

Final Project: Not Hitchcock Film Festival

Curatorial Concept and Purpose

Using primarily the work of film theorist Robin Wood, I planned a festival that would screen silent films that have commonalities with those found to be recurring in Hitchcock's oeuvre. Robin Wood identifies 5 plot formulations in his book Hitchcock's Films Revisited that the director used in numerous films spanning his British and American career. These themes are by no means exhaustive and are simply used as a basic framework for identifying Hitchcockian themes in other narratives films and works of art. I chose to use these themes to discover Hitchcockian elements in silent film as well as visual art. The purpose of this exhibit is to push the boundaries of art genres, encouraging the viewer to see the concepts and themes that are prevalent in all forms of art and everyday life. It also aims to broaden the historical timeline of cinematic elements, seeking to demonstrate that Hitchcockian themes are not only a product of a particular time and place, but can be found throughout the development and history of the motion picture.

Venue

Roxie Theatre: 3117 16th Street, San Francisco, CA. Located in the Mission District of San Francisco. I chose this theatre for its location, size, style, history, and overall aesthetic. It opened in 1909 as the "C.H. Brown Theater" and has gone through several names until it was bought by current management in 1976. In 2009, it became

a nonprofit organization and San Francisco's oldest operating theater. It has been showing independent and classic films since 1976.

The neighborhood of the Mission District in San Francisco has been greatly gentrified in the last few years. Now, primarily an area that attracts young artists the theater lies right in the midst of the target audience for this program. It also offers a nicely renovated space with a bit of history, while maintaining a manageable audience capacity and a laid back vibe. The Mission District has two stops on the BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) and is a short bus or cab ride from downtown San Francisco. In the past I have found that accessibility of public transportation as well as a convenient distance from main city landmarks can greatly impact the turnout for an event. This location is convenient and would encourage a great many artists that live in the neighborhood to come to the festival.

Layout of the Space & Logistics

Screenings will be in the main auditorium (capacity 238) and a photography art exhibit in the smaller auditorium (capacity 49). Each night the venue will open approximately one hour before the first screening. In the main auditorium, the theatre is able to place a piano at one side of the stage. Musicians will be in this location, with microphones and lights that are supplied by the theatre. They offer one house manager, one box office person, and one projectionist with the rental fees. I will hire one security person to oversee the art exhibit and lobby, et. The exhibit will show the work of photographer Mara Taber. As an unknown artist she is more interested in

exposure than in a fee for exhibition. She is a San Francisco native who currently lives and exhibits her work in NYC. The themes and concepts of her work show many similarities with the Hitchcockian themes reflected in our screenings. My organization will supply her with a fee to cover the cost of making prints in the sum of \$600 (\$30 per print for 20 prints). As she will be showing prints, there will be little associated risk of theft, et. however, security will monitor the gallery area to discourage any theft or vandalism. The prints she will show will also highlight the films in our 4 screenings. She will also design our website.

<http://www.nothinghitchcock.org> As a friend she will not charge for the web design, and she will also have the opportunity through the event to showcase her work. Each night, guests will be invited to view the exhibit in the small 2nd theatre before the main theatre opens approximately 20 mins before the first film screening of the night. Two ushers (hired independently) will offer programs with film info and program notes to the audience as they enter the theater. Seating will be open and first come, first serve. At the start time, I will introduce each screening and the musicians involved, I will also point out the Hitchcockian theme that the film exhibits and give a few brief thoughts on the selection and placement in the festival.

Screenings, Prints, Fees, and Accompaniment Schedule (times are approximate)

1. Saturday, 7pm screening:
Theme: The Falsely Accused Man
Film: A Cottage on Dartmoor(1929)
Print Info: 35 mm print from BFI. Overseas hire fee: £200 , USD: \$314.50
Accompaniment: Pianist: Stephen Horne, performance fee: \$1,000, doing his score written in 2006.

2. Sunday, 7pm screening:
Theme: Story about a Psychopath
Film: The Unknown(1927)
Print Info: 35 mm print from George Eastman House: \$300 fee
Accompaniment: Armen Ra, theramin, new score

3. Sunday, 9pm screening:
Theme: Story about a Guilty Woman
Film: The Red Kimona (1926)
Print Info: 35 mm print from UCLA Film & TV Archive: estimated \$400 fee
Accompaniment: Royal Society Jazz Trio, new score: \$1,000

4. Saturday, 9pm screening:
Theme: Story about a Marriage
Film: Sunrise(1927)
Print Info: 35 mm print from Criterion Pictures USA: \$500 fee
Accompaniment: Yee Duo, pianist & violinist, performance fee: \$500, new score

This festival will run for two screenings on Saturday and Sunday nights (at approx 7 pm and 9pm screenings). Tickets will be sold for the Roxie Cinema's usual rate of \$10/ticket.

Program Notes

This festival draws from the work of film theorist Robin Wood and his book, Hitchcock's Films Revisited in which he outlines some of the common themes in plot formation within Hitchcock's films. While other scholars and theoretician's work was used in the overall scope and understanding of this project. Wood's work was the main connecting force behind the concepts and formations of the themes. Without his work this series

would not be possible. I would also like to add that these themes were chosen and placed in an intended order with which the audience can draw their own correlations, similarities, and differences. Much can be learned from the films themselves and their relations to one another apart from their ties to Hitchcockian themes.

Night #1: The Falsely Accused Man and the Psychopath

A Cottage on Dartmoor(1929) has been described as dark and foreboding, reminiscent of Hitchcock stylistically, and overwhelmingly tragic. From the visuals of shadowy trees on the English moors, to a theatre in which a young man stalks his co-worker jealous of her date with another man, and a barber sharpening his straight edge razor while eyeing the neck of an enemy, this film exudes the qualities of classic suspense or film noir genre. Our leading man, Joe is not falsely accused of his crime but instead of the desire to commit it. As film scholar Robin Wood notes about the “falsely accused man” in Hitchcock’s films, “he is always innocent of the crime of which he is accused but (perhaps ambiguously) guilty of something else: at the least, egoism and irresponsibility.”¹ Joe in A Cottage on Dartmoor is guilty of taking action upon his desires and acting “irresponsibly” as Wood describes, but the crime that the viewer assumes he will commit he is innocent of. His punishment comes not from the law or the crime he has committed but from his own desires, it is his egoism that is his downfall. According to Wood some Hitchcock films that fit this theme are: The Lodger, The 39 Steps, Young and Innocent, Suspicion, Saboteur, Spellbound, Strangers on a Train, To Catch a Thief, The Wrong Man, North by Northwest, and Frenzy.

¹ Wood, Robin. Hitchcock’s Films Revisited. New York: Columbia University Press. 2002. 241.

In *The Unknown* (1927) Lon Chaney's character of Alonzo is our psychopath. As Wood states, this film often aligns itself with the falsely accused man film. Alonzo and Joe from *A Cottage on Dartmoor* bear many similarities. They are both men consumed by their emotional attachment to women. I would argue that these obsessions are not actually love but, merely their own egoism and the desire to have something that they are incapable of (in Joe's case emotionally and in Alonzo's case both emotionally and physically). As you will see in *The Unknown*, the film focuses its energies towards Alonzo much in the way that Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) proves to be more of a film about Norman Bates rather than the female character of Marion Crane. Alonzo is a psychopath not only in his actions towards others but also in the way he treats himself. Other Hitchcock films that fit into this thematic category are: *The Lodger*, *Murder!*, *Shadow of a Doubt*, *Rope*, *Strangers on a Train*, *Frenzy*, and the aforementioned *Psycho*.

Night #2: A Story about a Guilty Woman and a Marriage

The Red Kimona (1925) historically has been credited as directed by Walter Lang, yet in recent years it has been discovered that another director was a large part of the creation and production of the film, the early female director, Mrs. Wallace Reid.² The story for the film was adapted from one by Adela Rogers St. John by Dorothy Arzner, creating a really fascinating female perspective of a guilty woman story. Modeled after the real-life story of Gabrielle Darley, who was found to be guilty of prostitution and murder, this feminist spin on the Hitchcockian theme gives Darley control over her own fate. In

² Slide, Anthony. (1996) In *The Silent Feminists: America's First Women Directors* (pp.88). London, England: Scarecrow Press., Inc.

contrast to the Hitchcock films that the woman's punishment for her crime is more in the hands of society than that of any one individual character, Darley suffers and finds redemption through her own choices. The Hitchcock films Wood identifies with this theme are: *Blackmail*, *Sabotage*, *Rebecca*, *Notorious*, *The Paradine Case*, *Under Capricorn*, *Stage Fright*, *Vertigo*, *Psycho*, *The Birds* (arguably), and *Marnie*.

Our culminating film in this series is F.W. Murnau's masterpiece *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans*(1927). The complexities and visual brilliance of this film are only overshadowed by the emotional struggle of the relationship between our two main characters. Wood describes Hitchcock's films about marriage to be bleak and skeptical and at the beginning of *Sunrise*, the marriage of the central man and woman (which are unnamed) perfectly fits this scenario. However, as the narrative unfolds the story takes a Hitchcockian turn and become about something entirely different. While the central theme is a story about marriage, it also brings together the other cinematic themes of our festival: the guilty woman story, the psychopath, and the falsely accused man.

The influence upon Hitchcock or in turn the Hitchcockian influence is not what is important when viewing any of the films from our festival, but instead the accomplishments of cinema at all points in history. Each member of our audience will find something different and/or new within these works created almost a century ago and it is the discussions and inspirations that come out of these screenings that help to shape not only our film history, but our future.

Fees

Venue Rental Fee

\$4,000 for venue rental fees (including load in, load out, insurance, and theatre staff)

Staff

-2 ushers (volunteers who are offered free admission for the screenings that night)

-Security (one security guard to monitor the art exhibition space as well as the general theatre) \$12/hour for 5 hours per night= 10 hours Total: \$120

Printing Fees

-Photography print fees: \$600

-Additional Fees for Displays & Equipment to set up Art Exhibition space: \$300

-Program Printing Fees: \$400 (Programs to be designed and printed by Hello Lucky Invitation, Gifts, and Stationery, 977 Howard Street, San Francisco, California 94103).

-Flyers: \$200 (designed by artist Mara Taber, printed by Hello Lucky)

-Postcards: \$200 (designed by artist Mara Taber, printed by Hello Lucky)

-2 Large Posters for Theatre Displays: \$50

-10 smaller Posters for advertising in local businesses: \$100

-Press Kits will be emailed electronically and use the design of Mara Taber

Total: \$5,970

Budget: \$7,000 (to cover unforeseen costs)

Other Local Organizations

The following were contacted and showed interest in participating in a Co-Presentation:

SF Silent Film Festival, Roxie Cinema, and Art Deco Society of California. These organizations would be useful in utilizing their mailing lists and for additional advertising

purposes. They would all have ad space in the program. Additional ad space would be offered to sponsors, and available at a rate of \$200/full page ad.

Target Audience

Our target audience is a young artistic crowd primarily, also targeting students at the local universities and the audiences attending events put on by the SF Silent Film Festival, the Roxie Cinema, and the Art Deco Society. San Francisco Bay area has a large rockabilly/vintage-lifestyle community that would be a main part of the target audience for this event. Publications to send press kits to include (but are not limited to): SF Weekly, SF Guardian, Pirate Radio, 4 x 4 magazine, and SF Gate. While press is important, this event will focus more on word-of-mouth and free advertising as a means to draw an audience.

Postcards and flyers will be delivered to the following local businesses/locations:

- La Rosa Vintage Clothing
- Schauplatz Vintage Clothing
- Hotel Rex
- Sir Francis Drake Hotel
- Bourbon & Branch Bar
- The Alembic Bar & Restaurant
- Le Colonial Restaurant
- School of Visual Arts
- Ritual Coffee Roasters
- Four Barrel Coffee
- Shooting Gallery
- Barber Lounge
- Suppenkuche
- Blue Bottle Coffee
- 826 Valencia
- Little Star Pizza
- The Red Poppy Art House

- Borderlands Books
- Lost Art Salon
- Paxton Gate
- San Francisco State (film studies dept)
- UC Berkeley (film studies dept)

As I have stated in class before, putting flyers up on public streets is illegal in most areas so I would choose to focus more on advertising within businesses.

To Be Continued...

Two major points need to be addressed and further researched before this series will be ready to screen: Rights issues and the type of print used for screening. Due to the time constraints of this project and the timeliness of communication and information exchange with other companies and individuals, I was unable to find out about additional fees involved with relation to the copyright rights of these films. The budget may need to be expanded upon once the right's holders and fees related are identified. I am also undecided on if I would be screening archival prints of these films or if I would rather screen another print of the film. While the Roxie Cinema maintains that they have and do screen archival footage, due to my personal distance from the theatre currently, I was unable to investigate their staff and equipment further in time for this project's due date (I have attended screenings at this space in the past). Before signing a contract with the theatre and making any final decisions on the type of print to show, I plan to personally investigate the space, equipment, and staff and make my own judgments on the capabilities of screening archival prints of these films in this space.

References

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