The Bay Tree Bookstore

- New & Used Coursebooks
- Online Coursebook Reservations
- Fiction & Reference
- Test Preps & Guides
- Gifts, Greeting Cards
- Computers & Supplies

Proud supporter of Eye Candy
A Publication Devoted to UCSC's Film Community

The Bay Tree Bookstore
Your Campus Resource

www.bookstore.ucsc.edu
EYECANDY

WINTER 2001

EYECANDY Credits:
Editor-in-Chief
Nathan Brunskill

Business Manager
Briaranne Douke

Production Manager
Jimmy Walker

Advertising Crew
Melissa Chan

Writing Crew
Dahm Adhine
Nathan Brunskill
Andrew Dampfl
Alana Esquivel
Hilla Faban
J. Gingold
Jonathan Hamilton
Naomi C. Kajiyama
Brianna Lenz

Cover
Jimmy Walker

Website
J. Gingold
Ryan Roth
Jimmy Walker

Advisor
Amelia Hastie

HOLLYWOOD PRACTICE

HARD BODY HOLLYWOOD POLITICS
How the movie industry did Ronald Reagan's dirty work.

THE FORMULA FOR A PROFITABLE REMAKE
Why Psycho didn't measure up, and The Mummy profited.

FILMMAKERS AT WORK

DAVID CRONENBERG
"Plastiicky gruesomeness - the blending of Biochemistry and English.

Cameron Crowe
The autobiographical marriage of film and music.

FILMS OF FEMINISM

WHAT HAS HOLLYWOOD DONE WITH FEMINISM?
At first glance - Taking a closer look at the "power woman" of Keeping the Faith and the "objectified" in Erin Brockovich.

disORIENTATION:
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon.
What you see is not always what you get....

THEORIZING THE CINEMATIC

THE FINAL CUT
The impact of the cut-to-black on film. The experience of watching Larry Clark's Kids.

THE FICTION OF CINEMATIC TRUTH
Madonna, Kim Burns, Win Wenders: Truth and more about the manufacturing of subjective reality.

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE
DISTINCTIVELY DIGITAL ART FORMS
As digital media gain greater visibility in mainstream culture, one question arises to the surface: What is a distinctively digital art? Go to our website for this article - http://eyecandy.ucsc.edu
THE FORMULA FOR A PROFITABLE REMAKE

By Andrew Dingsfi

Why Psycho didn’t measure up, and The Mummy profited.

Hitchcock classic. The “new” Psycho would include Vince Vaughn as Norman, Anne Heche as Marion, and William H. Macy as Arbogast.

Why remake a movie that was nearly perfect to begin with? Respect for the director, love for the film and its genre, or the most probable reason, money. Will it have the same appeal as it did 40 years ago? Not if it is Van Sant’s Psycho, which opened on December 4th of 1998 and raked in a grand total of ten million dollars in its "modernizing" the film. Van Sant and writers took the leeway of adding a few things that they believed today’s audiences could better relate to. To avoid Hitchcock fans, and more so to Psycho fans, these changes were offensive and unnecessary.

First, during the “scoprophile scene,” where Norman watches Marion undress from his office next door, the modern version has a “smack smack” noise, which implies that Bates is masturbating to the undressing Crane. Later during the famous shower scene, we are shown Crane’s naked backside, which was not shown in the original. Although Hitchcock liked to push the limits, such scenes were more likely left out due to the Motion Picture Production Code of the time. With Psycho, Hitchcock was attempting to shoot a psychological thriller rather than a “ campy soft porn” horror flick. The final major change in the script is when Julianne Moore, as Lisa Crane, enters Bates room and finds pornographic magazines on his dresser. In the original, the books Lisa picks up are thought to be pornographic but the covers are blank, and no nudity is actually shown. Altering the movie that is said to be nearly identical to the original in combination with shoddy casting efforts and bad timing, resulted in Van Sant’s Psycho massacring expectations, and thus creating an unsuccessful remake. According to the formula, Psycho is a bad remake, but I nonetheless was impressed with the attention to detail and idea of exactly remaking a movie. Also because I like the original story so much, it was kind of hard not to consider 90’s Psycho a good movie. Although casting a 12-year old boy look alike for your female lead doesn’t help.

Although remakes have constantly failed, as did 1998’s other flops, Godzilla and The Avengers, there have been remakes that have been successful in terms of profit, such as The Mummy…

opening weekend playing on 2,477 screens. While the movie seemed to be on the right box office track after the first weekend out, it severely suffered and finished with a grand total of $21.3 million including international revenues. The remake flopped because there is nothing greatly appealing about a movie that is basically a clone of its original with the addition of a few significant changes that only serve to hinder the film. The director took new actors, rebuilt the original mansion, set it in 1998 and shot it in color. To finish the list, the changes that are made to the original script and shot compositions are more detrimental to the overall product than they are helpful.

In 1960, Alfred Hitchcock made a thriller unlike any before it. With his eerie and intelligent use of camera angles and composition, he thrilled audiences and made them look over their shoulders before stepping into the shower again. Psycho, starring Anthony Perkins as Norman Bates, Janet Leigh as Marion Crane, and Martin Balsam as Detective Arbogast, stirred and bedazzled audiences around the world. The movie is highly acclaimed and ranks 18th on the AFI’s top 100 movies of all time. In 1998, Gus Van Sant (Good Will Hunting) produced a near shot-by-shot remake of the

Whatever happened to originality and ingenuity in filmmaking? Remaking classics has been a growing trend within the last six years of filmmaking and it isn’t going to stop in the new millennium. A remake is when someone takes a film that has been done in the past (whether it is the title, the idea, or the entire film down to its camera angles) and re-films it at a later date with new actors and a new director. The ingredients to what constitutes a “good” remake are as follows: 1) must successfully stir the intended emotions of those in the audience, 2) must create a fan base, 3) must make a lot of money, 4) must be considered enjoyable by the general majority, and 5) must do something better than the original did. Recent remakes have included movies like Gone in 50 Seconds and Shaft, and will soon include the classic Planet of the Apes, to be redone by Tim Burton. While a movie may be considered a good remake, it is not necessarily a good movie. A good movie must: 1) be worth the $8.75 you paid for the ticket to sit in the theater, 2) be worth telling your friends about, and 3) have good acting and directing.
Remakes have consistently failed, as did 1996’s other flops, Godzilla and The Avengers, though there are remakes that have been successful in terms of profit, such as The Mummy (1999), which made $155 million in the US alone, and Shaft (2000), which made $70.3 million domestically, in casting popular actors by using new technologies in CGI and digital effects. Remakes of classic movies can appeal to large audiences, including both fans of the original, and new generations of moviegoers.

The Mummy (2000) is a perfect example of why classic movies of the distant past should be remade today. For a movie that was made great in 1932 by utilizing panopticon tricks and special effects standard for the times, Karel Freund’s The Mummy did an amazing job at terrorizing its audience. In the remake, Stephen Sommers replaces the classic mummy played by Boris Karloff with Arnold Vosloo as Im-Ho-Tep the mummified priest who is brought back to life. In removing the bandages and using the computer to alter the appearance of the actor, a more effective and visually delightful monster is created and feared. Although it is true that the modern Im-Ho-Tep is more frightening than his past equivalent he still lacks the charisma and charm that Karloff’s Mummy was so full of. The success of this movie is not based solely on the addition of “mesmerizing” special effects, the fact that the movie is cast with Brendan Fraser, acclaimed actor and heartthrob, as the starring role accounts for a large percentage in its substantial profits. Though Brendan Fraser’s acting isn’t worth the space his name is printed on in the credits, he draws crowds, and crowds draw money.

In altering the storyline to appeal more to the adventure/horror-based audiences of today, the remake strayed from the frightening yet romantic appeal that the original Mummy accomplished. The movie successfully follows my guidelines of what constitutes a good remake; it was entertaining and worth the money to most viewers, it made a lot of money, and it stirred the crowd’s emotions as it should. It even established a fan base, which is evident due to the making of a sequel that will be released later this year. Its redeeming values, and the attraction of wider audiences to this movie are most likely attributed to the fact that the former Mummy was made in 1932. This essentially makes the new Mummy an ultimately new movie in that the two are separated by several generations, and thus contributes to its success as a remake. Its action-packed, full of special effects, and stars the gallant and Brendan Fraser (whom I personally loath). As a remake this movie gets a gold star but as a movie it severely lacking in value.

The latest anticipation in remake news is for Tim Burton’s Planet of the Apes, which is currently in production and set to be released on July 27th of this year. The film is proposed to include the attractive and talented Mark Wahlberg, as well as Michael Clark Duncan and Spike Jonze. Even Charlton Heston is going to take a break from his gun-toting duties as NPA president to make a cameo. Putting the known information about the film into my formulas, Burton’s Planet of the Apes will most likely be a successful remake and a good movie at the same time. Rather than drawing old “Ape” fan’s from their extensive collections of films and memorabilia, and into theaters, the film will most likely draw Burton fans. From the line up and from the hype, it is easy to assume that the movie will be an instant phenomenon, but that's what they said about the new Psycho. Considering the history of remakes, viewers may see a different picture, but we’ll just have to wait and see if Burton will dazzle us yet again, or if the film will fall victim to the fate of other remakes.

Let's party!  
call me!  
555-4657

---

DIS-placements AND anxious OBJECTS

Curated by Joyce Brodsky and Shelby Graham

February 22 - March 21, 2001
Mary Porter Sesnon Art Gallery
Porter College, UCSC

Camera....
Action....
Lights....
Ooops.

Remember to stop in for some great coffee or espresso before your long day of script writing, shooting or screenings. Check out our fast T-1 connected computer for viewing your favorite short film over the net!
DRAWING First Blood

Hard Body Hollywood Politics

By Jeb Admire

Rambo was a Hollywood catalyst; he represented a shift, a transformation in American politics in the 1980s and therefore Hollywood film. His muscular, glistening body represented a return to the old style glorification of war waged against an "other." Through a cultural studies lens, one can discern the socio-cultural modes of thought prevalent during the period under examination. Therefore, an analysis of war and action films released during the Reagan and Bush era demonstrates an identifiable militant sentiment in U.S. foreign policy, revealing a hidden intensity complex camouflaged by ultra-conservative claims of military dominance. As difficult as it is to grasp Rambo as an important symbol of American politics and culture, he is nonetheless central to this investigation of Conservative politics in Hollywood films of the 1980s and 1990s.

First Blood. Rambo's cinematic introduction, appeared in 1982 at the start of Reagan's two term presidency. Up to this point Hollywood had taken its cue from the anti-establishment and anti-Vietnam films of the 70s and early 80s, and turned the formula into a generic plot-for-profit marketing strategy. Here's Rambo's cue. First Blood is the story of a Vietnam veteran unable to readjust to the patterns of American society and instead decides to hook it in the Oregon back country while being persecuted by a blood-thirsty back woods police chief. Rambo's concept of the enemy shifts from the Vietcong to a local branch of the United States government. Rambo is portrayed as a tragic product of corrupt U.S. government intentions and actions in Vietnam.

Three years later in the middle of Reagan's rule, Rambo: First Blood II was released with major changes in the story and Rambo's characterization. He becomes the hard body representation of American strength rather than the anti-U.S. scepticist. The plot is formed around Rambo's military mission to Vietnam to rescue American prisoners of war, and indirectly, his desire to repair a deflated U.S. ego. After the character is trained to the government's side Hollywood's definition of virtue shifts with him. Although anti-government sentiment is still prevalent throughout the film, Rambo's combat enemy is no longer the corrupt government that engineered the war in Vietnam, but rather the Vietnamese and Soviet armies. This was one of the first Hollywood films in the 80s to use communism as a scapegoat for many of the United States' own problems, an example of the "othering" pattern that patriarchal film has used since its beginnings. Rambo becomes the gun-toting preserver of American justice, ironic since that same sense of justice is what estranged him from American society in the first film. But hey, people can change right? Ronald Reagan even identified with Rambo's persona when stating that after watching First Blood II he knew how to deal with the Iranians the next time they committed an act of violence against the U.S., referring to the attack and hostage situation in Teheran in the late 70s, often blamed on Jimmy Carter.

This country went from the anti-war era of foreign relations diplomat Jimmy Carter, considered a weak President, into the conservative age of Commie-fighting ex-Hollywood star Ronnie Reagan. He took on the Cold War as the self-proclaimed vanguard of the "free world" and spread his American ideals throughout the lesser developed world whether it liked it or not. Apparently some people disagreed with Reagan and his imperialist, capitalist nature. Apparently Hollywood had no qualms about developing plot strategies that glorified the United States as the protector of world justice and human righteousness.

The slew of hard body, one-man-army films that become a common Hollywood trope during the twelve years following the second Rambo film are only comprehensible after linking them with the foreign policy of the Reagan and Bush administrations. The terms of Republican Presidents Reagan and Bush mark a trend in certain Hollywood films that parallel the tough-guy stance of U.S. foreign policy. The echo the sentiments of anti-leaflet conservatives who oppose foreign national independence insurrectionists that they believed threatened U.S. global economic and political domination.
Red Dawn and Death Before Dishonor. Such films worked to instill an American public with a false sense of security of the United States military against a foreign threat, and its moral struggle against the evils of communism and anti-American terrorism. On the surface, a film combating anti-American terrorism is a legitimate redeemable factor. Anti-American terrorism spawned from this country's attempts to install or retain puppet governments in foreign countries that were beneficial to American politics either economically or logistically.

Arnold's characters, alongside Stallone's as those in films like Death Before Dishonor and Red Dawn functioned as much as U.S. political propaganda as entertainment. These Hollywood productions rationalized the violence and war that the U.S. practiced during these Presidential terms as methods of subliminally tapping into American patriotic senses of duty and responsibility in order to engage support for aggressive foreign policy against foreign terrorism (Death Before Dishonor, Commando), communist invaders (Red Dawn), and an invisible alien on a jungle island (Predator) representing the Vietcong. Each of these films result in the victory of the American military against foreign oppression and evil.

Engaging with the type of films discussed above on a political level offers insight into Hollywood trends during a Republican Presidential term. It should be noted, however, that Hollywood war films released during terms of Democratic Presidency seem to oppose a glorification of war. The epic war films of the Democratic era portray the pain and destructiveness of war rather than following the past pattern of glorifying combat. Saving Private Ryan (1998) and The Thin Red Line (1993) both depict World War II destructively not only through graphic, violent imagery, but by developing a narrative about how a war can destroy families (Saving Private Ryan), and by illustrating the tragic impact of nature's destruction by seemingly petty human rationales (The Thin Red Line). Three Kings (2000), one of, if not the only, Hollywood film about the Gulf War, portrays the inhuman, bureaucratic characteristics of the U.S. and Iraqi militaries while giving innocent Iraqi citizens a voice in the narrative and not "othering" them. The film also comments on the vast difference of technological warfare resources between the two warring nations. This functions as a liberal statement of the result of war as a product of violent and territorial human nature easily manipulated and corrupted by governmental power, and ultimately as a belief of the hopelessness of war as a solution of conflicts.

While Hollywood's tradition of narratively displacing blame for America's deeply rooted fear of a threat against its sovereignty onto an "other" (Asian and Russian in the case of Rambo: First Blood II, Latin American in Commando and Death Before Dishonor, or Russian and Cuban in Red Dawn) did not change during the Clinton administration. Despite the blockbuster Arnold vehicle True Lies (1994) which positioned an Arab in the position of the enemy as a result of the World Trade Center bombing the previous year, action films during the 1990s primarily depicted extra terrestrial threats including alien invasion (Independence Day, 1996), earth bound comets (Armageddon, 1998, and Deep Impact, 1996), a superior and oppressive technological power (The Matrix, 1999) and introspective American struggles (Broken Arrow, 1996). Such a shift was made in order to cinematically represent the same "othering" narrative without explicitly portraying foreigners as enemies at a time when foreign relations were a less provocative subject.

This comparison of Hollywood action/war films of the two decades reveals a distinct pattern. The position of President in the United States is a figurehead position impacting the media representations of the country more than any other national element. As a product of public sentiment by economic design and function, Hollywood films mold to the ever-changing public image of the White House. Another Republican Presidential term is beginning, and judging by the past two decades of mainstream portrayals of the American military, Hollywood is going to resume a bombastment of the public with a glorification of American military and governmental power and righteousness. Perhaps Traffic (2000), distributed by none other than USA Films, is our first taste.
David Cronenberg: Play or be Played.

By Jonathan Hamilton
croopy story about leech-esque parasites that infest a Montreal apartment building, was made with an original investment of $180,000 and earned $3 million. Despite critical challenges of his initial films, this early period reflects his impact on the Canadian and international film markets, the resilience of his technique, and the undeniable quality the films themselves possess.

Within his body of work, Cronenberg has certain preoccupations which explore the outer limits of the human experience as it pertains to psychology, biology and technology. These themes have captivated audiences worldwide and have kept Cronenberg's films alive on the fringes of mainstream cinema. Films such as Crash, which criticizes car wrecks, or eXistenZ, which critiques modern escapism, stand as perfect examples of how Cronenberg's films reveal a darker psychological position. This perspective acts to both attract and repel audiences. Viewers are often repelled, fearing what their attraction means. Who wants to admit that these spooky characters could very well be a reflection of themselves on a psychologically darker level?

In Videodrome, there are dream-like sequences when TV's begin pulsing and stretching in plastically gruesome ways, gaining a flesh-like quality that emphasizes the smelliness of the line separating the technology and the human. In Naked Lunch, Cronenberg's education sparks. This adaptation of the 1959 William S. Burroughs novel gives Cronenberg the chance to deal with all of his favorite themes: mutation, transformation, sex, violence, the act of writing, scientific endeavor technology, the machine as an extension of the flesh, as well as with the novel that profoundly impacted his life and career. Where Cronenberg's background in biochemistry finds a creative outlet in the plastic mutations of the flesh which occur in the novel, M. Butterfly picks up thematically speaking from where Naked Lunch left off, dealing more with the problems of adapting a written work made for a stage play into the language of the cinema.

This is just a preview of David Cronenberg's larger body of works and ideas. His films have not reached the acclaim that some of his contemporaries in the genre have, but they are not so easily swept under the proverbial carpet. Cronenberg has given science fiction plastic surgery, and his work demands a second take for all of those who are themselves infected with that curious obsession aptly called the film virus.

CRONENBERG'S FILMOGRAPHY:
Transfer 1966
From the Drain 1967
Stereo 1969
Crimes of the Future 1970
Shivers 1975
The Italian Machine 1976
Rabid 1975
Fast Company 1979
The Brood 1979
Scanners 1981
Videodrome 1982
The Dead Zone 1983
The Fly 1986
Faith Healer 1987
Dead Ringers 1988
Naked Lunch 1991
M. Butterfly 1992/3
Crash 1996
eXistenZ 1997

THIS IS A SIMPLE NON-CORPORATE ADVERTISEMENT BROUGHT TO YOU BY
PLANET FRESH BURRITOS
Cameron Crowe, the Marriage of Music and Film

By Alana Esquivel

Take an upbeat narrative: scenes loaded with quotable dialogue like, “You complete me,” “I am a golden god,” and “I was just no where in your neighborhood”, and an array of rock music, and you have yourself a Cameron Crowe film. Originaling some of film’s most memorable scenes, this writer/director/producer has proved that quality, not quantity can result in a collection of unforgettable films.

We all know the work—Fast Times at Ridgemont High (1982), Say Anything... (1989), Singles (1992), Jerry Maguire (1996), and Almost Famous (2000) — although, you may not have known why his small collection of films contain a formal element that is deeply rooted with a touch of his past and a taste of his true love. By the age of 15 Cameron Crowe was a high school student writing for Rolling Stone Magazine and touring with an up and coming rock band. This experience would later be the basis for his film Almost Famous nearly 30 years later. More than likely Crowe’s background, and needless to say an apparent love for music in general are the influential reasons for his constant pairing of music and film. While Almost Famous is noted for being his most autobiographical film, his whole collection of work is loaded with a self-referential love of music. After a few years in the journalism field he wrote his first script, Fast Times at Ridgemont High in 1982. One of the earliest peeks into the halls and homes of high school students, this film would later spawn a number of similar films. Not to mention he would also meet his future wife, Nancy Wilson from the rock group Heart, on the set of Fast Times.

Music became and remained a central part of Crowe’s work. Take for instance the radio serenade in Say Anything... It is so memorable it does the cover and posters for the film. Or how about Singles, a film that reaches the height of the Seattle grunge scene of the early 90s and mixes in appearances of big bands of the day like, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, and Alice in Chains. The storyline of Jerry Maguire had little to do with music per se, but nevertheless released a top selling soundtrack along side the film. And most recently, Almost Famous, a film that follows the backstage life of a 70s rock band includes a blended soundtrack of old and new music.

However, it would be too easy to say that Cameron Crowe’s films only include a few good songs here and there. Music in these films becomes a complete package that when surrounded by other aspects are able to create the most moving, yet simple moments. It’s the lyrics, the timing, and the delivery that all aid in accentuating the precious parts of life that more often than not go unnoticed. Elaborate or dramatic circumstances are not the things that most of us identify with when we watch a film. It’s the small things that we can relate to, and in Crowe’s case it is the music that helps bring it to our attention.

Take for instance a scene in Jerry Maguire where Tom Cruise is belting away a tone-deaf rendition of Tom Petty’s “Free Fallin.” After a successful business meeting an ecstatic Maguire drives in his car and hunts down the perfect song on the radio to highlight his good mood. He switches from station to station singing a few bars from each song, only to be dissatisfied by
the sappy tunes and lyrics he barely knows the words to. He finally finds a station that has just the right song. He enthusiastically pounds his hand on the steering wheel, bobs his head, giggles, and sings his heart out. He knows the song, knows the lyrics, and as exemplified through the tootly grin on his face, nothing could be better at that exact moment. There is no sensational camera work or fancy editing in this scene. It is short and has little narrative importance, but nevertheless strikes a chord we can all relate to. What makes it significant is the fact that it is an integral part of our everyday life that we have all experienced. Who doesn't sing in the car, and more importantly how many times is that never shown in a film? People in movies are always driving from one place to another and filmmakers are in a constant rush to move the story along. Editing devices shift you from one place to the other with never a glimpse at what happens in between.

Cameron Crowe's films let us take a peek into that place so rarely seen and reminds us that these simple moments are as significant as the ones that typically get all the attention.

Another example of how music creates sentimental highlights within Crowe's film takes place in Almost Famous. Despite the fact that this film has the most direct reference to his love of music, the scene that brings the power of music to the forefront has little to do with the film's actual plot. In the midst of a chaotic concert tour, broken relationships, tainted friendships and an unbelievable amount of tension, the main characters sit cramped together inside the confines of an old and crowded tour bus. Elton John's song, "Tiny Dancer" comes on the radio and one person starts to sing along. One by one the camera reveals each person joining in until the once melancholy bunch is transformed into a smiling choir of high-spirited travelers. The scene is not providing a cure-all for the problems that are occurring within the narrative, but it releases the tension possessed by both the characters and the spectators. As in Jerry Maguire, this scene expresses those unexpected times when music or that perfect song expresses our mood, our emotions, and our feelings in a way that mere dialogue could never do.

The perfect example of the power music would have in relation to Crowe's later work is in Almost Famous when the young William Crowe's screen counterpart receives a forbidden collection of classic rock albums from an older, discerning sister. Before revealing her gift, she whispers in his ear, "It will set you free." And ultimately it does, as it is through rock 'n roll that the young Wil-

POOR COLLEGE MECHANICS
Mobile Mechanic Service
"We Come to You"
(408)505-1300 (831)465-9614

Discounts with UCSC student ID Card!

Tune-up
Brakes
Belts
Suspension
Cooling Systems
No-start

www.poorcollege/mechanics.com

We're Certified!
What has Hollywood done with Feminism?

By Briona Lens

Okay, so maybe the glass ceiling has shattered, but is the "glass lens" still intact, to coin a phrase? How far are we from Marilyn Monroe? She has come to be known for being objectified and subjected to an unbreakable male gaze in films of the past. As American Hollywood cinema progressed, and women started wearing power suits and hair bigger than their chests, we seem to have nodded and declared, "Yes! We as women have a safe refuge in film!" Now that we have films centered around us, and even our own television channel, with Original Lifetime Pictures dealing with "our issues," everything looks just fine for us in film. How safe is that assumption? We may be the focus of many glamorized stories with seemingly strong heroines, but has Hollywood really done anything with feminism?

There is something distressing in Hollywood films today. On one hand, we are represented by strong female characters and on the other, we are being cut into pieces by the camera, objectified by the prevalent male gaze of patriarchal society. We see this in every form of media (recall the last Victoria's Secret ad you saw) yet none of these images are mere a threat to what we are faced through the subversive surging of Hollywood films. There is a dangerous hypocrisy being presented to us when we view a woman who acts as if she is free from the oppression of sexism yet is still chained to submission by the camera lens.

Take Jenna Elfman's Anna Foilly in the film Keeping The Faith (1999). Here is a woman with power, prestige, a good career, and she even looks great in a sleek, shiny pantsuit. Enter the role model of the 21st century. Get ready, girls, because she's one hell of a... What exactly is she? Brian and Jake don't seem to think what to call their female companion. At one point the following dialogue is used in their attempt to describe her:

Brian: "...this very high powered business...you know..."

Jake: "...Woman?"

Yes, boys, she's a woman. And isn't it funny to use that gender following the words "high," "powered," and "business"?

At first glance, this film would seem to be compatible with feminist thought. Elfman is free to portray a woman with a definite sexuality balanced by her diegetic possession of power. Yet this power is compromised, for Anna is constructed and isolated through a male gaze.

Let's look at how this woman is introduced in the film. Brian and Jake are waiting for Anna to de-board a plane. There is a shot of the two men watching the line of passengers file out. Cut to Jake and Brian's point of view shot of the departing passengers. Anna comes into full view, the shot slows, and we see her for the first time through the eyes of the two male leads. This immediately sets up Anna as an object to be viewed through a male gaze. The slowing of the footage is a translation of the male's subjective influence on the shot.

At another point in the film, Anna is talking to Brian and as she lossess her head back, the shot freezes for several seconds through Brian's point of view. In yet another scene, Anna and Jake are in bed together, and the viewer is bombarded by shots that linger on her body, yet we do not see an equal focus on the male's figure. She is constantly framed by men. Trapped in between and suffocated by the two men vying for her affection. This use of cinematography and editing contradict what the narrative seems to be saying through the character development of Anna. Through the dialogue, Anna is made into a strong and sexy businesswoman, yet the camera continues to cut her up into fetishized pieces, de-power her, and smother her. Although wrapped in the modern packaging of the 21st century business woman, Anna is formed in the same way that her predecessors of the 1940s were.

At first glance, the film Erin Brockovich seems to create the same trap for its lead Julia Roberts. But what this film achieves is an exact reversal of the way in which Keeping The Faith fails. The film presents a woman without a job or the formal education that will get her one. Clad in astoundingly high heels, short skirts, low tops, big hair and heavy make-up, Erin struggles to support her three children alone. She is a woman stripped of her power, her life easily affected by powerful men like the doctor who carelessly smashes into her car and members of the courtroom during the preceding trial where she is destroyed during her testimony. The one woman on whom she could lean, the neighbor who babysats her children, disrupts her in the beginning of the film. She is without a support group of women, desperately trying to keep her head above water.

Yet we do not see Erin objectified by the camera. She is introduced to us, not in fetishized pieces, but as a whole. In the opening scene we see Erin during a job inter...
view. There is a close-up of her face that pulls back to show her upper half. The shot cuts to her point of view of the man interviewing her. This instantly places the viewer in line with Erin's character. She is constantly center-frame, usually motivating the camera movement, always shown as a whole person. She lacks strength in the narrative but retains power through the cinematography.

Admittedly, many feel as if her chest could be billed as a co-star. The outfits she wears constantly draw attention to her body. This in and of itself could be perceived as an objectification of her character. This argument is tackled directly in the text of the film. Upon her boss' suggestion that she might want to, "rethink her wardrobe," Erin replies hotly that she, in fact, needs to do no such thing, emphasizing that she likes the way she looks and will continue to dress however she feels appropriate. We have heard time and again that women who dress provocatively are "asking for" judgment or even sexual assault. Erin Brockovich wonderfully reverses this argument. Erin's dress code wins her the disfavor of most women she comes into contact with but also proves to be a valuable asset for her. She uses her body as a tool to manipulate men; it is a way to empower her. This point is treading on shaky ground as far as feminism is concerned, but the film deals with this smoothly. She does not use this power for personal gain, but as a tool for attacking society, for she only uses this "asset" to gain information from a lonely clerk in order to help her case. It is a turning of the tables; the voyeuristic male gaze of society is taken advantage of, thus accentuating its injustice.

Unfortunately, Erin Brockovich seems to be an exception to the rule in Hollywood. Perhaps that has to do with the fact that director Steven Soderbergh has previously achieved success in the independent film scene and is relatively new to the large studios of Hollywood. This goes to show that many factors need to be considered when discussing feminism in film.

Questions of authorship, genre, star typecasting, and star personas all play into the equation here. It seems that Hollywood has done with feminism what society has as well: placed it on the backburner to simmer until it boils over yet again. A call for more women in the production of Hollywood films is a necessity but not necessarily a solution to this problem. (Many female directors still adhere to Hollywood stylistic techniques and objectify their heroines in the process). It is also unfair to challenge feminism by only addressing women's roles in film; we must encompass all aspects of feminism and open an honest and critical discourse that covers race, gender, sexuality and class as well. This is starting to happen, but a greater importance needs to be placed on feminist readings of film if women are going to shatter that "glass lens" and finally set foot on equal ground with men. Perhaps this can start (or perhaps this can end) with film; either way film is an excellent tool to aid in communicating ideology, whether it be the dominant ideology or a reversal of such. Let's use it well.

---

**THE LITERARY GUILLOTINE**

**SCHOLARLY BOOKS**

- Rare
- Out-of-Print
- Used
- New
- University & Small Press

---

**CARTE CARDS and READINGS**

**MAGICAL HERBS BOOKS and TOOLS**

---

**204 Locust Street * Santa Cruz, CA 95060**

**457-1195**

**Open Mon. - Sat. 10-6**

---

**EYECANDY**
By C. Naomi Kajiyama

"Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" is a Chinese proverb that is basically translated as, "What you see is not what you get." What you see in Ang Lee's latest movie is a harmonious synchronization of Yo-Yo Ma's music and Yuan Wu Ping's thrilling martial arts choreography, artistic cinematography, vibrant uses of color in set design and costume, and a witty and heartfelt film. What you also see are women who are protagonists, who are heroic, and who know how to fight. However, what you do not get in Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (1999) is an affirmation of feminine mastery and strength that is independent of patriarchal figures and structures.

Lee describes his film as a "kind of dream of China, a China that probably never existed, except in [his] head." His mythical dream is comprised of elements from the Hong Kong martial arts, melodramas, epic/romance films, art films, and mainstream hits. In most cases, the film is visually compared to The Matrix, while other critics have likened its narrative to such films as Star Wars, The Wizard of Oz, and Lee's own Sense and Sensibility. One term that continues to surface in synopses is "chick flick." Yet this classification is misleading when it comes to the cinematic depiction of gender roles, specifically of women and femininity. Crouching Tiger is, instead, exemplary of a type of film that I call the "dick flick."

The dick flick showcases women as the central figures of the narrative, which like the chick flick, necessitates a feminist reading. The chick flick participates in the misrepresentation of women and the revolting of men, yet it does so under the guise of a chick flick. It is a film that is directed from a male-oriented perspective, that is about females, that mismanages its representation of women, and contributes to the suppression of femininity. Superficially the chick flick seems progressive; however, its female characters remain underdeveloped and objectified—in other words, they are not women. It usually convinces its audience into thinking that its representation of lead female characters are positive when, in fact, these images are more detrimental and are merely reworked stereotypes. The proverb, "Crouching tiger, hidden dragon," can be seen as a metaphor for the chick flick. Again, as its title forewarns, what you see is not what you get. Although the women are protagonists, they remain subjects who are subordinate in relation to the male figures. Most often, these undervalued women are transformed into (sexual) objects within the phallocentric frame. Typical of the chick flick are women protagonists who attempt to break free from the constructions of patriarchy. Consequently, their ends lead them to martyrdom, regression, repression, or death. In any case, it is a celebration of the dick.

The central character, Jen (Zhang Zi-Yi), defines her understanding of power through male-oriented organizations and symbols. It is not necessarily the actual phallic-shaped objects such as guns, bombs, or swords that signify virility. It is the power that the phalus elicits. It is the symbolic value of and substitution for the penis. The most obvious example of patriarchal power in Crouching Tiger would be the Green Destiny sword. The power of the Green Destiny supersedes all. In the scene when we first see the bare body of the sword, Sir Tse (Lung Siuh) and Governor Yu (Li Fa Zong) are in awe, as they gape at it in its penis-shaped glory while gently stroking it. The Green Destiny is the self-proclaimed Invincible Sword Goddess' way of establishing her dominance over a situation and means of eliciting fear. But note how the very word "sword" has penetrated itself between the other two words, because she could be neither invincible nor a goddess without it. Most likely, her self-labeled name would not have gotten lost in the translation from Mandarin to English because the script for Crouching Tiger was originally written in English.

The arrow, yet another phallic symbol that Jen handles, is used against other phallic symbols, but it also as a weapon of war, and an arrow piercing a heart is symbolic of sexual union. Lo (Chang Chen) and Jen's romance is established via sadomasochistic overtones, combining these three meanings of the arrow. Jen stabs him in his chest (heart). He lunges on top of her. She hits him on the head and rolls on top, still struggling in his grip. Lo repossesses his position on top, while forcibly kissing her. He avenges by rape as the camera cuts away to a close up of his hand moving deeper into her pants. The camera pans to Jen's chest, then to her face—one that at first reads as horror, and then pleasure. Pornographically, the following shot depicts a dehumanizing medium close up of Lo's bloody ejaculate. His discharge of blood shamelessly gushes
out from his wound down his victim's breasts. This pseudo-som shot upholds the maintenance of sex and violence as a familiar film theme.

Here is a "Crouching tiger, hidden dragon" moment. What you see is two people "making love." What you get is a rape scene that is suggestive of validation through victimization following the conservative and archaic power dynamics between women (the passive) and men (the dominating). Jen is helpless in his lock, as he helps himself to her body. Here, rape is portrayed as mere foreplay. The film attempts to justify the assault by leaving the last shot with Jen on top of Lo, embracing the act. The audience is asked to believe that when she rolls on top of him, it can be called consensual and pleasuring for both characters. Jen is thrust into the common female role as a sexual object, the product of his desire (as well as the desires of the popular audience, who are trained to read these physical advances as unbridled, reciprocal passion).

**WARNING: Ending spoiled ahead!**

In the end, the women get the short end of the dick. Jade Fox (Cheng Pei Pei), the dense, misdirected, and ineffectual villain is made to be the first martyr. Her last words announce that she wasted her life on Jen. Jade Fox projected her fantasies of challenging the phallocentric culture onto Jen, her surrogate daughter. But Jen rebelled, making Jade Fox's existence seem barren and futile. She prostituted herself in order to obtain the manuscripts of Wucan, the so-called "whorehouse," only to find that she is unable to grasp the meanings of the documents. She is made into a heroic maniac who celebrates all that is in her way. Jade Fox is forced into the role of the antagonist, as opposed to a heroic avenger of gender justice. Her valiant attempts are neglected and eventually lost within the narrative.

Even though Jade Fox kills Li Mu Bai (Chow Yun Fat), it is Shu Lien (Michelle Yeoh) who is made to be the second martyr. "I desire freedom. I must still respect a woman's duties," she sighs. The guilt of Li Mu Bai's death is projected onto the sexless Shu Lien. She becomes the one who has lost her femininity. We are led to believe that her life was in vain. She has been victimized. She mentally abandons Li Mu Bai's lifeless body in her arms, an instinct that restricts her from sexual liberation. Strangely, Shu Lien is punished for adhering to the ancestral and reserved legacy of her culture.

The conclusion may at first look ambiguous; but upon further examination, when Jen throws himself off the ledge, we cannot cancel out the possibility of suicide. We as moviogers are conditioned to want the characters in which we have emotionally invested ninety minutes (plus) to be redeemed in the end as heroes. We want a love story to end with the atonement of love. We want guilt to triumph over evil. Still, Jen serves as a sacrifice to these cultural narratives and fantasies. The neglected detail here is that not one of the characters in Crouching Tiger has the ability to fly. Rather, they defy many aspects of gravity. They push themselves off from the ground, the rooftops, and the surface of water with their feet; and, as humans, they are still limited by selected laws of physics. For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. When they thrust themselves upward, they must fall back down. They do not glide, hover, or float in the air. This is clearest when Jen leaps from the bridge.

Jen attempts to recreate the legend of the boy who made a wish and jumped off of a mountain, never to return. Here, in the last scene, Jen lifts himself above the ground and falls head-first into the ravine with her eyes closed, allowing little chance for her to propel her legs longitudinally before hitting the ground below. It is possible that Jen has a "faithful heart that makes wishes come true," and that she lives. Still, this would not have been possible if she had not risked her life first. In both ways, Jen is martyred and is conventionally classified with the rest of the beleaguered women, especially because there is a lack of self-awareness.

This was more Jen's story than any other character's. Yet, there is no internalization in the denouement, when before the audience was granted access to her visual point of view and her fantasies/memories (the desert sequences) for a good length of the film. In the end, the audience remains alienated, and the film deliberately leaves her destiny unanswered as she descends. The film deserves some credit for allowing Jen to make that final decision as she lifts herself from the bridge. But, instead of making this her ending, her fate is decided upon by the audience. We passively watch her fall and disappear. It is when we are left with the last contemplative extreme long shot of the clouds and hilltops that her fate is left to our imagination, no longer making it her choice, her movie. Thankfully, the audience can hope for a better, more equal life or afterlife for her. We can imagine a world where her existence and accomplishments are not measured by a dick stick. Still, the film does not grant an ending that clearly celebrates the lives of women. Just as Jen has childishly run away from her marriage, Crouching Tiger flies from the question: Was it her lack of consciousness as a youth or was it her womanhood that naively led her to throw herself off of the bridge?

The dragon in Taoism is symbolic of perpetual change, a representative of a spirit of "the Way." Lee mused, "The martial arts film is very masculine, but our film finds its center in its women characters. It is the women who in the end are walking the path of "the Way."" Indeed, the women in Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon are marching along a worn path, one that is dangerous and troubling. It hopefully follows the "ways" of victimization of women in film and perpetuates the inevitable sense of phallocentric omnipotence. What you get is misogyny, and phallocentric and misleading illustrations of women. What you get is the discriminatory reappropriation of femininity. What you get is Hollywood-influenced regurgitation. What you do
THE FINAL CUT

by: Nathan Bransford

THE MOST POWERFUL EFFECT IN A FILM DOES NOT
LIE WITHIN THE FILM. WHAT IS THE COMPLEX
EFFECT OF A SIMPLE DEVICE: THE CUT-TO-BLACK?

At 16 I remember being completely
cought up in watching Larry Clark's Kids, a
fiction film about New York City teenagers
who spend 24 hours drinking and having
dangerous sex. The film, intended to
be a "wake-up call" for parents (and
presumably their kids),
completely involved
me. Seeing a
film shot in a
documentary/
Cinema Verite
style, I was
completely
entranced
and sold by
the film's
characters and
its supposed
message about the
state of the country's
youth. I remember
the drama of the last
few moments of the
film very well: the
climactic party
scene ends. Tully
sleeps with
14-year-old Darcy. Casper rapes Jenny
while she's passed out. By the end of
the film, all of the main characters are
potentially HIV positive. The film cuts to
a montage of kids playing in the streets
and then back to a still, silent, long-takes
of Casper waking up on the couch. He looks
directly into the camera and, after a long,
awkward pause says, "Jesus Christ, what
happened?" Cut-to-black.

My jaw dropped. "That was the
end of the movie?" I thought to myself.
I felt sick to my stomach. The movie made
me feel ill. How did it wash over me
so suddenly? I think that this feeling is
compromised by the feeling one has when
watching the end of films like The Usual
Suspects, Seven, Swimming with Sharks,
American Psycho, or The Way of the Gun
to name a select few. "What a powerful
film," I thought after watching the films then,
"What a powerful ending." I think now. But
what is a film without its ending? Traditional
narrative motifs continually insert a
degree of lack. By this I mean that the
narrative instills in the viewer, who desires
an omnipotent subject position, a sense
that something is not yet known, and
that the unknown will eventually become
known. If this narrative lack sustains the
viewer's curiosity and interest and moves
the narrative along, then towards what
destination are the film and the viewer being
hurled? Undoubtedly, the destination is
the "cut-to-black." Not the last shot of
the film, or the credits, but the actual cut
itself. The final cut-to-black, perhaps the most
complex self-reflective device, gives the final
moments of most any film the potential to
be the most powerful part of the film-viewing
experience.

Take films like Seven, Kids, The
Way of the Gun, and The Usual
Suspects. Apart from making qualitative judgments on
their value as texts, I would suggest that
each of these films attain a certain level
of emotional impact and power specifically
because they employ the
cut-to-black. In all of the
aforementioned films, the
emotional impact and mood
previously established by the narrative
remains within the viewer after the film has formally ended.

In retrospect it is obvious that Kids' content and narrative structure lend themselves to emotional effects such as feeling "sick to one's stomach." However, it is the final cut-to-black that accentuates this effect by completely removing the viewer from the film through a sort of "desaturing" effect. Given the most basic definition of suture, a stitch, the forceful final cut rips open the narrative and its discourse. In fact in order for the power and impact of the cut-to-black to take effect the viewer must have been previously sutured by the film into a subject position. At the moment of the cut-to-black the film's presentation of the diatasis and, by extension, the diatasis itself have both ended; yet the viewer still feels the intense emotionally subjective presence of the film. In other words the viewer is still involved in the diegetic space of the film after the window into that space has closed. In this way the effect of the cut-to-black is a consequence of suture and the construction of subjectivity that it produces.

If meaning is attained when the spectator is sutured by a film text, meaning is also attained when the viewer is brutally ripped from that text via the cut-to-black. The cut is of particular importance because it is a visually violent device. The fade-to-black on the other hand would in essence be less powerful because it would ease the viewer out of the text. The cut-to-black is more jarring and produces an almost Eisensteinian synthesis - where a diatasis is created through conflict and collision - when the sutured viewer must suddenly reconcile the narrative lack presented on screen.

According to Kaja Silverman in The Subject of Semiotics the "narrative moves forward and acts upon the viewer only through the interaction of something which has not yet been fully seen, understood, revealed; it relies upon the inscription of lack [to keep the narrative moving]." In this way the cut-to-black serves as an end to the film, but also works to continue its diegetic world. For example, in Kids the "ending" of the narrative shows the viewer that there is quite a bit more story to be told. The viewer is not given a degree of narrative closure. The viewer has apparently only seen the beginning of a larger narrative. The film, cutting to black, has announced it will not be exhibiting the remainder of that narrative. The cut-to-black then denies the viewer the pleasure of filling the lack the film's narrative has worked to establish. This leads to what I have previously, and non-technically, labeled "feeling sick to my stomach." Being emotionally/subjectively involved, and subsequently being removed and denied a degree of closure, no doubt causes the psychological/physiological reaction described.

Interestingly, the cut-to-black exists as a formal device formed of contradiction. With the superficial destruction of the cinematic world, followed by the film's credits, it might be safe to say that the cut-to-black is a barrier that separates the diegetic story and the hidden discourses that produce that story. Breaking down that barrier by experiencing the cut-to-black, an act every viewer will eventually complete, makes the cut-to-black a type of self-reflexive device. However, it is not that simple. Since suture masks the production of point-of-view, the viewer believes his or her vision is omnipotent as opposed to limited, and the images playing out on screen are not fabrications, but spring naturally from "real life." The viewer, then, sees the images as autonomous and free from the hands of an author. While the cut-to-black does expose image autonomy as false by technically "ending" the film and revealing the authors of the film with the rolling of the credits, the cut-to-black avoids the standard definitions and intentions of most self-reflexive devices by somewhat skipping direct implications of authorship or visibly exposing a film's particular discourse. This is true specifically because of the cut-to-black's capability to carry on the diegisis after the narrative has ended.

Because narrative cinema's political power results from its ability to obliterate traces of anamnesis, the cut-to-black becomes a rather ambivalent self-reflexive device. Our ownership of the scenes and our primary identification with the camera/ apparatus is broken during the violent cut-to-black. However, our secondary identification with the diegetic characters still remains because of the lack imprinted via the viewer's narrative suture.

Before the cut-to-black, the story worked to hide the discourse. After the cut-to-black, the film shows the viewer the authors via the credits but any realization of discourse is pushed aside by the emotional impact of the diegisis still present in the viewer's mind. In a sense the story simply "pulls rank" and ends up overshadowing authorship and discourse despite the presence of the authors' names in the credits and the technical ending of the film. Through the cut-to-black the destruction of image autonomy does not implicate the discursive work of authorship so much as simply the author(s).

Returning to my experience with the film Kids, I realize that in the moment of viewing the film, the cut-to-black had such a powerful effect on my consciousness precisely because of the lack which was created and not replenished. This forced me to recognize the film-as-construction, while simultaneously instilling a desire for narrative continuation. Universalizing my experience, it seems the film viewer anticipates the bringing up of the house lights and the rolling of the credits. Staring at the black void on the screen, the viewer is still involved in the narrative (by this I mean the larger narrative the viewer is set up to want, but is denied). However, because the film's discourse and explicit authorship are not necessarily revealed and narrative involvement is sustained to a degree after the cut-to-black, it is sort of a "self-perpetuating" self-reflexive device. This self-reflexive device manages to sustain the viewer's subject position created via suture and naturalize the spectator's point-of-view and, therefore, the film as discourse as well.

The cut-to-black is a device that keeps the wheels of the narrative cinematic machine turning. It is a device that exhibits the dependency of a film text on authors, while simultaneously denying authorship and perpetuating the film's discourse by keeping the story alive after the film has ended. Once again returning to Kids, I can illustrate the point. While its final cut reminds the viewer that the film and the characters it contains do not exist independently of an anamnestic such as the writer, director, actor(s), or even projector, it keeps the story going via the viewer's psychological/physiological reaction to the sudden insufficiency of lack. The viewer, then, is likely to understand what Kids has to say about sex and drugs in youth culture, while ultimately missing the film's explicative and misogynistic discourse overwhelmed by the emotional intensity emphasized by the cut-to-black.
THE SUBJECTIVITY OF DOCUMENTARIES:
Is Cinematic Truth Fictional?

By Hallie Faben

What if I told you that all film is fiction? The latest action flick at the drive-in. The comedy you rented at the video store last Friday night. You'd probably balk at this obvious statement - isn't film a medium conducive to fiction? But what about the documentary you saw today in your biology class? Isn't it factual - a truthful presentation of reality as we know it? At the last turn of the century filmmaking developed as a medium that could visually represent reality in a manner similar to, but independent of, still photography. The Lumière Brothers, taking advantage of the new technology, sent their camera operators out into the field to document moving images of reality - a street corner in Paris, a baby being fed. The films were quite short and all were "unplanned" except for one, Le Jardinau et Le Petit Espagne, portraying a gardener and his young assistant. The assistant inspires the gardener's hose stopping the flow of water. The gardener, perplexed, looks into the nozzle of the hose at which point the assistant removes his foot sending a spray of water into the gardener's eye. The viewers in 1895 were surely tantalized by the naughty assistant's pranks and the crusty gardener's somewhat violent sparking of the youth in response. Because this short film is intended to be screened as a constituent part of the Lumière Brother's body of early work - mostly documentaries - it is a clear example of the fine line between two ideals - completely objective documentation and creative non-fictional re-enactments of real events.

Bearing in mind the dichotomy of objective documentation and creative non-fiction one might ask, "are the words truth and non-fiction analogous?" Films that are produced under the rubric of documentary filmmaking are considered to be non-fiction and so they are assigned the burden of truthfulness. This said, it should be noted that like any other film a documentary is not made arbitrarily, but rather to serve a specific purpose, whether to entertain or enlighten. But what impact does the inevitability of subjective camerawork, editing, and casting have on documentaries? A film's director, producer, and/or subject present their truth in a non-fictional form but the word documentary does not convey objective, universal truth. As always subjectivity in the cinema becomes an issue, and a film touted as a documentary has the most complicated relationship with subjectivity of all as it surreptitiously navigates both the author's portrayal of truth and the viewing subject's understanding of that truth.

Truth or Dare, a film about pop-star Madonna's Blonde Ambition tour, directed by Alex Kacelnik, seems anxiously tilted, as if it considers whether Madonna is a real person existing 'truthfully' or just an image dreamed by the media acting on a 'dare' to be provocative. Because most of us will never have a chance to be on tour as a top-billed musical act we can only watch with awe as Madonna struts around her dressing rooms in mostly naked stools, lounges in bed mostly naked - with her dancers, dancing mostly naked - or stage in front of throngs of people, and generally enjoys a mostly naked existence. Is this what she is really like when the cameras are not trained on her? Probably not. This said, it might do to consider Macornna's insistence on her need to "strip herself bare" and show her truth.

Truth or Dare does not necessarily label itself as an informational film about the real life of Madonna but rather as a film about the manufacturing of Madonna's star persona through public appearances. Richard Corliss of TIME Magazine, comments that "cinema verité, the genre that Truth of Dare fits into, is supposed to mean movie truth, but it's all about exhibition. The camera doesn't reveal who people are, it shows what they are trying to be." The film is shot in black and white with the exception of the dance sequences, which are filmed on color stock. The decision to use two kinds of film stock is effective as a way to convey that Madonna 'really comes alive' on stage with her colorful public persona and that off stage she has a distinct and delineated 'personal' personality which is heightened by the starkness of black and white film shot with high-key lighting. This varied use of film stocks calls attention to the many ways that films labeled as "documentary" are manipulated to more closely conform to the director, producer, or subject's creative vision of documentation. As Corliss sees it,
Madonna, the executive producer and star of the film, allows Kesha in the direction to “show us what Madonna thinks she is.” Truth or Dare, then, is non-fiction, but remains only subjectively truthful in its portrayal of Madonna.

Both licensed and limited by subjective truthfulness is it ever possible for a filmmaker to show a complete history or a whole truth in a documentary? The concept of subjectivity would suggest that this is impossible. Jazz, a recent documentary directed by Ken Burns and released on PBS confronts this question of the “whole truth.” The film has critics wondering why it is being called a comprehensive documentation of the history of America’s most original form of music. Why? It doesn’t include information on recent developments within the jazz community. One factor in the push to portray only certain aspects is surely Burn’s personal interests, but aside from that, there is the relatively recent phenomenon called synergy, a system of advertisement, product tie-ins, and general mass marketing through any means possible. Entertainment Weekly reports that Jazz’s five CD musical compilation companion, released by Sony, “debuted at No. 2 on the Billboard jazz chart.” This success on the music charts is followed by product placement of another tie-in CD at Starbucks and an agreement with the NBA that calls for music from Jazz to be played at basketball games.

With so many interests contributing to the promotion of his film perhaps Burns realized that he would have to make certain artistic and historical concessions in order to please the masses and make money. Jazz, then, like Truth or Dare, is technically non-fiction but remains subject to the vision of its authors in their attempt to produce an entertaining and informative moving document of their reality.

After discarding the pretense of objectivity and acknowledging that perhaps Madonna is not always the Madonna we see in Truth or Dare and that there may be more to jazz than Ken Burns chose to show us in Jazz how can we watch, enjoy and understand documentary films as truthful documents of reality? Wim Wenders, a German filmmaker, produces both fictional narratives and documentaries. In 1985 he released a film called Tokyo Ga – a documentary about his search for the Japan he had seen in the films of Yasujiro Ozu. In Tokyo Ga Wenders eloquently captures the strange and tenuous relationship between reality and subjectivity in the cinema – specifically documentary cinema. He states that “only what’s there can exist. What’s real? Hardly any other notion is more empty and useless when applied to the cinema. Each person knows for himself what is meant by perception of reality. Each person sees his reality with his own eyes. In short each person sees for himself, life. And each person knows for himself the extreme gap that often exists between personal experience and the depiction of that experience up on a screen.” This said, it is easier to understand that a documentary, like a fictional narrative, is just an amalgamation of many people’s interests and visions. But the question still stands – What if I told you that all films are fiction? Is the inevitability of multiple subjectivities too large of a threat to truth to allow non-fiction films to stand as true documents of reality?

Jazz was subject to Ken Burns’ subjective vision.