



ROBERT ALTMAN: AMERICAN OUTSIDER

The James Dean Story

After an inauspicious first feature (*The Delinquents*, which Altman preferred not to be screened), he co-directed this rather poetic documentary portrait of the life and character of the star and cult hero who had recently died. It has illuminating interviews, well-chosen clips (including a stunning outtake from *East of Eden*) and crisp monochrome camerawork depicting the bleak landscape of Dean's youth.

A contemporary review

Of all the strange phenomena to which the mass idolatry of the cinema has given rise, few equal the James Dean legend. Dean was killed when only one of his three films had been released; and it was not until several months after his death that the cult began to grow to the strange proportions it eventually reached. The excesses are not entirely explained by the purely romantic interest of the actor – his indefinite sexiness, his violent and youthful death – nor by his undeniable talent. It was more that Dean found a striking sympathy between his own temperament and background and the parts he was called upon to play; and through them he was able to strike, very accurately, some characteristics of his whole generation.

The James Dean Story, directed by George W. George and Robert Altman, and scripted by Stewart Stern (who wrote the screenplay for *Rebel without a Cause*) is a contribution and a stimulus to the legend. The film breaks new ground by its purely documentary approach; the way with show-business life-stories has always previously been to avoid using the least fragment of authentic material (for *The Buster Keaton Story* even some of the comedian's classic slapstick was, disastrously, re-staged). Apart from a few staged details (most of them unsuccessful) all the material in this film is documentary stills of Dean at various stages of his life, shots of the places in which he lived, interviews with the people who knew him and worked with him, a tape recording he made of a conversation with his family, a screen-test for *East of Eden*.

[The film] makes surprisingly few concessions to the fan-following. Apart from a rather embarrassing sequence dealing, apparently, with the Pier Angeli affair, and interviews with two young actresses who were somewhat fruitlessly 'dated' by Dean, there is no attempt to manufacture a 'love-interest'. Even the presentation of the rather morbid details of Dean's dreadful death is done with reasonable tact.

The film really convinces you that it is a serious attempt to probe the character of this extraordinary, talented and undoubtedly tormented young man, with his self-confessed longing for someone to love and for flamboyant success, his sense of isolation and of parental deprivation. If it rarely gets further than a lot of words, it is probably because Dean's real problems, socially and psychologically, were at once too involved and too familiar for this sort of discussion.

David Robinson, *Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1957

THE JAMES DEAN STORY

Directors: Robert Altman, George W. George
©/Production Company: George Robert Documentaries
Producers: Robert Altman, George W. George
Assistant to the Producers: Louis Lombardo
Screenplay: Stewart Stern
Still Sequences Photography: Camera Eye Pictures Inc
Contributing Photographers: Dennis Stock, Roy Schott, Frank Worth, Weegee, Edward Martin, Dick Miller, Peter Basch, Carlyle Blackwell Jr, Tom Caffrey, Jack Delano, Murray Garrett, Paul Gilliam, Globe Photos Inc, Fred Jordan, Impact Photos Inc, Lou Lombardo, Magnum Photos Inc, Russ Meyer, Don Ornitz, Paul Pospesil, Charles Robinson, Jack Stager, Phil Stern, Louis Clyde Stoumen, William Veercamp, Wide World Photos Inc, U.C.L.A. Department of Theatre Arts, California Highway Patrol
Editors: George W. George, Robert Altman *
Production Designer: Louis Clyde Stoumen
Assistant Production Designer: Abram D. Murray
Titles Design: Maurice Binder
Title Illustrations: David Stone Martin
Music: Leith Stevens
Sound Design: Bert Schoenfeld, James Nelson, Jack Kirschner
Sound: Ryder Sound Services
Sound Editor: Cathey Burrow

With:

Martin Gabel (narrator)
Marcus Winslow (Dean’s aunt)
Ortense Winslow (Dean’s uncle)
Markie Winslow (Dean’s cousin)
Mr Dean, Mrs Dean (Dean’s grandparents)
Adeline Hall (Dean’s dramatic teacher)
Bing Traster, Mr Carter, Jerry Luce, Louie De Liso, Arnie Langer, Arline Sax, Chris White, George Ross, Robert Jewett, John Kalin, Lew Bracker, Glenn Kramer, Patsy D’amore, Billy Karen, Lille Kardell (Dean’s friends)
Officer Nelson (highway patrolman)

USA 1957©
82 mins

* Uncredited

35mm print courtesy of the Robert Altman Collection at the UCLA Film & Television Archive

ROBERT ALTMAN: AMERICAN OUTSIDER

That Cold Day in the Park

Sat 29 May 17:50; Tue 8 Jun 18:00

M*A*S*H

Sat 29 May 20:45; Thu 10 Jun 18:00; Tue 22 Jun 14:30;
Mon 28 Jun 20:40

Brewster McCloud

Sun 30 May 19:00; Sun 13 Jun 16:00; Fri 18 Jun 17:50

California Split

Mon 31 May 15:45; Sun 20 Jun 15:40; Thu 24 Jun 14:30

McCabe & Mrs Miller

Mon 31 May 18:30; Wed 2 Jun 20:45; Sun 20 Jun 18:30

A Perfect Couple

Tue 1 Jun 17:50; Mon 14 Jun 17:50; Wed 16 Jun 20:45

Images

Tue 1 Jun 20:50; Sat 12 Jun 15:30; Fri 25 Jun 18:00

The Long Goodbye

Wed 2 Jun 14:30; Sat 19 Jun 17:30

Come Back to the 5 & Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean

Thu 3 Jun 17:50; Sat 19 Jun 12:30

Thieves like Us

Thu 3 Jun 20:40; Tue 8 Jun 20:30; Mon 21 Jun 17:50

Fool for Love

Sat 5 Jun 16:10; Sat 12 Jun 20:40

Buffalo Bill and the Indians, or Sitting Bull’s History Lesson

Sat 5 Jun 17:30; Sat 26 Jun 15:10

3 Women

Sat 5 Jun 20:30; Thu 10 Jun 20:30; Sat 19 Jun 15:00

Streamers

Sun 6 Jun 13:00; Mon 21 Jun 20:40

The James Dean Story

Mon 7 Jun 20:50

OC & Stiggs

Wed 9 Jun 20:40; Tue 22 Jun 18:00

A Wedding

Fri 11 Jun 20:30; Wed 23 Jun 14:30;
Sun 27 Jun 18:10

Quintet

Sat 12 Jun 18:10; Wed 30 Jun 20:45

Popeye

Sun 13 Jun 12:50; Tue 29 Jun 17:50

Health

Tue 15 Jun 20:45; Sun 27 Jun 12:15

Secret Honor

Wed 16 Jun 18:00; Sun 27 Jun 15:50

Women in the Films of Robert Altman:

An Online Panel Discussion

Thu 17 Jun 19:00

Beyond Therapy

Thu 24 Jun 17:50; Tue 29 Jun 20:45

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