



ROBERT ALTMAN: AMERICAN OUTSIDER

Women in the Films of Robert Altman: An Online Panel Discussion

We are delighted to announce that film critics Anne Billson and Hannah McGill, as well as season programmer Geoff Andrew, will join us for this discussion hosted by film programmer Rowan Woods.

Robert Altman made films which were in many ways quite different from those of other directors – not only those who'd come before him, but those (mostly younger than he) who made their mark at around the same time in the late 1960s and early '70s. This difference was not merely a matter of his innovative techniques and stylistic tropes, but of his films' content and concerns. Unlike the 'movie brats', whose main interest seems to have revolved around revitalising the traditional Hollywood genres, Altman's primary focus of attention was America itself; not just its inhabitants, but the political and social structures, the cultural values and the myths which circumscribed, constrained and shaped their lives. So it was perhaps unsurprising that Altman – whose early years had been, by his own admission, deeply influenced by the many women in his life (not only his mother and sisters, but his aunts, a cousin and the African-American maid who became his confidante and fostered his love of jazz) – should make so much space for women in his movies. There were, of course, the films centred on or populated mainly by women – *That Cold Day in the Park*, *Images*, *3 Women*, *Come Back to the 5 & Dime* *Jimmy Dean*, *Jimmy Dean* and *Dr T & The Women*; but there were also movies like *Thieves like Us*, *Nashville*, *A Wedding*, *Short Cuts*, *Kansas City*, *Cookie's Fortune*, *Gosford Park* and *A Prairie Home Companion* in which the experiences, emotions and thoughts of women lie at the heart of the narrative. Few American directors of Altman's era focused so frequently or so attentively on women characters; today's discussion will look at how he depicted them during his long and prolific career as a filmmaker.

Geoff Andrew, Programmer-at-large and curator of BFI Southbank's 'Robert Altman: American Outsider' retrospective

About the panel

Anne Billson is a novelist, film critic, photographer and international catsitter who has lived in London, Tokyo, Paris and Croydon, and who now lives in Antwerp. From 1992 to 2001 she was film critic of *The Sunday Telegraph*. She is a regular contributor to *The Guardian's* film pages and *Perspective* magazine, and a member of the programming team at Offscreen Film Festival in Brussels.

Her books include monographs on John Carpenter's *The Thing* (BFI Classics) and Tomas Alfredson's *Let the Right One In* (Auteur Publishing); *Cats on Film* ('the definitive work of feline film scholarship'); *Billson Film Database*; *Breast Man: A Conversation with Russ Meyer*. Her horror novels include *Suckers*, *Stiff Lips*, *The Ex* and *The Coming Thing*. In 1993 she was named one of Granta's 'Best Young British Novelists', and in 2015 was chosen by the BFI as one of '25 Female Film Critics Worth Celebrating'.

Hannah McGill is a freelance writer, critic and editor based in Edinburgh. She is a regular contributor to *Sight & Sound* magazine, to BBC arts and culture programmes, and to other film and television publications, most recently *Off the Back of a Truck: Unofficial Contraband for the Sopranos Fan* (Simon & Schuster). From 2006 to 2010 she was Artistic Director of the Edinburgh International Film Festival, and she has also taught Film Journalism and Film Studies at the University of Glasgow and Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh. She is the co-author and co-editor with Jonathan Barnstaple of the 2014 book *The 21st Century Novel: Notes from the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference* (Edinburgh University Press), and also writes short fiction and radio drama.

Geoff Andrew is Programmer-at-large for BFI Southbank. Formerly Head of Film Programme for BFI Southbank, he was also film editor of *Time Out* magazine for many years, and is a regular contributor to *Sight & Sound*; he is also a programme advisor to the BFI London Film Festival. His numerous books on the cinema including studies of Nicholas Ray and the American 'indie' filmmakers of the 1980s and '90s, and BFI Classics monographs on Kieslowski's *Three Colours Trilogy* and Kiarostami's *10*. He is the editor of *Sight & Sound's* 'Auteurs Series' anthologies devoted to Jean-Luc Godard and Martin Scorsese. He has contributed to many anthologies and DVD extras, lectured widely on the cinema, and served on film festival juries in Cannes, Venice, Istanbul, Turin, Krakow, Morelia, Sarajevo and elsewhere. In 2009 the French government made him a *Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*. He writes on film, music and the other arts at geoffandrew.com

Rowan Woods is a programmer and editorial consultant. She currently works for the BFI London Film Festival and the British Council, where she manages the UK's relationships with all the major international film festivals. She has previously worked in development, acquisitions, PR and as a TV and radio producer.

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Brewster McCloud Fri 18 Jun 17:50
Come Back to the 5 & Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean
Sat 19 Jun 12:30
3 Women Sat 19 Jun 15:00
The Long Goodbye Sat 19 Jun 17:30
California Split Sun 20 Jun 15:40; Thu 24 Jun 14:30
McCabe & Mrs Miller Sun 20 Jun 18:30
Thieves like Us Mon 21 Jun 17:50
Streamers Mon 21 Jun 20:40
M*A*S*H Tue 22 Jun 14:30; Mon 28 Jun 20:40
OC & Stiggs Tue 22 Jun 18:00
A Wedding Wed 23 Jun 14:30; Sun 27 Jun 18:10
Beyond Therapy Thu 24 Jun 17:50; Tue 29 Jun 20:45
Images Fri 25 Jun 18:00
Buffalo Bill and the Indians, or Sitting Bull's History Lesson
Sat 26 Jun 15:10

Health Sun 27 Jun 12:15
Secret Honor Sun 27 Jun 15:50
Popeye Tue 29 Jun 17:50
Quintet Wed 30 Jun 20:45
Vincent and Theo Sat 3 Jul 11:20; Tue 13 Jul 20:30
Prêt-à-porter Sat 3 Jul 18:05; Mon 19 Jul 17:40
The Player Sat 3 Jul 20:40; Mon 12 Jul 17:45; Wed 28 Jul 20:30
Short Cuts Sun 4 Jul 11:30; Sat 17 Jul 19:30
Kansas City Sun 4 Jul 15:20; Thu 15 Jul 17:40
Cookie's Fortune Tue 6 Jul 14:50; Wed 7 Jul 20:40; Tue 27 Jul 17:40
The Gingerbread Man Fri 9 Jul 20:40; Sat 17 Jul 17:50
Dr T & The Women Sat 10 Jul 15:00; Mon 26 Jul 20:30
Gosford Park Sun 11 Jul 15:20; Sun 18 Jul 18:20; Fri 23 Jul 14:30
The Company Tue 13 Jul 17:50; Sat 31 Jul 11:50
A Prairie Home Companion Sun 25 Jul 12:00; Sat 31 Jul 17:50

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