

PREFACE

By Aubrey Day, Editor-in-Chief, *Total Film* and *Sky Movies*

“But, of course, what I really want to do is *direct* . . .” It’s the timeless declaration of actors, writers, producers, and sundry other players from Hollywood and beyond. And why not? There are surely few more thrilling (or glamorous-sounding) vocations than being a movie director. Being the boss, in effect, of a crew of A-list heroes, stunning heroines, world-class cinematographers, cameramen, carpenters, caterers, etc., etc. (or, in the case of *Blair Witch*, half a dozen mates and a sandwich maker . . .).

As Quentin Tarantino once put it: “I get to live the life of an artist, and in the most expensive art form in the world.”

Like films themselves, film directors come in all shapes and sizes. Portly and pervy and disinclined to put a foot on set, having done all the thinking in pre-production (step forward, Alfred Hitchcock) to kinetic, chattering, totally “hands-on” auteurs who dabble in everything from the script to the soundtrack (enter jack-of-all-trades, Robert Rodriguez). But, be it dyed-in-the-wool studio men like John Ford or rule

rewriters like John Cassavetes, you’ll find every type of helmer over the following pages, alongside details of their bodies of work and insights into the themes and issues that color their creations.

Working on film magazines, my colleagues and I sometimes get to see today’s crop of moviemakers first-hand and, while budgets have rocketed, expectations increased, and risk-taking perhaps diminished, some things never seem to change. Everyone still yells “action” to kick-start proceedings (well, apart from Clint Eastwood, who tends to mumble “okay” to get the ball rolling). Most still want “just one more take” to be on the safe side (apart from David Fincher, whose “last take” tends to be followed by several dozen more). And, should you find yourself in a dingy bar at the end of a day’s shoot with the prettiest girl you’ve ever seen, sadly, telling her “I’m a film journalist” *still* won’t persuade her to give you the time of day.

Tell her you’re a film director, however, and it’s a whole different ball game . . .



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INTRODUCTION

By Steven Jay Schneider, General Editor

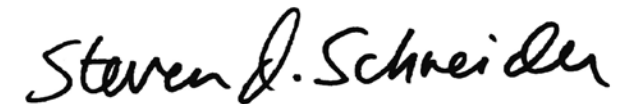
It is hard to imagine an art form more collaborative by its very nature than filmmaking. There may well be movies conceived, developed, financed, produced, written, directed, shot, edited, mixed, lit, and acted in by just one person—home movies aside—but even the idea of such a solipsistic pursuit seems diametrically opposed to the cinematic spirit, according to which a group of individuals with skills in highly specific areas (by no means limited to those listed above) are brought together—often kicking and screaming—in an effort at achieving onscreen a united creative and/or commercial vision. No small feat!

Nevertheless, and even acknowledging the death of auteur theory in contemporary film studies, we can say with confidence that movies do indeed have authors—and that there is no better candidate for the title of author of any particular cinematic text than its director. This is certainly the case if only in the weak sense that audiences find it helpful and comforting, perhaps essential, to impose a signature on what they see. And it is arguably the case in the stronger sense

that, despite input and constraints coming literally from all sides, it is the director who is usually responsible for making more of the decisions—and the more important decisions—over the course of any specific production.

With this in mind, the book you are now holding celebrates 501 of the most dynamic, original, influential, and gifted directors in history, across the entire cinematic terrain: geographic, stylistic, cultural, popular, artistic, and so on. Whether those filmmakers included herein have made many movies, some movies, or only a few, what they all share is a commitment to craft, a distinctive vision that manifests across both undeniable masterpieces and ostensible “failures,” and an uncanny ability—sometimes and in some ways a curse—to reveal aspects of themselves through(out) their work.

It is hard to understate, and almost impossible to underestimate, the importance of movies in the modern world. This book is a love letter to those men and women who have changed our lives as a result of their celluloid dreams.



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