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Albright College International Film Series Events

Reading, Pa. – Albright College's International Film Series will offer films throughout the fall. All films begin at 7:30 p.m. in Klein Lecture Hall (CFA room 235) in the Center for the Arts on the campus of Albright College. Tickets are \$3.

September 22

Jem Cohen in Person

Jem Cohen (Brooklyn) started his filmmaking life working in the studio system but realized that to make the kinds of films that embody his personal, poetic and activist vision he would have to do it on his own or in collaboration with artists/friends (most notably, poets and musicians) he admired. His works have been shown worldwide, and he has been the recipient of numerous prestigious awards and grants. Program: *Spirit* (Super 8, 7.5 min.) "Patti Smith asked if I would do a short film to accompany the release of her version of Nirvana's *Smells Like Teen Spirit...* The film is a domestic portrait of Patti and her son, Jackson. William Blake was invited in the form of a plaster cast of his death mask. Kurt Cobain (conflicted, fierce, gentle and another mother's son) was invited as an admirer of Leadbelly. Cats were invited as household saints. The film invokes New York and rural America. It is about picking up guitars and doing dirty dishes." - JC; *Long for the City* (2008, Super 8, 9:10) Patti Smith portrait; *For Walter Benjamin* (2008, 16mm, 10:00) with Patti Smith; *Blessed are the Dreams of Men* (2006, 16mm, 9:15); *One Bright Day* (2009, DV, 17 min.) "While out shooting for a different project altogether, I encountered two sleeping men on a Manhattan street. A short time later, I was standing in front of Pennsylvania Train Station with the camera on a tripod, when one of the men suddenly reappeared. He stepped in front of my camera and began to speak, about his path in the U.S. military, from Panama to Afghanistan to Iraq, about his life. I decided to limit the piece to what I shot in that area in those few hours, with one key addition: the text from a classic children's rhyme." - JC; *Night Scene New York* (2009, 16mm, 9.5 min).

September 29

The Fallen Idol (1948, 95 min.) by Carol Reed

Written by Graham Greene from his short story "The Basement Room" (the writer's personal favorite of all his adaptations), this film marked Greene's first collaboration with director

- more -

Reed. "A superior psychological drama [to *The Third Man*]... As the eponymous idol, Ralph Richardson is quietly splendid. His buttoned-up butler is an amiable fabulist, roguish yet decent, understated but passionate. The yearning with which he regards the radiant Morgan fuels the movie." – (J. Hoberman, *The Village Voice*) "One of the most brilliant demonstrations of point of view filmmaking... reminds us of the glories of the black-and white cinema at its peak." – Andrew Sarris, *The New York Observer*

October 6

Black Narcissus (1947, 100 min.) by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger

The show will begin with a short pre-screen introduction by film and literature scholar John Incledon, Ph.D., professor of Spanish, John Incledon, who will share with the audience some background on psychoanalysis and film. No matter the critical perspective, most considerations of this film eventually arrive at the film's art direction and revolutionary use of color. "In *Black Narcissus*, color was used to amp up the exotic nature and 'otherness' of the Indian landscape, architecture and costume. Yet color was also used in a new way, becoming "the emotion of the picture" (Martin Scorsese). Used as a thematic device, color became a way of externalizing the nuns' secret thoughts, their repressed emotions and desires. Secondly, the sense of place achieved through a combination of phenomenal art direction, highly expressive score and sound design is so enchanting and palpable, that the old palace and the mountains almost become characters themselves. So convincing were the studio sets, plaster mountains and matte paintings that Powell received many letters from people who had traveled or lived in India claiming to know the exact locations of certain scenes." - Karli Lukas, *Senses of Cinema*

October 13

It's Alive (1974, 91 min.) by Larry Cohen

"The screen's first monster baby seemed a bit shocking even after *The Exorcist*. It was Larry Cohen's biggest hit and benefits from Bernard Herrmann's score and Rick Baker's horrible fanged mutant infant. The baby doesn't waste any time slaughtering the doctors and nurses in the delivery room. Later it attacks a milk truck." - Michael Weldon, *The Psychotronic Encyclopedia of Film*

October 27

Silent Light (2007, 145 min.) by Carlos Reygadas

"The admirably unpredictable Reygadas [has made] the world's first talking picture in the medieval German plautdietsch dialect... *Silent Light* is a behavioral experiment—set in Northern Mexico's Mennonite community and cast almost entirely with Mennonite non-actors. Everything is monumentally deliberate, from the human interactions to the stolidly bucolic representation of Mennonite domesticity to the extraordinary, wide-screen landscape shots that bracket the action. Oscillating between the sacred and profane, this elemental tale of love and betrayal is part ethnographic documentary and part 16th-century psychodrama with an obvious debt to Carl Theodor Dreyer." - J. Hoberman, (Top 10 pick for 2008)

November 3

Two Lane Blacktop (1971, 102 min.) by Monte Hellman

Calling this movie (depicting a cross-country race between a '55 Chevy and a '70 GTO) "bressonian," as some have done, may be a bit of a stretch; it is, however, in the race as the ultimate (i.e. purest) road movie. James Taylor (a not so sweet Baby James) is The Driver in a role that appears "...beyond acting... a deadpan stoned zen state of non-performance." - (A.O. Scott, *NY Times*). Dennis Wilson (of Beach Boy drummer fame) rides shotgun, and in the backseat, Laurie Bird is The Girl. Along with the cars, the passing American landscape and some stunning wide-screen cinematography, the real star of the film is Warren Oates as GTO, an alcoholic, has-been loser who might or might not have won the race but may win the viewer's heart.

November 10

Kuchar Films of the 1960s: Mike Kuchar in Person

Mike Kuchar (San Francisco) will screen some of his most recent mini-dv productions and will introduce the last of the now legendary early Kuchar brothers' 8mm films: *Tootsies in Autumn* (1963, 15 min., 8mm-to-16mm blow-up, sound on CD.) Like George's later, better known *Hold me while I'm Naked* (1965), a film-within-a-film, the caustic tale of a deranged director's cruelty to an actress past her prime; *Lust for Ecstasy: A Drama of Obsessions in the Language of Sensationalism* (1963, 52 min, 8mm-to-16mm blow-up, sound on CD). Featuring Donna Kerness, Bob Cowan, Mike Kuchar, Cynthia Mailman, George Kuchar and Larry Leibowitz. "...I wrote many of the pungent scenes on the D train, and when I arrived on the set I ripped them up and let my emotional whims make chopped meat out of the performances and the story... Yes, [this film] is my subconscious, my own naked lusts that sweep across the screen in 8mm and color with full fidelity sound." - G.K.; *Lovers of Eternity* (1964, 36 min., 8mm-to-16mm blow-up, sound on CD). The last 8mm Kuchar production is an all-too-tragic tale in which we find underground icon Jack Smith, experimental filmmaker Dov Lederberg and one giant cockroach stealing the show from one another in a creepy parable about Downtown excess. (The early films of George and Mike Kuchar were preserved by Anthology Film Archives with support from the National Film Preservation Foundation.)

November 17

Orphée (1947, 95 min.) by Jean Cocteau

In this, the second film of Cocteau's Orpheus trilogy, one that sets the famous Greek myth in what was then contemporary Paris, altering it in ways that reflect the personal core of his vision, the filmmaker (also an accomplished artist, poet, novelist and playwright) employs his unique blend of French classical and surrealist/modernist style. Cocteau described the ideal viewer of his films as one "open to my dream and agree[ing] to be put to sleep and to dream it with me (accepting the logic by which dreams operate, which is implacable, although it is not governed by our logic). I am only talking about the mechanics, since Orphée is not at all a dream in itself: through a wealth of detail similar to that which we find in dreams, it summarizes my way of living and my conception of life." In the same text he comments upon that part of the mise-en-scene, which comes most immediately to mind when one

- more -

Albright College International Film Series / Page 4 of 5

thinks of a Cocteau film: "Mirrors: we watch ourselves grow old in mirrors. They bring us closer to death." - Jean Cocteau, *The Art of Cinema*

November 24

Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One (1968, 70 min.) by William Greaves

"In 1968, there were at best a handful of African-American directors working in television and no African-Americans directing feature films. For an African-American director to make a feature film, let alone one as experimental as a film by Warhol or Godard, could not have been imagined if Greaves hadn't gone out and done it... Onscreen, the director (Greaves) outlines the responsibilities of the crew. The film is being shot by three 16mm cameras, each equipped with a zoom lens and a magazine that holds eleven minutes of film, and all three synced, in the clumsy technology of the day, to reel-to-reel sound recorders. One cameraman, Greaves instructs, is to focus solely on the actors playing the scene; another cameraman is to film the crew that is shooting the scene; and the third is to include the actors and the crew, as well as onlookers and anything interesting that's happening in the park. (Sometimes Greaves himself wields a fourth camera)... Thanks to Greaves' lively, innovative editing (involving some of the most surprising contrapuntal double and triple split-screen images in the history of movies), the film has the polyrhythmic elegance of its Miles Davis score. More than mere background music, the score is the abstract model for the film's improvisations on a theme and also an expressive element in its own right." - Amy Taubin

December 1

The Last Mistress (2007, 104 min.) by Catharine Breillat

"The first time you see the courtesan called La Vellini [Asia Argento], she's stretched out on a divan and wearing a smile, or perhaps a scowl. It's hard to tell with this woman, whose lips restlessly tremble and twist with rage and pleasure. She's dressed like the supine subject of Goya's painting "The Clothed Maja," which, like its sister image, "The Nude Maja," was condemned as indecent by the Spanish Inquisition. To look at the figure on screen writhing like a pampered cat is to understand why those paintings made some observers uneasy.... Like all the unruly women who populate Ms. Breillat's films, La Vellini rubs hard against the grain. She's the fly in the ointment, the stick in the eye, and it's her howls, her spit and her fury that keep everything off kilter, disturbing the peace, its keepers and the narrative flow. Ms. Breillat reserves her most adoring close-ups for Mr. Aattou, a delicate beauty with feminine pillowy lips. (She loves her boys.) But she never denies Ms. Argento, who hurtles into her scenes, at times literally, gobbling up a lot of space. She's playing a woman whom others deride as a creature — as if she were a beast. In truth, La Vellini is a woman of pleasure, and Ms. Breillat makes certain her cup runneth over, furiously." - Manhola Dargis, *New York Times*

December 8

Vertigo (1958, 128 min.) by Alfred Hitchcock

"Vertigo seems to me of all of Hitchcock's films the one nearest to perfection. Indeed its profundity is inseparable from the perfection of form: it is a perfect organism." - Robin Wood, *Hitchcock's Films Revisited*. We might add that it is also (taking a cue from the film's

- more -

Albright College International Film Series / Page 5 of 5

earlier Keatsian working title, “darkling I listen”) one of Hitchcock’s most personal and complex works, one embodying and critiquing the allure and beauty of romantic leibestod, (of Keats’ “easeful Death”) while simultaneously, on a more detached level, offering us what is arguably the greatest work ever created about what transpires between director, actor and audience in the history of narrative cinema.

Thursday, December 10

Cinema Club Student Show

Recent works in various media by Albright College film and video students; makers will be present to introduce their work.

For more information call 610-921-7713.

Founded in 1856, Albright College is a nationally ranked, private college with a rigorous liberal arts curriculum with an interdisciplinary focus. The College’s hallmarks are connecting fields of learning, collaborative teaching and learning, and a flexible curriculum that allows students to create an individualized education. Two-thirds of students graduate with dual/individualized majors in more than 200 different combinations. Albright enrolls about 1,625 undergraduates in traditional programs, another 500 adult students in accelerated degree programs, and 100 students in the master’s program in education. Albright College is located in Reading, Pennsylvania, about 60 miles west of Philadelphia.

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