



Conversations with the Great Moviemakers of Hollywood's Golden Age: At the American Film Institute

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The first book to bring together these interviews of master moviemakers from the American Film Institute's renowned seminars—a series that has been in existence for almost forty years, since the founding of the Institute itself.

Here are the legendary directors, producers, cinematographers and writers—the great pioneers, the great artists—whose work led the way in the early days of moviemaking and still survives from what was the twentieth century's art form. The book is edited—with commentaries—by George Stevens, Jr., founder of the American Film Institute and the AFI Center for Advanced Film Studies' Harold Lloyd Master Seminar series.

Here talking about their work, their art—picture making in general—are directors from King Vidor, Howard Hawks and Fritz Lang (“I learned only from bad films”) to William Wyler, George Stevens and David Lean.

Here, too, is Hal Wallis, one of Hollywood's great motion picture producers; legendary cinematographers Stanley Cortez, who shot, among other pictures, *The Magnificent Ambersons*, *Since You Went Away* and *Shock Corridor* and George Folsey, who was the cameraman on more than 150 pictures, from *Animal Crackers* and *Marie Antoinette* to *Meet Me in St. Louis* and *Adam's Rib*; and the equally celebrated James Wong Howe.

Here is the screenwriter Ray Bradbury, who wrote the script for John Huston's *Moby Dick*, *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Illustrated Man*, and the admired Ernest Lehman, who wrote the screenplays for *Sabrina*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and *North by Northwest* (“One day Hitchcock said, ‘I've always wanted to do a chase across the face of Mount Rushmore.’”).

And here, too, are Ingmar Bergman and Federico Fellini (“Making a movie is a mathematical operation. It's absolutely impossible to improvise”).

These conversations gathered together—and published for the first time—are full of wisdom, movie history and ideas about picture making, about working with actors, about how to tell a story in words and movement.

A sample of what the moviemakers have to teach us:

Elia Kazan, on translating a play to the screen: “With *A Streetcar Named Desire* we worked hard to open it up and then went back to the play because we'd lost all the compression. In the play, these people were trapped in a room with each other. As the story progressed I took out little flats, and the set got smaller and smaller.”

Ingmar Bergman on writing: “For half a year I had a picture inside my head of three women walking around in a red room with white clothes. I couldn't understand why these damned women were there. I tried to throw it away . . . find out what they said to each other because they whispered. It came out that they were watching another woman dying. Then the screenplay started—but it took about a year. The script always starts with a picture . . . ”

Jean Renoir on actors: “The truth is, if you discourage an actor you may never find him again. An actor is an animal, extremely fragile. You get a little expression, it is not exactly what you wanted, but it’s alive. It’s something human.”

And Hitchcock—on Hitchcock: “Give [the audience] pleasure, the same pleasure they have when they wake up from a nightmare.”

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