

Chapter 1 : Robert A. Altman - Wikipedia

In , Robert Altman had been approached by a studio executive with an original screenplay called The Great Southern Amusement Company, a musical set in the world of country music.

Or no, not quite. Gwen Welles is called over to fill in the proper glow of mystified delight. I saw Nashville a month before it opened locally. I had scarcely any notion of what I was going to see. Even after my first look, I avoided reading most reviews and articles dealing with the film, although the knowledge that they were piling up in unprecedented numbers began to irritate and slightly intimidate me. Inevitably, reports reached me, bits and pieces, quotable quotes bannered by the ads and bounced off from by some of the few writers I did read. The present discussion is not excepted and the as-yet-nonviewer is urged to peel away after the three asterisksâ€”which, be it noted, are not red, white, and blue. What are mysteries for? You read the solution and put the nightlight out and go to sleep and forget the whole thing. We had some ground rules, you gave me some truth. It begins with the Paramount mountain, anachronistically black-and-white and streaked with scratches. Immediately this is blasted offscreen by a welter of color and sound. Snatches of the songs cut across the spiel and the title NASHVILLE itself, reiterated at the announcement of every second or third name, splashes diagonally overall in various unspeakably garish tints. Meanwhile, we snickerâ€”in order to head off or disguise unseemly gulping for airâ€”and privately vow to meet the challenge of a super-crammed visual and aural experience. Pile it on, Altman; catch me sleeping, huh! And so it is that, the gauntlet thrown, the rules of the contest apparently declared, we sweep the opening image of the film proper with radar. A full frame it is, too: A red-white-and-blue sound wagon heaves into view and a new voice, of one Hal Phillip Walker, Presidential candidate of the Replacement Party, launches into some recorded? Oh, right, there were political posters on that garage door too. As many signs as there are signs on any normal street. And it is a street, after all, a chunk of available actuality beyond the comprehensive reconstruction of the most assiduous art director. The camera eye, led by the movement of the Walker wagon and then just as naturally reoriented to accept the compositional imperative of a perspective-dominating thoroughfare, might take its next lead from one of those highway route signs pointing us ahead or around the corner. The Bank , which seems to have a huge tear in it until we realize the hood of a streetlamp is inadvertently darkening up the foreground. OK, no tear in the billboard; but The Bank surely matters, for candidate Walker is talking politics in the gut economic terms to whose validity that whole streetful of traffic testifies: My daddy lost a leg in France, I have his medal still. My brother served with Patton; I saw action in Algiers. The opening lateral track of McCabe and Mrs. Miller seems only accidentally to discover the bedewed figure of the first of its title characters bearing through the blue-green of the drizzly Northwest landscape, then all but invisibly zoom-locks onto him and respectfully cranes to acknowledge his monumental arrival in the nascent community of Presbyterian Church. In Thieves like Us a similar strategy twines the Neanderthal progression of Bowie and Chicamaw right into the fabric of land and history, while the first moment of California Split finds its two stars passing each other like schleps in the night during a tracking shot whose casual intricacy assures us that somebody indeed is in charge here. The beginning of Nashville incorporates the formal suggestibility of all these previous steppings-off and keeps right on going, developing an expansiveness, inclusiveness, and incisiveness all its own. Every shot, as it comes on, advances us to a new plateau of possible reference, a plateau that is explored and sometimes climbed away from as the shot proceeds. As the best of directors have always done, defining, redefining, and enlarging our notion of what is classical about the classical cinema, Altman simultaneously gives us something new to watch and a new way of watching it. Where did five-and-a-quarter hours of footage go? Surely a lot of it is stacked on top of the minutes we now have. We overhear the proprietor, Trout, haranguing somebody: Neither is Trout, though someone might have had a camera on him when he spoke his piece. He sits at a table, beaming his gaze and an imbecilic grin on everything around him; a copy of Varietyâ€”ever-present showbizâ€”lies before him. Hal Phillip Walker looks exactly like Connie White! Life goes on on many levels in Nashville, often many levels at the same instant of viewing and listening time; and people are defined in the film, exist in terms of these different levels. The righthand edge of the frame arrives

at the recording booth and the identification is confirmed: But a couple hours later in film time, several days in narrative time, Sueleen will establish such a claim on his imagination that in retrospect this non-encounterâ€”non- in both conventional visual terms and behavioral termsâ€”shapes up as an act of funky destiny. Altman makes us conscious of the formal levels in his film. We recognize the separateness of these levels even as they are overlaid to create a reality-in-depth of dazzling complexity. Often we are aware that a room, a highway, a populous frame is vibrant with the potential for event, while those who are part of the scene proceed vaguely about their business with little or no sense of this. Did the grinning Tricycle Man also hear what Trout was saying? Some of the loveliest moments in the film are, dramaturgically speaking, very small ones in which we are made certain that, if only temporarily, a character has been privileged to share our perception of this density. Sueleen, the waitress and would-be singer; an arrestingly dopey blonde Barbara Harris who styles herself Albuquerque and has come to town with the same ambition; and Star Bert Remsen , her ironically named husband who wants no truck with such foolishness and who, consequently, is unpleasantly surprised to find that the wife has disappeared to pursue her dream. Searching for her, he arrives at the Den and sits sipping beer alongside Sueleen, her very counterpart. And a few moments later amid, of course, a great deal of other activity , as Sueleen is taking her turn at the microphone, in walks Albuquerque to strike up an exploratory conversation with a musician. Cut, belatedly, to Star, staring into infinity, who suddenly snaps upright and whirls about. It is, again, a small thing, but it is, again, lovelyâ€”and bespeaks a cockeyed sense of faith on the part of Robert Altman. The levels can operate deceptively. Band music blaring, we tilt down from the sign to the equally screen-filling sprawl of the airport; a party of dignitaries has just left the building and is striding self-importantly our way. But the promise of Nashvilleâ€”and certainly of Nashvilleâ€”is that any of them might. Now, by extension, the entire oeuvre is invoked to certify stardom. There are levels beyond those of sound and sight, reference and inference, and Altman plays it the Pirandellian way on all of them. Scott Glenn plays Pfc. Keith Carradine and Cristina Raines, who played lovers in a little-seen picture called Hex, repeat the relationship here. We even leap across media for a droll cast-list clue: Merle Kilgoreâ€”Trout no wonder Kurt Vonnegut flipped over the movie! And throughout the film stalks a character with camera and tape recorder who claims to be making a documentary on Nashville. Next door some less finicky performers are doing their stuff, so he takes her there. Beyond the glass of the control booth a troupe of black gospel singers is working up a number. Someone among them seems a bit out of place, but we have only a glimpse of her before she is obscured by Opal Chaplin , who fusses interminably before settling into her seat. Lily Tomlin in a black gospel troupeâ€”sounds pretty precious. The singing resumes and she throws herself into the performance with the exaggerated enthusiasm of a honkie determined to acquire rhythm. The camera zooms in slowly. The womanâ€”Lily Tomlin or Linnea Reese? Good faith is firmly established in Nashville and is rarely in jeopardy thereafter. One of the disappointing things about Thieves like Us was that, for all its limpid look of a time and place and race of people reconstituted rather than gauzily remembered, it was so small and self-contained. The Panavision format has rarely been treated to such dynamically enclosable material as it encounters here. Indeed, the Tricycle Man, unencumbered by characterological baggage beyond an air of benign eccentricity and a ready visibility, virtually constitutes a visual and connective principle within the film, and frequently serves as a kinesthetic bridge between, say, last night and came the dawn. A scene ends and, whether Tricycle played a part in it or not, we accept his presence at the beginning of the next. And that eye will be aesthetically satisfied. The zoom, as Altman mostly employs it, alters perception; camera movement adjusts the world. Both spatially and ethically, Altman tends to leave the world where and as he found itâ€”except insofar as the act of discovery constitutes a transformation. The way Altman builds his movies, this sense of discovery can be sharedâ€”or a direct parallel to it experiencedâ€”by the viewer. Once this strategy has been established and the viewer has either accepted it or resolved to sit back and grouse, the most mundane gesture has a way of seeming marvelous. Roland Barthes might write an essay explicating the delicious rightness of Ned Beatty committing the gravity of his form and physiognomy to waiting for the water to come to a boil so he can hardcook an egg; I only know that at the moment that image appeared onscreenâ€”and stayed there long enough to assure me that Altman was as delighted with it as Iâ€”I felt as if the entire film up to that point had prepared me for a moment of cosmic

beauty, a moment that somehow served to deepen the character of Delbert Reese beyond any regionally satirical gesticulations the shrewd actor in the role might and subsequently did indulge in. I got no time. Bigness, as attained in Nashville, is inseparable from a species of stylistic vitality. When the starlets of the Tennessee Twirling Institute present their greetings to Nashville idol Barbara Jean after her recovery from a near-fatal fire, the screen is overwhelmed with red-white-and-blue jingoism, prancing sexism, and canny commercialism—but it is overwhelming, and the energy of the sequence does not inhere entirely in the spirit of awestruck mockery one senses just offscreen. Yet this sort of bigness, this sort of vitality inextricably involves the threat, perhaps even the promise, of violence. Those martial charmers move on Barbara Jean as if she were a military objective. Did screenwriter Joan Tewkesbury have to make either place up? Violence is arguably a part of Nashville from that first bit of sensory overload that comprises the main title. The first moment of behavioral splendor in the film occurs when Haven, momentarily basking in the respectfully self-effacing support of the chorus, slowly sweeps the studio—his studio at that moment—with a stern-jawed, beady stare, as though personally Remembering the Maine from his private gun turret. Potency and futility are utterly confused in his injunction to the hapless and disgusted piano player Frog: Comedy and violence underwrite one another throughout the opening movements of the film: And it is a multivalenced kind of violence that Altman catches in a moment like the actual disembarkation of Barbara Jean from her private plane. We watch in longshot as she is led toward the gate and ultimately the focal center of the festivities. Meanwhile, a gigantic airliner American Airlines enters and passes through the frame; it remains in the background during its entire progress through the shot, yet its size and the roar on the soundtrack quite dominate the field. And of course it also, back in immediate terms now, does satisfying violence to entrenched notions of what is customarily permitted to occur within a single take—which variety of stylistic violence is highly liberating. The return of Barbara Jean Ronee Blakley frame grab from DVD Beaver We experience a kindred, maybe even more complex feeling of violence done to safely discrete levels a few moments later. Earlier we have been referred to him by way of the monitor on the TV color camera, but now we look directly at him as though the television screen and the Panavision format had become one. The two reflexive gestures of noncommunication coexist peacefully for a moment. WENO drones confidentially on. It is in the very fibre of Nashville that the membrane separating the performer and the audience, who-gets-to-be-on and who-gets-to-watch, is permeable in the extreme. Haven Hamilton trades backstage pleasantries with black singing star Tommy Brown, mutters a caustic follow-up for his own and, incidentally, our delectation, then strides onstage and launches into song, all in one unbroken take; a moment later, the camera tracking his stroll along the Opry stage only gradually shifts its focus from the audience to him, and many of the people in that audience are engaged in walking up and down, snapping pictures, looking at or for someone other than the official star; in the foreground of the shot, musicians exchange perversely un-overheard comments, and occasionally we cut to an irreverent John Triplette who, onstage behind Haven, offers snide cracks about his height or lack of same and costuming.

Chapter 2 : A Prairie Home Companion () - IMDb

In , Robert Altman received a lifetime-achievement award from the Academy Of Motion Picture Arts And Sciences, and when he took the stage at the Oscar ceremony, the audience members braced themselves, waiting for the often outspoken and curmudgeonly director to take a few shots at the Hollywood system or at George W. Bush.

Robert Altman In , Apple introduced its third generation iPod and with it, a series of silhouetted dancers. During the thirty-second ad, not a single white earbud falls out of place. The performance begins with Nik Owens stepping out from the audience, plugging in a pair of headphones now wireless, of course , pressing play, and jamming out. And for the next fifty minutes, Mills and five other dancers take movement cues from a playlist that shuffles between classical, rock, and diaphanous electronic music from composers Daniel Wohl and Angelica Negron. Throughout, they untangle cables and pass headphones amongst themselves in a series of sonic coronations. Mute the music, and you have a meditation on what happens when six bodies share a confined space. This experiment suits her dancers well; they can flex with ease, then freeze in place. They slip between everyday gestures and abstract, guttural movements. They are shapeshifters, their personalities as static and wispy as the shadowy figures in an Apple ad. Moments in which the dancers mime spelunking, for instance, or striding down a sidewalk, seem aimless and flat. Whenever the dancers are forced to acknowledge their human forms, they deflate. The duo encircles Morley, coaxing him into swinging his hips and rolling his torso. How will his body react? Mills folds the answer into a sort of reductive, moral tale. Morley succumbs and slinks to the floor alongside his peers, the last dregs of a good time pumped out of them with every breath. As Owens and Mei Yamanaka approach the group, they act out disgust and disappointment—hands on their hips, they reprimand the supine dancers. This tableau resembles a portrait of parents who follow a trail of empty bottles to the basement, where their drowsy high schoolers wave a limp hello. And with it, a moment that had the potential to be charged and electric becomes didactic. Tiffany Mills Company Blue Room. Robert Altman This moment skirts drama, but it captures a central aspect of the performance: The Flea Theater is sparse, and the space between the performers and audiences is one cord-length away. The dancers jump into the performance from the front row of the audience, and the stage doors double as patron entrances. Despite this intimacy, the dancers are fully consumed with their relationships to one another: And though their choreography rarely syncs up, their disparate movements are on the same wavelength. Each time they steal a glance at one another or reach for an imagined object is a reminder of just how much they have spun out of an empty space. Blue Room tends to its boundaries, too. Before the house lights dim, the dancers lay blue architectural tape along the perimeter of the stage. In the second half of the performance, they repeatedly rearrange these lines. They use tape to bisect the dance floor. They create gaps in the blue square through which the dancers spill out. They stick tape on the wall and a dancer hovers underneath it, at once looking like a child under a growth chart and a man at a dead end. Mills and her dancers deftly tinker with sound and space; they lean on one another for a moment, then turn their backs to the other bodies in the room. There is dynamism throughout the performance, but for all of its permutations, Blue Room lacks a driving force. Why the music, the tape, the grasping for the literal? What was once novel about the silhouette Apple ads is now, nearly twenty years later, nostalgic: And for all that Mills and her dancers do to enliven the stage, Blue Room feels, at times, just as transient.

Chapter 3 : Robert Altman's Popeye might be Williams's best film

Robert Bernard Altman (/ ˈ ɛ ˈ ɛ ː I t m ˈ ɛ ɪ m n /; February 20, - November 20,) was an American film director, screenwriter, and producer. A five-time nominee of the Academy Award for Best Director and an enduring figure from the New Hollywood era, Altman was considered a "maverick" in making films with a highly naturalistic but stylized and satirical aesthetic, unlike most Hollywood films.

Cinema Robin Williams reacts to how Popeye was received. It was NOT a boxoffice failure. It was made for 20 million and grossed well over 60 million. I will argue it is his best, hands down. Like Williams and its director, the film paid a price for breaking away from formula. Popeye is fucking art, so there, I said it. Popeye fought Cinema and lost the first few battles, but I think it won the war. Bear with me as I show how this unique film stands up against Cinema. His stars either loved or despised him. Robin Williams almost quit Popeye several times because of conflicts with Altman. He faced mutiny on perhaps his best known and commercially successful film, MASH. Elliot Gould and Donald Sutherland lobbied to have him fired. They opposed his freestyle approach to acting, allowing the actor to take responsibility for the development of their character. They were well-meaning people who wanted him to get what he deserved, which was a big commercial hit. But when it came down to the art or the money, he was with the art. It appears that Altman cared little for financial success and wanted art to trump commercial appeal. He was an anomaly in Hollywood. His characters were imperfect, their dialogue overlapped in dizzying rapid fire volleys. This is why Popeye succeeds. Williams was burning through stand up midways for some time before he was unleashed as a guest star on the hit 70s sitcom, Happy Days. Fellow stand up comedians patterned his shotgun style. It was a telling moment between the old comic guard and this new, wild upstart. Carson was out of his depth. Williams reducing Carson to insignificance in less than five minutes on the Tonight Show. The rainbow suspenders, sweat and pure adrenaline that defined Williams in stand up comedy. Hollywood never knew what to do with Williams. Mork and Mindy was a paycheckâ€”a mediocre sitcom that existed only to showcase Williams. The sitcom was a safe delivery system for American viewers who could experience Williams comfortably and avoid his wild, drug-fueled stand up routines that made must see cable TV. Williams was X-rated for anyone over Doubtfire, were bland, safe, commercial pieces and consequently, the kind that Williams railed against. These films were pay checks and what the actor is most known for. It was no secret he was saddened at the prospect of a Mrs. Doubtfire sequel before his death, having no respect for the material that gave him one of his biggest hits. Both needed commercial success, yet resented it. Both wanted the ability to explore the artistry of film and push the medium in their own ways. They found themselves pushing back against the industry and audience expectation. When it came time to make his first film and breaking the confines of a dull sitcom, Williams chose Popeye. Dustin Hoffman was vetted for the role of the King Features comic sailor from Thimble Theater and eventually passed. Williams came to the attention of producer of Evans after Mork and Mindy shot to the top of the TV heap. Altman went to work immediately against the studio system. What would or should Popeye be? A musical was a daring move, but emboldened by the success of Annie, Paramount and Disney rolled the dice. Here is where Popeye emerges as a true piece of art, and despite its poor critical and popular reception, round house punched Cinema in the face. Spielberg found success with insisting Jaws be shot on the open Atlantic, far from the pools, tanks and executives of Universal Studios. Altman was about to take this a step further. Fringe cartoonist, playwright and screenwriter , Jules Feiffer was selected to write the script. Mainstream success hit Feiffer when his unproduced play, Carnal Knowledge was adapted to screen with Mike Nichols directing. The film opens with an odd assortment of townsfolk breaking into a dour anthem the soundtrack and songs to be discussed. The characters seep from the woodwork, between the buildings and into view. The first five minutes show that Popeye was not going to be the Disney type family musical. The opening is not some show-stopping tune. Is it World War II? Is it the s? Is it modern day and a town that time forgot? Watch the opening and see the film release its characters. They filter in, dotting the streets and layering into the set. We are seeing something special, and I knew this while watching it in the theater back in Watch the performer chasing his hat in the old slapstick routine, the mayor and his

wife all regal and strutting pompously while Altman staple, Paul Dooley plays Wimpy in hamburger bliss. This is movie magic. The set of Sweethaven, built from the ground up for the film. Altman ordered the construction of an entire town for this film. Under the art design of Wolf Kroeger, the town of Sweethaven was a collection of odd angles, sagging rooftops and drab buildings clinging to the Maltese cliffside. This was not a set—it was a living, breathing town and it is still used today as a popular tourist attraction called Popeye Village. Sweethaven was assembled with imported lumber—each building handcrafted for its own unique look. This is true love and passion for filmmaking. Today we can imagine how this would go. Most of the town would be a CGI rendering, and existing structures on a lot. However, this film would not be made today. The clip above shows how Altman paints his canvass. Not a word is spoken by Williams, but his face and body language speak volumes. His crusty image, swollen forearms and Spinach addiction made it almost impossible for a real-life translation. It would never measure up. We feel for him. He possesses a quiet dignity and humility. I was in eighth grade when I saw this film. It was customary to see a big film with a group of friends. I was the only one out of six kids who liked it. I listened to people grumbling as the full house emptied. When I declared my enjoyment of the movie, I might as well had been beaten down. Yet, for all the complaints, the audience seemed quite entertained while the movies was playing. When those big boots clomped all horse-like down the steps and the camera raised up to reveal the actress—there was a collective gasp from the sold out house. Then silence as they realized they were looking at Olive Oyl. I never heard such exasperation from an audience again until when James Cameron revealed the majesty of the Queen Alien in Aliens and then over 20 years later when the T-Rex busted out of its jail in the original Jurassic Park. Duvall was a living special effect and that gasp said only one thing: This was a time before comic books hijacked cinema. Were they expecting a more consumer film? The detractors were right about one thing: The biggest film of the Christmas season was a fat turkey and they had to think fast to ensure they broke even. Altman allows the relationship between Olive and Popeye to truly take shape. The dinner table scene where Popeye is subjected to a dialogue smorgasbord is classic Altman. Characters talk over one another. Geezil professes his hatred for Wimpy, Wimpy dispenses marriage advice to Olive, Olive bitches over glasses, knives and people picking on her fiancée, Bluto. There are at least four different conversations going full force, and in the middle of it all Popeye never gets a bite to eat. Williams hardly utters a word, his face and body doing all of the heavy lifting, and the final result is just beautiful. Williams and his ability to ad lib was harnessed properly. Popeye was known for his under the breath mutterings. You have to work for these nuggets of genius. And the only way to do this, is to surrender yourself to the film. Duvall was robbed of an Oscar for her channeling of Olive.

Chapter 4 : The Shuffle | The Brooklyn Rail

Once the theater's seats were filled, at approximately p.m., the lights in the theater dimmed, and the words "A Robert Altman Film" flashed on the screen.

His major contribution is the ensemble film, particularly his masterpiece, Nashville. Following a collection of assorted characters in the country music capitol, Nashville is about a country seemingly on the verge of a nervous breakdown, and its cast, featuring standout performances from Lily Tomlin, Henry Gibson, and Keith Carradine, delivers moments of both dramatic and comedic brilliance. In addition to acting in the film, Blakley, already an established recording artist, contributed seven songs to it. I was listening to it all day today. Oh, that is so nice of you. Well, good, I just watched the documentary over the weekend and it seemed to me like they ignored the fact that I contributed six songs to the movie. Did you notice that? Yeah, I did notice that! I was surprised because it seemed like for the making of Nashville they were going to try to explain how it was done and who did what and everything and then they left that all out. I thought it was odd. I watched the documentary today, and you say that you got involved because you knew [soundtrack producer] Richard Baskin and he was involved in the film. I had met him with a boyfriend of mine at the time, and Richard turned out to be a fan of my first album, which was on Elektra Records, and he had me come in and meet Altman as a composer, a few months before we actually did the movie. No, I was originally a writer, a composer. Did you have acting experience before? Well, I had acted all through school days, including high school, junior high school and college. And I had done summer stock and was a member of Equity, but then I kind of gave up acting to write and do music. And then I got pulled back in. I was into electronic music, and I was a producer of soundtracks and I had my album I had done. Susan Anspach was brought in to play Barbara Jean. Did you have a formal audition? No, they just decided they wanted me to do it. Your self-titled album is kind a folk-country album. Did you have that kind of Nashville country music background or were you more of a New York-based musician at that point? I was a music major at Stanford. Then I went to join a rock band called California. We recorded the title song for a movie called April Fools. And then, from there, I got a record deal at Elektra and in fact, a couple of the songs from Welcome Home, Soldier Boys went onto the Elektra album and into Nashville. Altman liked to have his actors improvise a lot and bring their own stories to their characters. In terms of the Barbara Jean character, how much of that did you really craft yourself with Robert Altman? And how much of that was on the page already? Well, [I did] most of it myself. She only had one scene, one speaking scene, in the script that I got. That was the hospital scene. In the script there was a scene where Barbara Jean arrives at the airport. So these little scenes existed but there was nothing in them. You know, he would welcome ideas. If you did something and he liked it, that was great. It was included in the television version, but nobody knows where that is anymore. And then when I lay in the hospital bed and talked about a dream I had of a little daughter and all this kind of stuff. But everything else I did was used. No, she was originally written to be based on, I believe, Lynn Anderson. Lynn Anderson was a blonde and Susan Anspach was supposed to play her. She was in Five Easy Pieces, a great actress. Yes, we hung out a lot together. You said recently that you remained friends with Gwen Welles and Karen Black. Gwen and I shared a car. We rented a Ford together and we had a very good time together. I just adored her. I got to know her and became better and better friends with her over the years. I sang at her grave site recently. How long were you in Nashville during the filming? I arrived early and helped Altman; I took him to see Ry Cooder, and I asked him to be in the movie, but he said no. Did you experience any reactions from that scene after the movie came out? You see it as more of an homage to the country music scene. Yes, I can see why people see the ironic or the edge. But every individual personality has that, too. Life is like that. And these iconic figures might have some characteristics that can be broadly stroked or finely stroked. What I find is that the Nashville community of today has a love for the movie. When you recorded your album, did you see yourself in a particular way or have a label that was put on you by people in the industry? Were you a country singer or were you a folk singer? People are always trying to put labels on me. I was a Los Angeles person, and I was a writer. It was unusual for [a singer] to be a writer back then. I had never been to Nashville. I was not at all a country

musician. I had some country roots, of course, but they were cowboy roots, they were pioneer roots, Northwestern. Do you feel like Barbara Jean and Nashville are what most people associate most definitively with you and your career? Yes, it was a definitive moment because it thrust me into the international spotlight for a moment, and it was just a remarkable experience. Oddly enough, people your age, guess what they remember me for? But as far as me showing what I can do as an artist and a project that used my abilities to the fullest, Nashville probably did that. I was allowed to write, I was allowed to sing, I was allowed to act. That magnificent cast of actors and just glorious work that they all did so many of them. Many of them are gone, and that is just so hard to take. Life is bittersweet in that way. In some ways, cinema provides that for us:

Chapter 5 : Robert Altman Archives - Parallax View

And as Robert Altman's swirling Americana tapestry of fame, politics, apathy, and twanging country tunes, Nashville takes place in the frenzied days leading up to a political rally for a Replacement Party candidate and was born of a post-Watergate mentality.

Or no, not quite. Gwen Welles is called over to fill in the proper glow of mystified delight. I saw Nashville a month before it opened locally. I had scarcely any notion of what I was going to see. Even after my first look, I avoided reading most reviews and articles dealing with the film, although the knowledge that they were piling up in unprecedented numbers began to irritate and slightly intimidate me. Inevitably, reports reached me, bits and pieces, quotable quotes bannered by the ads and bounced off from by some of the few writers I did read. The present discussion is not excepted and the as-yet-nonviewer is urged to peel away after the three asterisksâ€”which, be it noted, are not red, white, and blue. What are mysteries for? You read the solution and put the nightlight out and go to sleep and forget the whole thing. We had some ground rules, you gave me some truth. It begins with the Paramount mountain, anachronistically black-and-white and streaked with scratches. Immediately this is blasted offscreen by a welter of color and sound. Snatches of the songs cut across the spiel and the title NASHVILLE itself, reiterated at the announcement of every second or third name, splashes diagonally overall in various unspeakably garish tints. Meanwhile, we snickerâ€”in order to head off or disguise unseemly gulping for airâ€”and privately vow to meet the challenge of a super-crammed visual and aural experience. Pile it on, Altman; catch me sleeping, huh! And so it is that, the gauntlet thrown, the rules of the contest apparently declared, we sweep the opening image of the film proper with radar. A full frame it is, too: A red-white-and-blue sound wagon heaves into view and a new voice, of one Hal Phillip Walker, Presidential candidate of the Replacement Party, launches into some recorded? Oh, right, there were political posters on that garage door too. As many signs as there are signs on any normal street. And it is a street, after all, a chunk of available actuality beyond the comprehensive reconstruction of the most assiduous art director. The camera eye, led by the movement of the Walker wagon and then just as naturally reoriented to accept the compositional imperative of a perspective-dominating thoroughfare, might take its next lead from one of those highway route signs pointing us ahead or around the corner. The Bank, which seems to have a huge tear in it until we realize the hood of a streetlamp is inadvertently darkening up the foreground. OK, no tear in the billboard; but The Bank surely matters, for candidate Walker is talking politics in the gut economic terms to whose validity that whole streetful of traffic testifies: My daddy lost a leg in France, I have his medal still. My brother served with Patton; I saw action in Algiers. The opening lateral track of McCabe and Mrs. Miller seems only accidentally to discover the bedewed figure of the first of its title characters blurring through the blue-green of the drizzly Northwest landscape, then all but invisibly zoom-locks onto him and respectfully cranes to acknowledge his monumental arrival in the nascent community of Presbyterian Church. In Thieves like Us a similar strategy twines the Neanderthal progression of Bowie and Chicamaw right into the fabric of land and history, while the first moment of California Split finds its two stars passing each other like schleps in the night during a tracking shot whose casual intricacy assures us that somebody indeed is in charge here. The beginning of Nashville incorporates the formal suggestibility of all these previous steppings-off and keeps right on going, developing an expansiveness, inclusiveness, and incisiveness all its own. Every shot, as it comes on, advances us to a new plateau of possible reference, a plateau that is explored and sometimes climbed away from as the shot proceeds. As the best of directors have always done, defining, redefining, and enlarging our notion of what is classical about the classical cinema, Altman simultaneously gives us something new to watch and a new way of watching it. Where did five-and-a-quarter hours of footage go? Surely a lot of it is stacked on top of the minutes we now have. We overhear the proprietor, Trout, haranguing somebody: Neither is Trout, though someone might have had a camera on him when he spoke his piece. He sits at a table, beaming his gaze and an imbecilic grin on everything around him; a copy of Varietyâ€”ever-present showbizâ€”lies before him. Hal Phillip Walker looks exactly like Connie White! Life goes on on many levels in Nashville, often many levels at the same instant of viewing and listening time; and

people are defined in the film, exist in terms of these different levels. The righthand edge of the frame arrives at the recording booth and the identification is confirmed: But a couple hours later in film time, several days in narrative time, Sueleen will establish such a claim on his imagination that in retrospect this non-encounterâ€”non- in both conventional visual terms and behavioral termsâ€”shapes up as an act of funky destiny. Altman makes us conscious of the formal levels in his film. We recognize the separateness of these levels even as they are overlaid to create a reality-in-depth of dazzling complexity. Often we are aware that a room, a highway, a populous frame is vibrant with the potential for event, while those who are part of the scene proceed vaguely about their business with little or no sense of this. Did the grinning Tricycle Man also hear what Trout was saying? Some of the loveliest moments in the film are, dramaturgically speaking, very small ones in which we are made certain that, if only temporarily, a character has been privileged to share our perception of this density. Sueleen, the waitress and would-be singer; an arrestingly dopey blonde Barbara Harris who styles herself Albuquerque and has come to town with the same ambition; and Star Bert Remsen , her ironically named husband who wants no truck with such foolishness and who, consequently, is unpleasantly surprised to find that the wife has disappeared to pursue her dream. Searching for her, he arrives at the Den and sits sipping beer alongside Sueleen, her very counterpart. And a few moments later amid, of course, a great deal of other activity , as Sueleen is taking her turn at the microphone, in walks Albuquerque to strike up an exploratory conversation with a musician. Cut, belatedly, to Star, staring into infinity, who suddenly snaps upright and whirls about. It is, again, a small thing, but it is, again, lovelyâ€”and bespeaks a cockeyed sense of faith on the part of Robert Altman. The levels can operate deceptively. Band music blaring, we tilt down from the sign to the equally screen-filling sprawl of the airport; a party of dignitaries has just left the building and is striding self-importantly our way. But the promise of Nashvilleâ€”and certainly of Nashvilleâ€”is that any of them might. Now, by extension, the entire oeuvre is invoked to certify stardom. There are levels beyond those of sound and sight, reference and inference, and Altman plays it the Pirandellian way on all of them. Scott Glenn plays Pfc. Keith Carradine and Cristina Raines, who played lovers in a little-seen picture called Hex, repeat the relationship here. We even leap across media for a droll cast-list clue: Merle Kilgoreâ€”Trout no wonder Kurt Vonnegut flipped over the movie! And throughout the film stalks a character with camera and tape recorder who claims to be making a documentary on Nashville. Next door some less finicky performers are doing their stuff, so he takes her there. Beyond the glass of the control booth a troupe of black gospel singers is working up a number. Someone among them seems a bit out of place, but we have only a glimpse of her before she is obscured by Opal Chaplin , who fusses interminably before settling into her seat. Lily Tomlin in a black gospel troupeâ€”sounds pretty precious. The singing resumes and she throws herself into the performance with the exaggerated enthusiasm of a honkie determined to acquire rhythm. The camera zooms in slowly. The womanâ€”Lily Tomlin or Linnea Reese? Good faith is firmly established in Nashville and is rarely in jeopardy thereafter. One of the disappointing things about Thieves like Us was that, for all its limpid look of a time and place and race of people reconstituted rather than gauzily remembered, it was so small and self-contained. The Panavision format has rarely been treated to such dynamically enclosable material as it encounters here. Indeed, the Tricycle Man, unencumbered by characterological baggage beyond an air of benign eccentricity and a ready visibility, virtually constitutes a visual and connective principle within the film, and frequently serves as a kinesthetic bridge between, say, last night and came the dawn. A scene ends and, whether Tricycle played a part in it or not, we accept his presence at the beginning of the next. And that eye will be aesthetically satisfied. The zoom, as Altman mostly employs it, alters perception; camera movement adjusts the world. Both spatially and ethically, Altman tends to leave the world where and as he found itâ€”except insofar as the act of discovery constitutes a transformation. The way Altman builds his movies, this sense of discovery can be sharedâ€”or a direct parallel to it experiencedâ€”by the viewer. Once this strategy has been established and the viewer has either accepted it or resolved to sit back and grouse, the most mundane gesture has a way of seeming marvelous. Roland Barthes might write an essay explicating the delicious rightness of Ned Beatty committing the gravity of his form and physiognomy to waiting for the water to come to a boil so he can hardcook an egg; I only know that at the moment that image appeared onscreenâ€”and stayed there long enough to assure me that Altman was as

delighted with it as I felt as if the entire film up to that point had prepared me for a moment of cosmic beauty, a moment that somehow served to deepen the character of Delbert Reese beyond any regionally satirical gesticulations the shrewd actor in the role might and subsequently did indulge in. I got no time. Bigness, as attained in Nashville, is inseparable from a species of stylistic vitality. When the starlets of the Tennessee Twirling Institute present their greetings to Nashville idol Barbara Jean after her recovery from a near-fatal fire, the screen is overwhelmed with red-white-and-blue jingoism, prancing sexism, and canny commercialism—but it is overwhelming, and the energy of the sequence does not inhere entirely in the spirit of awestruck mockery one senses just offscreen. Yet this sort of bigness, this sort of vitality inextricably involves the threat, perhaps even the promise, of violence. Those martial charmers move on Barbara Jean as if she were a military objective. Did screenwriter Joan Tewkesbury have to make either place up? Violence is arguably a part of Nashville from that first bit of sensory overload that comprises the main title. The first moment of behavioral splendor in the film occurs when Haven, momentarily basking in the respectfully self-effacing support of the chorus, slowly sweeps the studio—his studio at that moment—with a stern-jawed, beady stare, as though personally Remembering the Maine from his private gun turret. Potency and futility are utterly confused in his injunction to the hapless and disgusted piano player Frog: Comedy and violence underwrite one another throughout the opening movements of the film: And it is a multivalenced kind of violence that Altman catches in a moment like the actual disembarkation of Barbara Jean from her private plane. We watch in longshot as she is led toward the gate and ultimately the focal center of the festivities. Meanwhile, a gigantic airliner American Airlines enters and passes through the frame; it remains in the background during its entire progress through the shot, yet its size and the roar on the soundtrack quite dominate the field. And of course it also, back in immediate terms now, does satisfying violence to entrenched notions of what is customarily permitted to occur within a single take—which variety of stylistic violence is highly liberating. The return of Barbara Jean Ronee Blakley frame grab from DVD Beaver We experience a kindred, maybe even more complex feeling of violence done to safely discrete levels a few moments later. Earlier we have been referred to him by way of the monitor on the TV color camera, but now we look directly at him as though the television screen and the Panavision format had become one. The two reflexive gestures of noncommunication coexist peacefully for a moment. WENO drones confidentially on. It is in the very fibre of Nashville that the membrane separating the performer and the audience, who-gets-to-be-on and who-gets-to-watch, is permeable in the extreme. Haven Hamilton trades backstage pleasantries with black singing star Tommy Brown, mutters a caustic follow-up for his own and, incidentally, our delectation, then strides onstage and launches into song, all in one unbroken take; a moment later, the camera tracking his stroll along the Opry stage only gradually shifts its focus from the audience to him, and many of the people in that audience are engaged in walking up and down, snapping pictures, looking at or for someone other than the official star; in the foreground of the shot, musicians exchange perversely un-overheard comments, and occasionally we cut to an irreverent John Triplette who, onstage behind Haven, offers snide cracks about his height or lack of same and costuming.

Chapter 6 : Robert Altman's Jazz ' Remembrances of Kansas City Swing () - Rotten Tomatoes

Find A Perfect Couple (, dir. Robert Altman) at calendrierdelascience.com Movies & TV, home of thousands of titles on DVD and Blu-ray.

He worked in publicity for a company that had invented a tattooing machine to identify dogs. He entered filmmaking on a whim, selling a script to RKO for the picture *Bodyguard*, which he co-wrote with George W. Having enjoyed little success, in he returned to Kansas City, where he accepted a job as a director and writer of industrial films for the Calvin Company. With its success, Altman moved from Kansas City to California for the last time. After just two episodes, Altman resigned due to differences with a producer, but this exposure enabled him to forge a successful TV career. Over the next decade Altman worked prolifically in television and almost exclusively in series dramas directing multiple episodes of *Whirlybirds*, *The Millionaire*, *U. Through this early work on industrial films and TV series, Altman experimented with narrative technique and developed his characteristic use of overlapping dialogue. He also learned to work quickly and efficiently on a limited budget. During his TV period, though frequently fired for refusing to conform to network mandates, as well as insisting on expressing political subtexts and antiwar sentiments during the Vietnam years, Altman always was able to gain assignments. In , the producers decided to expand "Once Upon a Savage Night", one of his episodes of Kraft Suspense Theatre , for theatrical release under the name, Nightmare in Chicago. He did not direct another film until That Cold Day in the Park , which was a critical and box-office disaster. Mainstream success[edit] In , Altman was offered the script for MASH , an adaptation of a little-known Korean War -era novel satirizing life in the armed services; more than a dozen other filmmakers had passed on it. Altman had been hesitant to take the production, and the shoot was so tumultuous that Elliott Gould and Donald Sutherland tried to have Altman fired over his unorthodox filming methods. Nevertheless, MASH was widely hailed as an immediate classic upon its release. Miller , a Revisionist Western in which the mordant songs of Leonard Cohen underscore a gritty vision of the American frontier; The Long Goodbye , a controversial adaptation of the Raymond Chandler novel scripted by Leigh Brackett now ranked as a seminal influence on the neo-noir subgenre; Thieves Like Us , an adaptation of the Edward Anderson novel previously filmed by Nicholas Ray as They Live by Night ; California Split , a gambling comedy-drama; and Nashville , which had a strong political theme set against the world of country music. Although his films were often met with divisive notices, many of the prominent film critics of the era including Pauline Kael , Vincent Canby and Roger Ebert remained steadfastly loyal to his oeuvre throughout the decade. Audiences took some time to appreciate his films, and he did not want to have to satisfy studio officials. Later career and renaissance[edit] Altman with Lillian Gish and Lily Tomlin at Nashville awards ceremony in In , he directed the musical film Popeye. It was soon beleaguered by heavy drug and alcohol use among most of the cast and crew, including the director; Altman reportedly clashed with Evans, Williams who threatened to leave the film and songwriter Harry Nilsson who departed midway through the shoot, leaving Van Dyke Parks to finish the orchestrations. The departure of longtime Altman partisan Alan Ladd, Jr. Unable to secure major financing in the post-New Hollywood blockbuster era because of his mercurial reputation and the particularly tumultuous events surrounding the production of Popeye, Altman began to "direct literate dramatic properties on shoestring budgets for stage, home video, television, and limited theatrical release," including the acclaimed *Secret Honor* and *Come Back to the Five and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean* , a critically antipodean adaptation of a play that Altman had directed on Broadway. Shortly thereafter, he returned to film *Secret Honor* with students. Still, widespread popularity with audiences continued to elude him. Altman then directed *Short Cuts* , an ambitious adaptation of several short stories by Raymond Carver , which portrayed the lives of various citizens of Los Angeles over the course of several days. In , Altman directed *Kansas City* , expressing his love of s jazz through a complicated kidnapping story. Altman was still developing new projects up until his death, including a film based on *Hands on a Hard Body: The director then quipped that perhaps the Academy had acted prematurely in recognizing the body of his work, as he felt like he might have four more decades of life ahead of him. Family[edit] Altman was married three times. His**

first wife was LaVonne Elmer. They were married from to , and had a daughter, Christine. His second wife was Lotus Corelli. They were married from to , and had two sons, Michael and Stephen. His son Steven is a production designer who often worked with his father. His third wife was Kathryn Reed. They were married from until his death in . They had two sons, Robert and Matthew. Altman became the stepfather to Konni Reed when he married Kathryn. He moved his family and business headquarters to New York City, but eventually moved back to Malibu, where he lived until his death. Altman despised the phenomenally popular television series MASH which followed his popular film, citing it as being the antithesis of what his movie was about, and citing its anti-war messages as being "racist. Bush were elected, but joked that he had meant Paris, Texas when it came to pass. He noted that "the state would be better off if he Bush is out of it. He was also an atheist and an anti-war activist. According to his production company in New York, Sandcastle 5 Productions, he died of complications from leukemia. Legacy[edit] During a celebration tribute to Altman a few months after his death, he was described as a "passionate filmmaker" and auteur who rejected convention, creating what director Alan Rudolph called an "Altmanesque" style of films. He created a unique and wonderful world on his sets,. Where your imagination was encouraged, nurtured, laughed at, embraced and Altman-ized. Altman had filmed Secret Honor at the university, as well as directed several operas there. In , a feature-length documentary film, Altman , was released, which looks at his life and work with film clips and interviews. He understood the creative limits imposed by the television genre, and now set out to direct and write films which would express his personal visions about American society and Hollywood. His films would later be described as "auteuristic attacks" and "idiosyncratic variations" of traditional films, typically using subtle comedy or satire as a way of expressing his observations. However, he still felt that his independence as a filmmaker did him little harm overall: He admits, "I have a bad reputation with writers, developed over the years: Ring Lardner was very pissed off with me," for not following his script. With them, his independence sometimes extended to his choice of actors, often going against consensus. Cher , for instance, credits him for launching her career with both the stage play and film, Come Back to the Five and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean. Everyone told him not to cast me. Nobody would give me a break. I am convinced that Bob was the only one who was brave enough to do it. You know, all this talk about Bob being this kind of irascible, difficult kind of person? Well, he was never that way with an actor or with a creative person that I saw. He saved all that for the money people. They were well-meaning people who wanted him to get what he deserved, which was a big commercial hit. But when it came down to the art or the money, he was with the art. He hung up on me. Bob was as stubborn and arrogant as I was at the time, but the sad thing is that I cheated myself out of working with someone I loved so much, someone who made acting both fun and easy and who trusted his actors. Stars would line up to work for nothing for Bob Altman. Funny in a critical wayâ€”of what the world is and the world we live in. They were both geniuses in their way. They alter your experience of reality. They have their world and they have their humor. That humor is so rare. He especially loved many voices, sometimes arguing, sometimes agreeing, ideally overlapping, a cocktail party or a street scene captured as he experienced it. I felt it really strongly. I want to do that kind of work. Miller is a satire on Westerns; [46] author Matthew Kennedy states that Nashville is a "brilliant satire of America immediately prior to the Bicentennial"; [47] A Wedding is a satire on American marriage rituals and hypocrisy; [48] Altman himself said that The Player was "a very mild satire" about the Hollywood film industry, and Vincent Canby agreed, stating that "as a satire, The Player tickles. Altman blames the box office failure of The Long Goodbye , a detective story, on the erroneous marketing of the film as a thriller: When the picture opened, it was a big, big flop. No wonder the fucking picture is failing. He therefore tended to sketch out only a basic plot for the film, referring to the screenplay as a "blueprint" for action. Performers enjoy working with Altman in part because "he provides them with the freedom to develop their characters and often alter the script through improvisation and collaboration," notes Derry. Richard Baskin says that "Bob was rather extraordinary in his way of letting people do what they did. He trusted you to do what you did and therefore you would kill for him. He said, "Have you brought your scripts? He said, "Well, throw them away. It was like being onstage with a full house every second. Nevertheless, Altman preferred to use improvisation as a tool for helping his actors develop their character. When I cast a film, most of my creative work is done. I have to be there to turn the switch on and give them

encouragement as a father figure, but they do all the work. I have to give them confidence and see that they have a certain amount of protection so they can be creative. I let them do what they became actors for in the first place: That was truly an astonishing thing," she said. He was so genuinely mischievous and so damn funny. That they were that joyous an experience. That was the difference with Bob Altman. He loved actors and wanted to see acting. I equate this work more with painting than with theater or literature. I have to be thrilled if I expect the audience to be thrilled. I try to encourage actors not to take turns. To deal with conversation as conversation.

Chapter 7 : *Table 19*™ Review: Anna Kendrick in a Wedding Comedy *à* Variety

Credit Credit Robert Altman for The New York Times. I kicked back almost every Friday by featuring a video performance by a band I liked. But I let the practice slide for a variety of reasons.

Chapter 8 : Joachim Roenneberg - Notable deaths in - Pictures - CBS News

Robert A. Altman is the current Chairman and CEO of ZeniMax Media, parent company of publisher Bethesda Softworks, calendrierdelascience.com also serves on the Advisory Board of The George Washington University Law School.

Chapter 9 : Robert A. Altman | Revolv

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