

of staggering complexity and length (such as *Out One*, originally about twelve hours long!). By the mid-1980s, Truffaut had died, Chabrol's films were often unseen outside France, and Rivette's output had become esoteric. Rohmer retained international attention with his ironic tales of love and self-deception among the upper-middle class [*Pauline at the Beach* (1982) and *Full Moon over Paris* (1984)]. Godard continued to attract notoriety with such films as *Passion* (1981) and his controversial retelling of the Old and New Testaments, *Hail Mary* (1983). In 1990 he released an elegant, enigmatic film ironically entitled *Nouvelle vague*—which bears little relationship to the original tendency. In retrospect, the New Wave not only offered several original and valuable films but also demonstrated that renewal in the film industry could come from talented, aggressive young people inspired in large part by the sheer love of cinema.

## THE NEW HOLLYWOOD AND INDEPENDENT FILMMAKING

Midway through the 1960s, the Hollywood industry seemed very healthy, with blockbusters like *The Sound of Music* (1965) and *Dr. Zhivago* (1965) yielding huge profits. But soon problems arose. Expensive studio pictures failed miserably. Television networks, which had paid high prices for broadcasting films after theatrical release, stopped bidding for pictures. American movie attendance flattened out at around one billion tickets per year (a figure that, despite home video, has remained fairly constant ever since). By 1969 Hollywood companies were losing over \$200 million annually.

Producers fought back. One strategy was to produce counterculture-flavored films aimed at young people. The most popular and influential were Dennis Hopper's low-budget *Easy Rider* (1969) and Robert Altman's *M\*A\*S\*H* (1970). By and large, however, other "youthpix" about campus revolution and unorthodox lifestyles proved not to be big box-office attractions. What did help lift the industry's fortunes was a series of immense hits made by young directors. The most successful were Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* (1972); William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973); Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977); John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978); and George Lucas's *American Graffiti* (1973), *Star Wars* (1977), and *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980). In addition, films by Brian De Palma (*Obsession*, 1976) and Martin Scorsese (*Taxi Driver*, 1976; *Raging Bull*, 1980) attracted critical praise.

These and other directors came to be known as the "movie brats." Instead of coming up through the ranks of the studio system, most had gone to film schools. At New York University, the University of Southern California, and the University of California at Los Angeles, they had not only mastered the mechanics of production but also learned about film aesthetics and history. Unlike earlier Hollywood directors, the movie brats often had an encyclopedic knowledge of great movies and directors. Even those who did not attend film school were admirers of the classical Hollywood tradition.

As had been the case with the French New Wave, these movie-mad directors produced some personal, highly self-conscious films. The movie brats worked in traditional genres, but they also tried to give them an autobiographical coloring. Thus *American Graffiti* was not only a teenage musical but also Lucas's reflection on growing up in California in the 1960s. Coppola imbued both *Godfather* films with a vivacious and melancholy sense of the intense bonds within the Italian-

American family. Paul Schrader poured his own obsessions with violence and sexuality into his scripts for *Taxi Driver* and *Raging Bull* and his own directed films, such as *Hard Core* (1979).

Since movies had been a major part of the young directors' lives, many films of the New Hollywood were based upon the old Hollywood. De Palma's films borrowed heavily from Hitchcock, with *Dressed to Kill* (1980) an overt redoing of *Psycho*. Peter Bogdanovich's *What's Up, Doc?* (1972) was an updating of screwball comedy, with particular reference to Howard Hawks's *Bringing Up Baby*. Carpenter's *Assault on Precinct 13* (1976) derived partly from Hawks's *Rio Bravo*; the credits list as editor one "John T. Chance," the character played by John Wayne in Hawks's Western.

At the same time, many directors admired the European tradition, with Scorsese drawn to the visual splendor of Luchino Visconti and British director Michael Powell. Some directors dreamed of making complex "art films" in the European mold. The most well-known effort is probably Coppola's *The Conversation* (1974), a mystery-story reworking of Antonioni's *Blow-Up* (1966) that plays ambiguously between reality and hallucination (p. 315). Robert Altman and Woody Allen, in quite different ways, displayed creative attitudes fed by European cinema: Altman's *Three Women* (1977) and Allen's *Interiors* (1978), for example, owed a good deal to Ingmar Bergman's work.

Altman and Allen were of a slightly older generation, but the "movie brats" proved the most continuously successful directors of the era. Lucas and Spielberg became powerful producers, working together on the Indiana Jones series and personifying Hollywood's new generation. Coppola failed to sustain his own studio, but he remained an important director. Scorsese's reputation rose steadily: By the end of the 1980s he was the most critically acclaimed living American filmmaker.

During the 1980s fresh talents won recognition, creating a "New New Hollywood." Many of the biggest hits of the decade continued to come from Lucas and Spielberg, but other successful directors were somewhat younger: James Cameron (*The Terminator*, 1984; *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, 1991), Tim Burton (*Beetlejuice*, 1988; *Batman*, 1989), and Robert Zemeckis (*Back to the Future*, 1985; *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, 1988). Many of the successful films of the 1990s came from directors from both these successive waves of the Hollywood renaissance: Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993), De Palma's *Mission: Impossible* (1996), and Lucas's *The Phantom Empire* (1999), as well as Zemeckis's *Forrest Gump* (1994), Cameron's *Titanic* (1997), and Burton's *Sleepy Hollow* (1999).

The resurgence of mainstream film was also fed by filmmakers from outside Hollywood. Many directors came from abroad—from Britain (Tony and Ridley Scott), Australia (Peter Weir, Fred Schepisi), Germany (Wolfgang Peterson), the Netherlands (Paul Verhoeven), or Finland (Rennie Harlin). During the 1980s and 1990s, more women filmmakers also became commercially successful, such as Amy Heckerling (*Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, 1982; *Look Who's Talking*, 1990), Martha Coolidge (*Valley Girl*, 1983; *Rambling Rose*, 1991), and Penelope Spheeris (*Wayne's World*, 1992).

Several directors from independent film managed to shift into the mainstream, making medium-budget pictures with widely known stars. David Lynch moved from the midnight movie *Eraserhead* (1978) to the cult classic *Blue Velvet* (1986), while Canadian David Cronenberg, a specialist in low-budget horror films such as *Shivers* (1975) won wider recognition with *The Dead Zone* (1983) and *The Fly* (1986). The "New New Hollywood" also absorbed some minority directors from independent film. Wayne Wang was the most successful Asian-American (*Chan Is Missing*, 1982; *Smoke*, 1995). Spike Lee (*She's Gotta Have It*, 1986; *Malcolm X*,

"I love the idea of not being an independent filmmaker. I've liked working within the system. And I've admired a lot of the older directors who were sort of 'directors for hire.' Like Victor Fleming was in a contract all those years to Metro and Selznick and Mayer . . . he made *Captains Courageous*. And you know, his most famous films: *Wizard of Oz* and *Gone with the Wind*."

Steven Spielberg, producer/director

1992) led to the way for young African-American directors such as Reginald Hudlin (*House Party*, 1990), John Singleton (*Boyz n The Hood*, 1991), Mario van Peebles (*New Jack City*, 1991), and Allen and Albert Hughes (*Menace II Society*, 1993).

Still other directors remained independent and more or less marginal to the studios. In *Stranger than Paradise* (1984) and *Down by Law* (1986), Jim Jarmusch presented quirky, decentered narratives peopled by drifting losers. Allison Anders treated the contemporary experiences of disaffected young women, either in small towns (*Gas Food Lodging*, 1992) or city centers (*Mi Vida Loca*, 1994). Leslie Harris's *Just Another Girl on the IRT* (1994; p. 31, Fig. 1.32) likewise focused on the problems of urban women of color.

Stylistically, no single coherent film movement emerged during the 1970s and 1980s. The most mainstream of the young directors continued the tradition of classical American cinema. Continuity editing remained the norm, with clear signals for time shifts and new plot developments. Some directors embellished Hollywood's traditional storytelling strategies with new or revived visual techniques. In films from *Jaws* onward, Spielberg used deep-focus techniques reminiscent of *Citizen Kane*. Lucas developed motion-control techniques for filming miniatures for *Star Wars*, and his firm Industrial Light and Magic has become the leader in new special-effects technology. With the aid of ILM, Zemeckis astutely exploited digital imaging for *Forrest Gump* (p. 114, Fig. 5.6). Spielberg and Lucas have also led the move toward digital sound and high-quality theater reproduction technology.

Less well-funded New Hollywood filmmaking cultivated more flamboyant styles. Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*, *Raging Bull*, and *The Age of Innocence* (1993) use camera movement and slow-motion to extend the emotional impact of a scene. De Palma has been an even more outrageous stylist; his films flaunt long takes, startling overhead compositions, and split-screen devices. Coppola has experimented with fast-motion black-and-white in *Rumble Fish* (1983), phone conversations handled in the foreground and background of a single shot (*Tucker*, 1988), and old-fashioned special effects to lend a period mood to *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1993).

Several of the newest entrants into Hollywood have enriched mainstream conventions of genre, narrative, and style. We have already seen one example of this strategy in our discussion of Spike Lee's *Do The Right Thing* (Chapter 11, pp. 361–366). Another intriguing example is Wayne Wang's *The Joy Luck Club* (1993). Set among Chinese-American families, the film concentrates on four emigrant mothers and their four assimilated daughters. In presenting the women's lives the film adheres to narrative principles that recall *Citizen Kane*. At a party, the three surviving mothers recall their lives before coming to America, and a lengthy flashback is devoted to each one. Alongside each mother's flashback, however, the plot sets flashbacks tracing the experiences of each woman's daughter in the United States. The result is a rich set of dramatic and thematic parallels. Sometimes the mother/daughter juxtapositions create sharp contrasts; at other moments, they blend together to emphasize commonalities across generations (Fig. 12.35). The women's voice-over commentaries always orient the viewer to the shifts in narration while still enabling Wang and his screenwriters to treat the flashback convention in ways which intensify the emotional effect.

An even more experimental attitude pervades the work of other independent directors. The brothers Joel and Ethan Coen treat each film as a pretext for exploring cinema's expressive resources. In *Raising Arizona* (1987), high-speed tracking shots cooperate with distorting wide-angle close-ups to create comic-book exaggerations (Fig. 12.36). A somewhat similar approach is taken in Gregg Araki's



Figure 12.35 *The Joy Luck Club*.



Figure 12.36 Wide-angle exaggeration in *Raising Arizona*.

gay road picture *The Living End* (1992). In films such as *Trust* (1991), Hal Hartley mutes a melodramatic plot through slow pacing, brooding close-ups, and dynamic foreground/background compositions (Fig. 12.37).

Independent directors have also experimented with narrative construction. The Coens' *Barton Fink* (1991) passes unnoticeably from a satiric portrait of 1930s Hollywood into a hallucinatory fantasy. Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* (1993) and *Pulp Fiction* (1994) juggle story and plot time in ways that recall the complex flashbacks of the 1940s. Unlike the flashbacks in *The Joy Luck Club*, moreover, the switches are not motivated as characters' memories; the audience is forced to puzzle out the purposes served by the time shifts. In *Daughters of the Dust* (1991) Julie Dash incorporates the rich Gullah dialect and explores a complex time scheme that seeks to fuse present and future. In one scene, optical effects give the characters a glimpse of a child who is as yet unborn.

So while in the 1980s and 1990s, younger studio directors adapted classical conventions to modern tastes, an energetic independent film tradition began pushing the envelope. By the end of the 1990s, the two trends were merging in surprising ways. As independent films began to win larger audiences, major studios eagerly acquired distribution companies like Miramax and October Films. Much media journalism fostered the impression that Hollywood was becoming "subverted" by independent filmmaking, but in fact more and more the major studios controlled audiences' access to "independent" productions. The Sundance Film Festival, founded as a forum for the off-Hollywood scene, came to be treated as a talent market by the studios, which often bought films in order to line up the filmmaker for more mainstream projects. Thus after Keven Smith found success with *Clerks* (1994), he directed *Mallrats* (1995), a tame twentysomething comedy for Universal. Robert Rodriguez's similarly microbudgeted *El Mariachi* (1992) proved a hit, so he was hired to remake it as an all-out action picture starring Antonio Banderas (*Desperado*, 1995).

Yet sometimes the big-budget films of independent filmmakers conveyed a distinctly experimental attitude. Kevin Smith used the star-filled *Dogma* (1999) to question Catholic doctrine. David O. Russell, who had worked his way into the system with off-kilter comedies (*Spanking the Monkey*, 1994; *Flirting with Disaster*, 1996), made *Three Kings* (1999), an action picture which criticized Gulf War policies and which reveled in a flamboyant, digital-era style. Following in the path of *Pulp Fiction*, studio pictures began to play more boldly with narrative form. A genre thriller like *The Sixth Sense* (1999) encouraged viewers to see it twice in order to detect how the narration had misled them. Stories might be told through complicated flashbacks (Steven Soderbergh's *Out of Sight*, 1998, and *The Limey*, 1999, Fig. 12.38) or through different characters' perspectives, with the plot showing key story events several times (Doug Liman's *Go*, 1999). A film might reveal that one character was the imaginary creation of another (David Fincher's *Fight Club*, 1999) or that a person could crawl into another's brain (Spike Jonze's *Being John Malkovich*, 1999) or that the external world was merely an illusion produced by sophisticated software (the Wachowski brothers' *The Matrix*, 1999). In their willingness to experiment with ambiguous and teasing modes of narration, many American studio films began rivaling their overseas counterparts like *Breaking the Waves* (1996), *Sliding Doors* (1998), and *Run Lola Run* (1998).

At the end of the century, many of the most thrilling Hollywood films were being created by a robust new generation, born in the 1960s and 1970s and brought up on videotape, videogames, and the Internet. Like their predecessors, these directors were reshaping the formal and stylistic conventions of the classical cinema while also making their innovations accessible to a broad audience.



Figure 12.37 A high-angle framing in depth from *Trust*.

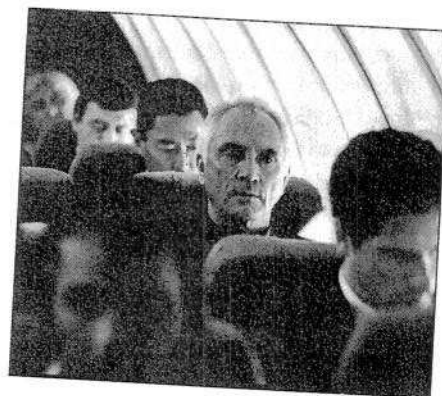


Figure 12.38 An ambiguous image which recurs throughout *The Limey*: It may be construed either as a flashback to the protagonist's trip to the United States or as a flashforward to his trip back to Britain, presented in the final scene.