

Greatest Cinema: Part I

Index reviewer highlights some of the best films from the first half of the 20th century

BY KEN DUSOLD
Assistant Editor

During 1895, Auguste Lumière and his brother, Louis, filmed employees leaving their factory in Lyon, France. The film was 46 seconds. While not the first motion picture produced, the Lumière Brothers' foray into movies reverberated loudly enough to influence a network of pioneers who would come to inspire more than a century of American filmmakers.

Because it's March, there are few productions worth rushing out to see in theaters, so a reflection of where film as a medium and an art form has taken audiences thus far seems fitting. The following five films represent the very best of each period or decade between 1900 and 1960.

Pre-1920

"The Birth of a Nation" (1915): Incredibly racist, this D.W. Griffith-directed film remains an irrefutably important and brilliant example of early American cinema. Watching the scenes depicting Civil War skirmishes and the succeeding story of the Ku Klux Klan's "valiant" attempts to return order and honor to the Reconstruction-plagued South, the careful viewer might feel as if the development of the art form is unfolding before their eyes in real time. The overture of sympathy for the post-war South — as realized in

the use of white actors in blackface playing animalistic black Americans — is not the easiest to swallow for modern viewers, but is nonetheless an artistic masterpiece.

1920s

"The General" (1926): Buster Keaton is often — and unfairly — perceived as the "other" comedic genius of the silent film era in comparison to his well-known rival, Charlie Chaplin. As proven in this brilliant amalgamation of physical comedy, epic storytelling and cinematic risk-taking, Keaton is in no way inferior to Chaplin. He plays a Civil War-era train engineer forced to single-handedly chase down Union soldiers who have stolen his beloved locomotive and inadvertently kidnapped his crush, Annabelle (Marion Mack). "The General" includes some of the most hair-raising and expensive stunts used in a silent film, making it a landmark achievement in the action-adventure and comedy genres.

1930s

"Stagecoach" (1939): One of the greatest westerns ever made, this John Ford-directed epic provided John Wayne with his breakout performance and moviegoers with an inspiring work of visual magic. Ford captures the conflicts within late 19th century civilized society by confining it to small dwellings and a claustrophobic stagecoach.

By utilizing the naturally rugged landscape of Arizona and Utah — which would become the unofficial headquarters for most western genre moviemaking through the 1960s — Ford highlights the tribulations of the untamed wild west as his characters journey eastward toward New Mexico Territory and beyond.

1940s

"Citizen Kane" (1941): During production of this film, which was Orson Welles' feature film debut, Welles is said to have closely studied John Ford's work in "Stagecoach." If true, this would make Welles the perfect student, as "Citizen Kane" remains widely regarded as the greatest film in history. "Kane" transformed the medium by not only perfecting a new style of cinematic storytelling, but by innovating the fields of cinematography and editing as audiences know them today. The use of Bernard Herrmann's musical score placed to complement the story's trajectory and action corrected a long-held habit of blanketing films

with music from beginning to end. While a first viewing of "Kane" can be a slightly tedious experience, repeated screenings provide insight into true artistic genius.

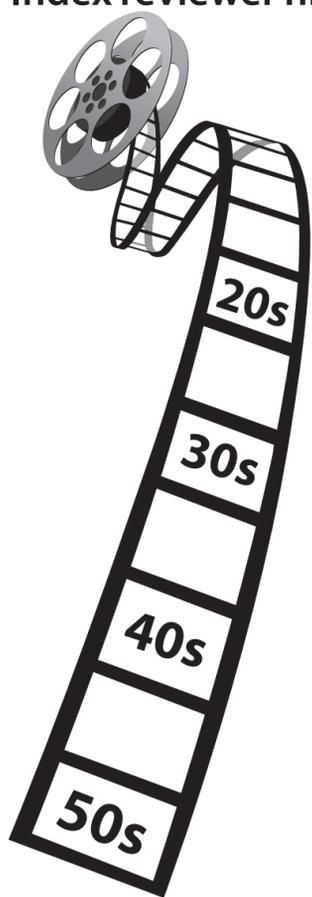
1950s

"Seven Samurai" (1954): Japanese director Akira Kurosawa's masterpiece not only introduced millions of American moviegoers to international cinema, but is one of the few foreign films to have a lasting impression on the industry's landscape in the United States. By depicting the assembling of warriors for one good purpose, Kurosawa influ-

enced a key plot element adopted by almost every American film that includes a gang of heroes. Included in the now legendary movie — Kurosawa's film

was remade as a western in "The Magnificent Seven" — are some of the all-time greatest fight sequences. So important to the genre of action-adventure films, it is safe to say that without "Seven Samurai," millions of "Star Wars" fans would feel incomplete.

For an extended list of outstanding films from the first 60 years of American cinema, see www.tmnnew.truman.edu/theindex



Tempers flare while driving



BY JOHN O'BRIEN
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I try to avoid letting little worries get to me. While walking down the street, I don't pick fights with strangers, use curse words like they are sentence enhancers or throw random items at others. And with some exceptions, I think many people are similar to me in that way.

However, something interesting, confusing and somewhat terrifying happens to even the calmest people when they sit behind the wheel: road rage.

Road rage, whether mild or wild, now is considered a mental disorder, according to a USA Today article. Linked to a disorder called intermittent explosive disorder, road rage is defined as an over-exaggerated reaction to something that happens on the road.

Sixteen million drivers of the nearly 200 million licensed drivers in the United States are believed to suffer from intermittent explosive disorder and road rage. To me, that number seems surprisingly small.

From shouting in the car or flipping the bird, to hitting another driver or causing injury, road rage can vary greatly. Most people aren't driving others off the road, but I have reason to believe, from experience, that if the interiors of cars had ears, they would be

burning from the words they hear.

I'm not saying I am a dangerous, aggressive driver with whom people don't want to share the road. But every now and then, when a break rolls along and I drive home, I tend to channel my inner sailor when I think someone else is driving poorly.

When I am cut off by someone not paying attention to the road, or someone around me is driving like an idiot, I kindly inform them. And by inform them, I mean I string together rather odd combinations of the worst words I can think of in the confines of my car.

Do I cuss about strangers in my car occasionally? Yes. Do I think I have a mental condition? Yes. That condition is "being a human," the craziest of all conditions. But no, I don't think a disorder is the source of my potty mouth or the minor rage of others.

There is no question about where I got my sailor mouth. It wasn't TV or movies. The cause for my dirty mouth when I drive is none other than my dear mother.

When my brother and I were younger and rode in the car with my mom, she would slip up and say some not-so-nice words. She is a great mom, but she is a tough lady and a police officer, so she had a "rougher" side that would come out occasionally behind the wheel.

Several years later, my little sisters came along, and my mom was determined to clean up her language. And did she ever. Insults hurled at idiotic drivers took a more creative turn, bringing forth gems like "head head" and "knuckle-headed butt butt."

With my mom's change of pace, my road rage mutated into its current state: singing insults. The words are just as filthy as ever, but they are now coming out in a more friendly, pleasant way, I suppose.

Nonetheless, even though drivers become flustered occasionally, it isn't necessarily a bad thing if it isn't dangerous or doesn't cause conflict. We sometimes have to safely let a little crazy out, especially when we are dealing with a real "knuckle-headed butt butt."

Guilty pleasures bring satisfaction



BY JENNIFER MARKS
Staff Reporter

I consider myself to be a fairly well-rounded person with sophisticated tastes. As a classically trained violinist, competitive equestrian and avid reader of history and British literature, I sound like someone from the 1800s. However, I don't think my "Pretty Little Liars" addiction would jive with 19th-century standards. With the pressures of taking 17 credit hours, writing and drawing for the Index and competing for both stock-and-hunt show teams for Equestrian Team, I feel entitled to my guilty pleasure.

This show, with all its petty, shallow drama, is television gold. You can hate on the girls' perfect hair, flawless makeup, attractive boyfriends and the unrealistic picture they paint of high school during the 21st century all you want, but I still love this show.

For those of you who don't follow it as religiously as I do, the show is based on four girls whose best friend is murdered in a small New England town. After the murder, a mysterious "A" blackmails them into dumping their teacher boyfriends, concealing their sexuality and lying to their parents, among other, equally dramatic events. Being a terrible liar myself, and some-

one who leads a comparatively boring day-to-day existence, I can't get enough of their lives: Aria's secret relationship with her oh-so-attractive English teacher, Spencer's obsessive pursuit of an Ivy League education, Hannah's drama with her step-sister and bad-boy boyfriend, and Emily's discovery of both her star-swimming skills and her lesbian lifestyle. This might sound ridiculous, but after five days of classes, E-Team practice and Index interviews, there's nothing I would rather do than hunker down in my room with my hour of PLL and a pint of Ben and Jerry's.

Relieving stress isn't the only thing my guilty pleasure does for me. PLL links me with my best friend from home. We watched the show together during high school and had frequent marathons with homemade popcorn and salt and vinegar chips. Now that she attends Mizzou and I'm at Truman State, "Pretty Little Liars" is our little lying slice of home.

I think it's genetic, really. My mother, a brilliant and educated woman who works full time at a pediatric hospital, never fails to disparage Jersey Shore and anything that glorifies the extravagant lives of the famous. But give her a copy of People Magazine and she instantly turns into a 14-year-old girl relaying story after story about the frivolous lives of celebrities.

So why do we love trashy magazines and television shows so much? Guilty pleasures are just an awesome form of escapism. Sure, we could be doing something productive with the hour I spend watching four girls wear designer clothes and date ruggedly handsome boys or the hour my mom spends flipping through the "exclusive interviews" with the Kardashians — whom she hates, by the way — and pictures of Hollywood's best-dressed, but we can only be cultured for so long before we crack — everyone needs a little trash in their lives if they want to keep sane.

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