

Book Reviews

When the Shooting Stops . . . the Cutting Begins

By Ralph Rosenblum and Robert Karen. Published (1979) by The Viking Press, 625 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10022. 310 pp. Illus. 6½ × 9½. Price \$12.95.

The *auteur* theory of filmmaking has eclipsed today's most vital art form by placing overwhelming creative responsibilities on the director. Though film is primarily a director's medium, it is also an organizational effort; and where, formerly, the director's status was one of leadership, he has lately become a potentate, wielding mysterious, creative powers. All accolades are bestowed on him by an influential coterie of critics who, perhaps in search of a hero, ascribe to him all significant parameters of the medium: he is judged as author, philosopher, intellectual, technician, cinematographer, and editor, all in obstinate defiance of the few minutes of credits which follow every motion picture.

Ralph Rosenblum, a highly regarded film editor, with films such as *Annie Hall*, *A Thousand Clowns*, and *The Producers* to his credit, puts filmmaking in a new perspective, detailing the evolution of film from an unwieldy and often unstructured muddle to the cohesive, rhythmic cadences of plot and time which moviegoers are accustomed to. The evolution, of course, takes place in the cutting room, and the task is quite unique in that all exertions are directed at self-effacement. It is rightfully said that good editing goes unnoticed; unfortunately, it is a consequence of the art that it also goes unappreciated by audiences who flow with the continuity of a film and judge the editing only when it is apparent and obtrusive.

It is the *auteur* theorist who most notably succumbs to this judgmental pitfall. He deludes himself and others in overemphasizing the director's creative role because, as an aesthete, he cannot comprehend the many significant creative contributions made in pre- and post-production phases of filmmaking,

where a director's responsibilities are usually greatly diminished. Rosenblum makes this manifest: "A feature-length film," he states, "generates anywhere from twenty to forty hours of raw footage. When the shooting stops, the unrefined material becomes the movie's raw material, just as the script had been the raw material before. It must now be selected, tightened, paced, embellished, arranged, and in some cases given artificial respiration, until the author's and the director's vision becomes completely translated from the language of the script to the idiom of the movies. The effort usually takes two or even three times longer than the shooting itself."

When the Shooting Stops is extremely strong when detailing editorial choices which enhanced many famous vignettes and transformed lackluster films into powerful artistic achievements. The author also offers inside accounts of personalities, with particular emphasis on his remarkable professional relationship with Woody Allen. Finally, the delightful and sometimes touching descriptions of outtakes never to be publicly viewed make *When the Shooting Stops* a crucial document for the serious moviegoer.

— Gary Rosenberger

The Video Primer

By Richard Robinson. Revised (1978) by Quick Fox, 33 W. 60 St., New York, NY 10023. 400 pp. Illus. 7 × 10. Price \$8.95.

The Video Primer is the result of a revolution in television communications commonly referred to as independent video. The technical achievement which fostered its growth was the advent of half-inch video equipment, in particular, the Sony Portapak. The advantages of this new medium abounded: affordability, ease of use, immediate feedback, and no need for processing. Video artists proliferated, establishing meaningful alternatives to network programming, and the trend was encouraged by many cable television stations willing to present non-broadcast quality videotape formats to subscribers.

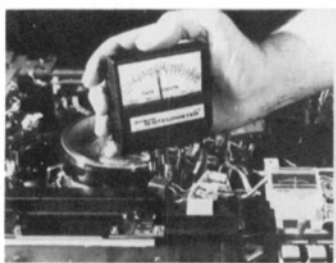
The first edition of *The Video Primer* was published in 1974 and fulfilled a demand for a basic but comprehensive guide to video production methods and equipment usage. However, various changes in the state of the art created a need for an updated edition. According to Richard Robinson, video manufacturers have opted for more expensive (and profitable) videocassette and broadcast-quality formats to supplant the seminal Portapak, with VHS and Betamax having led the procession in the home market. This alters the character of independent video, sufficient to require substantial modifications in the orientation of the practitioner.

The success of any primer is predicated on its ability to educate the novice unpatronizingly, and *The Video Primer* totally fulfills that requirement — it is precise and comprehensible, providing many illustrations which serve to clarify a difficult subject, and includes a glossary which can even be useful to the uninitiated. *The Video Primer* is ultimately a coat of armor resisting the broadsword of technological anxieties. — G.R.

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