

ARTS AND FEATURES

'Visions of Light' offers unique insight into the art of modern cinematography

"Visions Of Light" approaches the history of film from an angle that is novel and yet entirely logical. That is, the camera angle.

If you love the movies, you'll love this one. I don't mean looking on them as an occasion to eat absurd amounts of popcorn, fantasize about sex or avoid talking to your date. But rather for those of you who sneak alone to the matinee on hot summer afternoons when you're expected at work and annoy friends while in the video store by insisting on renting titles like "The Big Sleep" — then this is your movie.

"Visions" consists of clips from an assortment of movies interspersed with camera operators talking about their own and others' work. Some of the films are famous, others obscure. The common thread is cinematography.

Ah, cinematography, a word equally difficult to say, spell and drop unpretentiously into conversations. Usually when people talk about movies, it's in terms of plot, actors or maybe directors. But such discussions always seem to miss the point. For, in truth, they ignore the most distinguishing feature of film: that it is photography in motion.

We are not, after all, simply watching players enact a story. Someone filmed this. They chose a certain angle over another, an amount of light, a close shot to focus on a face or a long one to

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Movie Review

take in a whole room or landscape. These and a million other decisions profoundly affect the way we understand the story we're watching. Yet most of the time we don't notice how they influence it.

Film language, composed entirely of moving images, doesn't translate into words very well. But powerful visual images stay with us all the same, sometimes for years. For me, the fascination of this movie lies in its power to put into words things I had known only visually.

I remember watching movies like "Citizen Kane" and "Rebecca" as a child at the monthly free films at the public library. They riveted me then for reasons I couldn't have explained. When I had forgotten everything about them but the barest plot outline and a few images, I continued to remember them as amazing.

Seeing clips from such films in "Visions," as filmmakers discussed the techniques involved in shooting them, brought a shock of recognition. So that was why I loved that movie; that's how they did it.

The film proceeds in roughly chronological order, but entirely avoids the

usual cliches of Hollywood history. It does not focus on famous names or big movies — except as these pertain to the subject at hand. This allows for discussion of topics that would normally be peripheral or entirely ignored.

Color symbolism in "The Last Emperor" or the influence of old LIFE magazine photos on the look of "Raging Bull" are things that even movie fanatics would not think of on their own, but will love learning.

If there is a flaw in this film, it would be that there is not more of it. The brief references to European cinematography in mention of German films of the '20s, clips from "The Conformist" and a talk with Roman Polanski's cameraman only made the lack of a general discussion more painfully evident.

Because film is a universal language, as someone in the film rightfully points out, why spend so much time in the American idiom? It's true that in 90 minutes one can't do everything. But "Visions" manages to do a lot.

Many people resist paying first-run movie prices to see documentaries and will wait for them to come out on video. Ignore this impulse. Take the afternoon off and go to the matinee.

This is one movie that ought to be seen in the theater, as movies were meant to appear: much bigger than life, overwhelming us with light and shadow.

Arts Entertainment

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

THURSDAY, JUNE 24 MUSIC BLEED/MODERN PILGRIMS/BICYCLE FACE at Local 506. 942-4745. JEFF HART at Columbia Street Bakery & Coffeehouse. 967-9150. TWEEKER at The Cave. 968-9308. FRIENDS OF BLACK CHILDREN FUNDRAISER at Skylight Exchange. 933-5550.

FRIDAY, JUNE 25 MUSIC CHILL CASE and EITHER WAY PATSY DIES at Columbia Street Bakery. 967-9150. MINISTERS OF SINISTER at The Cave. 968-9308. PAJAMA DON at Colonel Chutney's. 942-7575. RUTH ROCCHIO at Skylight Exchange. 933-5550. WHAT PEGGY WANTS/TWEEKER/BLIND MAN'S HOLIDAY at Local 506. 942-4745. POTATO HEAD at He's Not Here. 942-7939. EVENTS EARTH BUDDIES III starring 10,000 MANIACS with WORLD PARTY at Walnut Creek Amphitheatre. 834-4000.

SATURDAY, JUNE 26 MUSIC BAHLOOKA ROUX at The Cave. 968-9308. THE ED ACUESTA TRIO at Columbia Street Bakery. 967-9150. OROGENY at Skylight Exchange. 933-5550. NIGHTBIRD at He's Not Here. 942-7939. COMEDY TRANSACTORS IMPROV CO. at The ArtsCenter in Carrboro. 929-ARTS. EVENTS N.C. LITERARY REVIEW EX-TRAVAGANZA at McIntyre's Fine Books and Bookends at Farrington Village. 542-3030. REX CLASSIC NIGHT OF STARS featuring MICHAEL FRANKS, YELLOWJACKETS, DIANE SHUUR and NORMAN BROWN at Walnut Creek. 834-4000. ART SALE AND SEAFOOD COOKOUT at Tom Robinson's Seafood featuring the works of local artists. Proceeds will benefit Advocates for North Carolina's Coast. 942-1221.

SUNDAY, JUNE 27 MUSIC CAPSIZ 7 at The Cave. 968-9308. DSF EARTH CORPS at Colonel Chutney's. 942-7575.

MONDAY, JUNE 28 COMEDY 1-900-IMPROV and CHAT WITH PAT at The Cave. 968-9308. JED AND GREG AND FRIENDS at The Cave. 968-9308. EVENTS WEST COAST SWING DANCE classes offered at the ArtsCenter. 962-ARTS.

TUESDAY, JUNE 29 EVENTS MARK RICHARD will read from his latest novel "Fishboy: A Ghost's Story" at McIntyre's Fine Books and Bookends. 542-3030.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 30 MUSIC DAVID SPENCER at The Cave. 968-9308.

SPECIAL EVENTS JONPAULSTONEHUERNER will exhibit works titled "Ramblings and Introspections" at the ArtsCenter. Opening reception is June 27 and the exhibition will run through July 20. 962-ARTS. KENNY BURRELL TRIO will kick off the third annual "Adventures in Jazz" summer series at the ArtsCenter June 25 at 8 p.m. 962-ARTS. MIKE CROSS, a one man musical show, will be accompanied by the North Carolina Symphony at Regency Park in Cary on June 26 at 7:30 p.m. 733-2750. DAYTON CONTEMPORARY DANCE COMPANY at Duke University's Page Auditorium June 24-26 at 8 p.m. 684-6402.

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Help Wanted Paid Volunteers Needed \$\$\$ ASTHMA, HEADACHE & HEARTBURN STUDIES HEADACHE STUDY Individuals 18 years and older with occasional or frequent headaches needed for a short home research study. \$40 paid incentive if qualified.

Help Wanted Women with Premenstrual Syndrome SUBJECTS NEEDED Announcing a research study at UNC for women, ages 24-45, with PMS. Study compares medication to placebo.