

Telluride Film Festival

TELLURIDE, CO 44th SEPT 1-4, 2017

A Tribute to Ed Lachman

Made possible by a donation from The Burns Family

In a 50-year career, Ed Lachman has been the cinematographer of choice for film directors with innovative visions. Todd Haynes, Steven Soderbergh, Robert Altman, Paul Schrader, Todd Solondz, Sofia Coppola, Jan Troell, Werner Herzog, Wim Wenders, Volker Schlöndorff, Ulrich Seidl and Jean Luc-Godard are among those who have picked Lachman as their creative partner, collaborator and co-conspirator.

Lachman was inspired to pursue cinematography in art school. One of his inspirations was encountering *The Americans*, Robert Frank's influential photography book. "His photos showed me you could imbue reality-based and found images with the experience and poetic subjectivity of the photographer," Lachman states. This conception of what he calls a "poetic realism of the image" and his love for the European art cinema of the '60s and '70s have shaped Lachman's work as a cinematographer ever since.

Lachman's first credit as director of photography was in *THE LORDS OF FLATBUSH* (1974), a modestly budgeted, indie-style film that introduced Sylvester Stallone and Henry Winkler to the world. Lachman, an ardent cinephile, has always gone out of his way to discover new work and talented young directors. Early in his career, he was so taken by the genius of *SIGNS OF LIFE*, a first feature by a then unknown young West German filmmaker, that introduced himself to the director, Werner Herzog, and they became friends. Nine years later, Lachman began working with Herzog on one of his characteristically apocalyptic documentaries, set in the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe. Herzog's intention was to film the story of a group of poor farmers who "resisted God and country" and refused to evacuate the island before the volcanic eruption. Fortunately, the volcano did not erupt, and the powerful *LA SOUFRIERE* (1977) became a document about the destitute lives of the forgotten island's inhabitants. Lachman also worked on Herzog's *HOW MUCH WOOD COULD A WOODCHUCK CHUCK* (1976) and *STROSZEK* (1977).

The next three years were an extraordinary apprenticeship for Lachman, thanks to the migration in the mid-'70s of numerous European directors to New York. Already known for his work and familiarity with European cinema, Lachman was hired to work with esteemed foreign cinematographers, including some of those he most revered. He worked with Sven Nykvist on Frank Pierson's *KING OF THE GYPSIES* (1978), and on Jan Troell's *HURRICANE* (1979), with Vittorio Storaro on Bernardo Bertolucci's *LUNA* (1979), and with Robby Müller on the New York sequences of Wim Wender's *THE AMERICAN FRIEND* (1979) and again on Peter Bogdanovich's *THEY ALL LAUGHED* (1981). Lachman consolidated his reputation as the American cinematographer most attuned to the New German Cinema when he shot *LIGHTNING OVER WATER* (1980), Wenders' emotional film about the filmmaker Nicholas Ray.

He deepened his connection with American directors with the success of Susan Seidelman's *DESPERATELY SEEKING SUSAN* (1985), an unusually visual and inventive studio release. This offbeat comedy, featuring a cast of then unknowns, including Rosanna Arquette, Aidan Quinn and an up-and-coming

singer named Madonna, was memorable for Lachman's saturated downtown cityscapes. Lachman gave the film a romantic atmosphere in an intoxicating yet authentic world.

When American independent cinema flourished in the '90s, Lachman was instrumental, and his contributions have continued to be enormous ever since. His reputation for working intuitively, inventively and with inspiration grew through his work with Paul Schrader (*LIGHT SLEEPER*, 1992), Gregory Nava (*MI FAMILIA*, 1995; *SELENA*, 1997; *WHY DO FOOLS FALL IN LOVE*, 1998), Todd Solondz (*LIFE DURING WARTIME*, 2009; *WIENERDOG*, 2016) and Sofia Coppola (*VIRGIN SUICIDES*, 1999). Steven Soderbergh hired Lachman for his experimental neo-noir film *THE LIMEY* (1999), an intense, moody, semi-abstract portrait of Los Angeles, which displayed Lachman's "poetic realism" at its best. The two continued their partnership with the Oscar-nominated *ERIN BROCKOVICH* (2000).

Lachman has consistently tied his success to the vision of the directors he has collaborated with, and in recent years, the threads of his career have come together in five extraordinary projects that he has shot for the remarkably gifted writer-director Todd Haynes. *FAR FROM HEAVEN* (2002), their Academy Award-nominated film, reworked the '50s melodramas of Douglas Sirk. Next came the visually arresting and multi-structured Dylan essay-poem *I'M NOT THERE* (2007), the HBO miniseries *MILDRED PIERCE* (2011) and the critically acclaimed Patricia Highsmith adaptation *CAROL* (2015, for which Lachman received his second Oscar nomination). With this year's brilliant *WONDERSTRUCK*, Haynes and Lachman have tapped into Lachman's half-century of experience and his encyclopedic visual knowledge of film. The film masterfully interweaves the stories of two 12-year-olds in two separate cinematic languages and time periods. Lachman has constructed a glorious celebration of cinematography's power.

Lachman has created more than films; he also has carved a niche as an artist, showing his installations, videos, and photography at The Whitney Museum of American Art, The Ludwig Museum in Germany and other notable museums and galleries throughout the world. Lachman has received this year's *American Cinematographer's* Lifetime Achievement Award, and is the only American to receive Germany's prestigious Marburg Camera Award.

The Telluride Film Festival is delighted and honored to pay tribute to Ed Lachman's extraordinary creative contribution to the art of cinema.

—Larry Gross

PROGRAM

- 1. Selection of clips (17 minutes)**
- 2. Presentation of the Silver Medallion (Sunday screening only)**
- 3. Onstage interview:** by Larry Gross (Sunday) and John Horn (Monday)
- 4. Feature Film:** On Sunday: *FAR FROM HEAVEN* (d. Todd Haynes, 2002, 107m)
On Monday: *WONDERSTRUCK* (d. Todd Haynes, 2017, 117m)