# HAL ASHBY : INTERVIEWS PDF, EPUB, EBOOK




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## DGA Quarterly Magazine | Summer | Books - Hal Ashby: Interviews

Three decades later, another editor-turned-director, Amy Scott, has made the first feature-length documentary about Ashby. With the film opening in theaters this week, I chatted with Scott about what led her to make a movie about her personal hero and the inspiration she draws from his humanist sensibility. Like Ashby, you began your work as an editor before taking on the role of director. Do you feel a special kinship with him because of this? Being an editor allowed me to understand an aspect of his personality that I think guided a lot of his decisions. It requires long periods of concentration where you have to stay in one room, and that comes with sacrifice.

The fact that he was married five times speaks volumes about his dedication to his work at the expense of his personal life. Yes, but the reason it did go well for Hal on set is because Norman Jewison led him out of the editing room and taught him everything at a really pivotal time. So Hal was able to get in among the people. But for his entire life he was also constantly taking films back and editing them at his house. It was something he liked to do, and not in a controlling way but just out of a curiosity, to see how he would cut the film.

I completely get that. It took me years to edit this movie because I thoroughly enjoyed being in the edit room with this footage of Hal. That era of filmmaking and the way they made movies—only these guys could tell those stories. Beau Bridges and Jeff Bridges were also really important because their collaborations with Hal bookended his career, and their experiences were so different. Jane Fonda was necessary because she was so responsible for Coming Home. It was important to get the big picture. We wanted people who knew Hal and worked with him and loved him, but we also wanted people like Chuck Mulvehill, his producer, who gave a great, thoughtful, and critical interview.

Despite making some of the most celebrated American films of the seventies, Ashby is still sometimes regarded as a cult director rather than as one of the central figures of his time. Why do you think it is that he has never reached the level of recognition of his contemporaries? And he was kind of always back in the shadows. When we got our hands on his letters, that was really entertaining. The making of George Stevens' Texas-sized epic is recounted in Don Graham's meticulously chronicled book. Joseph McBride, who has written magisterial biographies on John Ford, Frank Capra and Steven Spielberg, has put together a collection of his journalistic work through the decades.

John Fithian, president of the National Association of Theatre Owners, talks about the future of moviegoing as we know it. Weighing in at pages, this venerable compendium subscribes to the idea that noir pertains to tone and features profiles of a wide array of films. Naremore's close-reading and contextualization of the film make Sweet Smell of Success seem like a heroic victory over its producers' own worst instincts and an even more remarkable achievement than we already believed. Starting out in an Aussie industry that barely existed, Peter Weir has traveled the world looking for the revelatory moment and deeper truth.

In films like Master and Commander and Dead Poets Society, he found people who—like himself—never play it safe. The Guild. DGA Quarterly. Tweet This! Share on Facebook. The best of new publications by, for, and about directors, their teams and the industry. More from this topic. See more articles from Books. Fall Hooked on Hitch. Spring Lubitsch's Timeless Appeal. Summer

## Hal Ashby | Discovering the work of an underrated genius

Hal Ashby: Interviews for the first time brings together the best interviews conducted over the course of Ashby's career. Ashby discusses his filmmaking philosophy, memories of working his way up the Hollywood ladder in the s, and his troubled productions in the s. Account Options Anmelden. Meine Mediathek Hilfe Erweiterte Buchsuche. Weiter zu Google Play ». As a director whose talents were honed over 15 years in the editing room working largely with Norman Jewison , he was, in the end, the person who gave his work its final luminescence when others edited his films without his input, the movies were unsuccessful.

Ashby may have been hands-off but, in the end, only Ashby carried the entire movie in his head. An LA Weekly piece on the ruination of 8 Million Ways to Die shows Ashby, at the tail end of his career after a calamitous liaison with the duplicitous Lorimar, as sane and laid-back as ever. As this Taschen volume makes clear, the Master of Suspense remains appealing to cineastes young and old, with plus features underscoring his timeless ingenuity. Author Gwenda Young makes the case that from the silent era to the golden age, Clarence Brown deserves a place among the giants. The making of George Stevens' Texas-sized epic is recounted in Don Graham's meticulously chronicled book. Joseph McBride, who has written magisterial biographies on John Ford, Frank Capra and Steven Spielberg, has put together a collection of his journalistic work through the decades. John Fithian, president of the National Association of Theatre Owners, talks about the future of moviegoing as we know it. Weighing in at pages, this venerable compendium subscribes to the idea that noir pertains to tone and features profiles of a wide array of films.

Naremore's close-reading and contextualization of the film make Sweet Smell of Success seem like a heroic victory over its producers' own worst instincts and an even more remarkable achievement than we already believed. Starting out in an Aussie industry that barely existed, Peter Weir has traveled the world looking for the revelatory moment and deeper truth. In films like Master and Commander and Dead Poets Society, he found people who—like himself—never play it safe. The Guild. And once more. Ashby lived the movies, literally. He was a movie zombie, eating time and film behind shaded window panes. His life could be in shambles, but he was a dedicated editor, with an eye like a jeweler and a clock that never ticked. Not until the edit was locked. Ashby looked the part of a shut-in, his hair growing out into fraying tendrils, bearded and bespectacled hiding sloe-colored eyes; he looked like an AP bio teacher on a bender.

He quested for the perfect cut, and yearned for pacing. And he never left that bungalow. Every sonofabitching time you sit down and thread up a goddamn reel and you punch a button and you start to look at it, you get a different idea. The film will tell you what to do. It spoke to him over and over again. Ashby, of course, eventually moved on from editing to become one of just a few legendary filmmakers—among them David Lean, Robert Wise, and Don Siegel—to transition from that below-the-line position to the top of the poster. But it is the editing that matters, the trade that brought him to movies, the craft that taught him precision and concision, the work that won him an Oscar in , for Heat , and the gigs that bred a philosophy: The only thing that matters is the movie. Editing is for the obsessed. In the best of them, it creates a perfectionist with a vision.

Now is a fitting time to look back at Ashby, a movie biz yeoman turned shaman, and his stunning body of work. But more so because Ashby had a way of making his movies about weighty ideals and real-seeming people, neither of which have aged much in the past 40 or so years. They explored friendship, romance, war, peace, sex, race, gender, celebrity, and parenthood. They scaled politics and international conflict and television. Ashby made message movies with a simple code of empathy and decency. They reflected the man, who carried one of the most unwavering reputations among colleagues in his profession.

Thank you. Russell, and Adam McKay, to the actors he guided to Academy Awards, among them Jon Voight and Jane Fonda, to the generation of iconic artisans and musicians he grew up alongside and collaborated with, including Wexler, Robert C. Few filmmakers embody the essence of

a time the way Ashby does. This century, it seemed like Ashby was in danger of becoming more footnote than first-ballot hall of famer.

He is ever present in the generous spirit of his movies but increasingly removed from their mythology. His films could be explosive, but mostly work patiently to portray different stripes of human experience. Fruit pickers in the California valleys during the Depression. Naval officers out from under the thumb of their XOs. An impish gardner with lights flashing in his eyes. A rich kid with a misbegotten view of real estate strategy. They were often vulnerable men searching for something unattainable. As much as it was sad there was a larger takeaway. It was not at all the case. The director Norman Jewison adopted Hal Ashby as a kind of mentee and became a father figure to the hardworking but nomadic Southwestern refugee. The Ashby we talk about now was a late-blooming creative talent who spent the first 34 years of his life slowly nosing his way into the upper echelon of the movies.

He was born in , the last of four children to a poor Mormon family of dairy farmers in Ogden, Utah. His mother, 44 years old when she gave birth to him, was the product of a polygamous marriage. His father, James, died by suicide shortly after the dairy farm went out of business when he refused to pasteurize its milk. Hal was

## The Realistic Magic of Hal Ashby, the Greatest Director of the s - The Ringer

Ashby discusses his filmmaking philosophy, memories of working his way up the Hollywood ladder in the s, and his troubled productions in the s. Account Options Anmelden. Meine Mediathek Hilfe Erweiterte Buchsuche. Weiter zu Google Play ». Hal Ashby : Interviews. Hal Ashby. Was andere dazu sagen - Rezension schreiben. Fruit pickers in the California valleys during the Depression. Naval officers out from under the thumb of their XOs. An impish gardner with lights flashing in his eyes. A rich kid with a misbegotten view of real estate strategy. They were often vulnerable men searching for something unattainable. As much as it was sad there was a larger takeaway. It was not at all the case. The director Norman Jewison adopted Hal Ashby as a kind of mentee and became a father figure to the hardworking but nomadic Southwestern refugee.

The Ashby we talk about now was a late-blooming creative talent who spent the first 34 years of his life slowly nosing his way into the upper echelon of the movies. He was born in , the last of four children to a poor Mormon family of dairy farmers in Ogden, Utah. His mother, 44 years old when she gave birth to him, was the product of a polygamous marriage. His father, James, died by suicide shortly after the dairy farm went out of business when he refused to pasteurize its milk. Hal was And only now, in retrospect, can I see how much pain he must have been in. Though studio biographies indicated that Ashby had graduated from Utah State University to make him seem as intellectually accomplished as contemporaries like Peter Bogdanovich and Francis Ford Coppola, in truth he was a dropout. Married and divorced by 17, he was a father at 19, and soon itching to get out of Ogden. The clerk did the best she could: a listing for a multilith operator running a kind of mimeograph machine at Universal Studios.

Within days, he was, essentially, a copy boy using machinery to deliver visual aids to executives and filmmakers around the lot. It took Ashby—a notoriously committed and perceptive worker—five years to elbow his way into assistant editor positions at Disney and Republic Pictures. But at the time, The Loved One was an oddity, curiously paced and constructed. Jewison was already an established filmmaker, with four romantic comedies for Universal and nearly a decade of TV work to his name. But he had not yet found his voice as a filmmaker, had not found an outlet for the pressing ideas in his mind. Ashby helped unlock them. In the next four years, Ashby and Jewison worked on four films together, gaining more trust and creative chemistry as they went along. The Russians Are Coming! But no matter the genre—lace-curtain thriller or Cold War satire, social-issues drama or sleek caper—Jewison and Ashby pushed the style and structure of movies, toying with jump cuts, pans, close-ups, insert shots, and particularly multiframe formats that would subtly reinvent the visual language of Hollywood movies.

The plots of these movies have begun to wear with age, but their flair persists. The Landlord is a gentrification drama set in Park Slope, Brooklyn, about a young wealthy white man who buys a brownstone occupied by black families in an effort to launch himself as a self-made real estate mogul. With Jewison out, Ashby jumped at the chance to make his first film. After more than 15 years massaging, manipulating, and mapping movies, Ashby was ready. He was in the great tradition of storytellers. He knew what people wanted to hear, and it was effortless. The film stars Bridges, Louis Gossett Jr. The Landlord is a movie about a white guy attempting to eject black people from their homes, or make them live by his rules. It was a vital, ongoing outspeak of what was going on in his head. It was his desire to reach out to friends, coworkers, and ultimately his audiences. It went this way for Ashby for several consecutive movies. Harold and Maude , which tells the story of a suicidal teen misanthrope and the effervescent year-old he falls for, was a critically derided flop that took years to catch on as a cult favorite before becoming a cultural touchstone for self-identifying weirdos.

Now it is a kind of hall pass for filmmakers of a certain generation. In The Last Detail , Ashby made Navy men seem like flailing, existential, distraught brothers looking for a dad. He called The Last Detail his best performance. I agree. The image of Randy Quaid, as a young sailor on his way to serve a harsh military prison sentence, being serviced by a prostitute while staring blankly at a flickering light fixture, is the visual metaphor to end them all.

Suddenly I was almost 40, and I no longer had the energy to pursue it. Living and managing life was not his strong suit. In a profile in the Times , Ashby was reported to have moved out of his previous home because it had become so full of editing equipment that there was nowhere to sleep. Once an editor, etc. But in the movies he was making, you can see the distant observations he made about his own life in his work, the insecure reflections of a person who could commit only to his job. Ashby is a little different. He seems to be addressing—if not coping with—his choices in real time, even if he never acted on them. The people around him suffered, even if his work never did. In the background of scene after scene, the movie portrays a vamping, self-amused Los Angeles den of ennoble bobbleheads in petting themselves while Rome burns. Nixon is around the corner, with hell to pay. Amid the sexual and societal tumult, Ashby plays it cool and lets his leading man, Warren Beatty, play it twitchy.

Shampoo is the second Ashby film made from a Robert Towne script, after The Last Detail , and you can feel the director locking into the deep, idiosyncratic material. Sexual theater at the height of political anxiety, what a time to be alive. If Shampoo was self-aggrandizement, his next film, Bound for Glory , was self-indictment. All the characters are made up except for Guthrie and his wife, Mary. But it tells the tale of a Dust Bowl

washout from a broken town with flighty dreams who leaves his family behind and heads west to the creative safehaven of California.

Sound familiar?

**The Many Faces of Hal Ashby: A Conversation with Amy Scott | Current | The Criterion Collection**

Fall Hooked on Hitch. Spring Lubitsch's Timeless Appeal. Summer Giant Steps. Kubrick's Napoleon Complex. More from this issue. View the Summer Issue. The Theater Experience. The Film Noir Encyclopedia. Hal Ashby: Interviews. Sweet Smell of Success. It was something he liked to do, and not in a controlling way but just out of a curiosity, to see how he would cut the film. I completely get that. It took me years to edit this movie because I thoroughly enjoyed being in the edit room with this footage of Hal. That era of filmmaking and the way they made movies—only these guys could tell those stories. Beau Bridges and Jeff Bridges were also really important because their collaborations with Hal bookended his career, and their experiences were so different. Jane Fonda was necessary because she was so responsible for Coming Home.

It was important to get the big picture. We wanted people who knew Hal and worked with him and loved him, but we also wanted people like Chuck Mulvehill, his producer, who gave a great, thoughtful, and critical interview. Despite making some of the most celebrated American films of the seventies, Ashby is still sometimes regarded as a cult director rather than as one of the central figures of his time.

Why do you think it is that he has never reached the level of recognition of his contemporaries? And he was kind of always back in the shadows. When we got our hands on his letters, that was really entertaining. I could only show a small fraction of them because there were so many that he fired off to studio execs. It was fascinating. I always had this notion of Hal being a very chill, gentle, ethereal guy, but actually he would smoke some pot and go to town on the typewriter. It is a film of intelligence and subtlety, at once biting in its satire and yet generously sympathetic. Unfortunately, the amazing ending is marred somewhat by the inclusion of a blooper reel credit sequence. Sellers himself would blame the trivialising of the end for costing him an Oscar. All rights reserved. All total or partial use of the content of this website is prohibited. EN IT. Username or Email Address. This website uses cookies and sends them to third parties to send you tailor-made ads according to your preferences.

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