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UNDERWORLD, U.S.A. 1960. Written, produced and directed by Samuel Fuller. Photographed by Hal Mohr. 99 minutes. Cast: Cliff Robertson (Tolly Devlin), Dolores Dorn (Cuddles), Beatrice Kay (Sandy), Paul Dubov (Gela), Robert Emhardt (Conners), Larry Gates (Driscoll), Richard Rust (Gus), Gerald Milton (Gunther), Allan Gruener (Smith), David Kent (Tolly as a boy of 12), Peter Brocco (Vic Farrar), Neyle Morrow (Barney).

Martin Rubin: A theme of cleanliness runs through UNDERWORLD, U.S.A. It starts with Cliff Robertson sterilizing instruments in a prison hospital and ends when, as he's dying, he stumbles over a trashcan which says "Keep Your City Clean." Why did you use this?

Sam Fuller: Again, I wanted contrast. In addition to sterilizing utensils, I told Robertson to put the bandages on the man very gently, very precisely, like a surgeon. I wanted to get that effect: he's clean about those bandages even though he's double-crossing the man he's putting them on.

I also tried to get a contrast wherever I could between the cleanliness of the head of National Projects and the discussion he's carrying on about narcotics and prostitution and murder. That's why I picked the swimming pool location. I wanted that hollow, clean atmosphere you get around a swimming pool. So I had this crime organization hold their meetings there, rather than in the pompous office or the pool hall or the dingy little room where gangsters usually hang out.

M.R.: Another motif was the emphasis on Robertson's clenched fist. It had double-edged, perverse connotations. Again, it was more than an ordinary symbol, because it was constantly changing.

S.F.: The symbol of the fist is his spite against society. Pictorially and emotionally, it tells a story. It's his fight. He's fighting all the time. I also wanted its anger. Tremendous anger. The fist represented his dialogue to the cop when he was a boy. He said, "I'll get 'em!"

M.R.: Robertson is the only one in the film who acts on personal grounds. He wasn't motivated by a newspaper story; he actually witnessed his father's murder.

S.F.: I used the same thing in PICKUP ON SOUTH STREET. This is human nature: In PICKUP, Widmark didn't care about anything. Didn't care! But when he found out that someone took a beating for him, that someone was physically hurt who was tied up with him, he said, "O.K. That's it," and he went right after the enemy

The same with Robertson. He didn't give a damn. But since he's committed himself, on his level, to a partner, and since now he's assigned to kill this partner, then he has to go after Conners. Because if Rust doesn't kill her, someone else will.

It's a theme I like in a picture. I never like a man to do something for any chauvinistic or false premise other than emotional, personal necessity. If a newspaper says, "GREAT HERO SAVES 12,000 PEOPLE FROM BEING BOMBED IN A STADIUM," we know he didn't save 12,000 people. He saved <u>one</u>. That's what I'm trying to bring out.

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Fuller himself would find ridiculous the idea that Tolly Devlin in UNDERWORLD, U.S.A. is a romantic hero. Devlin is not the hero of this film; he is only the protagonist, a foil for Fuller's ideas. Fuller no doubt considers himself the most anti-romantic (meaning anti-conventional) of American film-makers. His films are calculated assaults on his audience's complacency, attempts to make them stop thinking rationally and start feeling emotion. He constantly and beautifully undercuts our ideas about heroic, villainous, or even logical behavior. His characters are consistent in their inconsistency, coherent in their

contradictions; each protagonist is a battleground of philosophical, psychological, and political forces. Fuller conceives of himself as a savage muckraker of a journalistic tradition. His often-expressed purpose is simple and direct: "to shake them up." He is committed to his characters and ideas in a very romantic way, and this commitment is justifiable because he knows and feels from first-hand experiences the realities of life in America as depicted in his films. True romanticism has always depended more upon an artist's compassionate involvement with his subject matter than upon the formalistic trappings of the love story.

The true hero of UNDERWORLD, U.S.A. is emotion, the true villain materialism. Emotion first brings to life, then brings to death a boy and a girl who should have been irrevocably immune to the power of human love. Tolly's capacity for normal human response has been systematically destroyed by traumatic experiences and socially deprived psychosis; Cuddles's by a presumably similar background in prostitution. Tolly's unemotional, materialistic commitment to Cuddles (marriage is "the only good partnership") marks the beginning of the triumph of emotion. This triumph is the film's miracle, its myth. On the other hand, the FBI and "National Projects," as presented in this film, indicate Fuller's very real and terrifying vision of the triumph of materialism over emotion in America. This triumph is the film's sombre reality.

-- Lee Sanders

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SHOCK CORRIDOR. 1963. Written, produced and directed by Samuel Fuller. Photographed by Stanley Cortez and (uncredited for hallucinatory sequences) Samuel Fuller. 101 minutes. Cast: Peter Breck (Johnny Barrett), Constance Towers (Cathy), Gene Evans (Dr. Boden), James Best (Stuart), Hari Rhodes (Trent), Larry Tucker (Pagliacci), William Zuckert (Swanee), John Mathews (Dr. Cristo), Chuck Roberson (Wilkes), Paul Dubov (Dr. Menkin), Neyle Morrow (Psycho), Rachel Roman (Singing Nymphomaniac).

The central concept of the film is that everything is the opposite of what it seems, a grotesque distortion of "normality." Most fundamentally, the inmates of the mental hospital are shown to be just as "sane" as those on the outside. Notice particularly that almost every scene that takes place outside the hospital is either 1) in the office of a psychoanalyst who instead of making people sane is shown training a "normal" man to become insane; or 2) at a strip joint in which takes place one of the most bizarre parodies of a strip-tease act ever seen. Notice also which of the two attendants turns out to be the murderer. Also the forms that each patient's insanity take: the deserter imagines he's a great soldier, the black man imagines he's the leader of the KKK, and the "greatest scientific genius alive" has the mind of a six-year old. When Johnny goes insane, he follows the same pattern. Being involved with communication, newspapers, it's fitting that he should lose his voice.

-- Lowell Peterson & Martin Rubin

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The opening scene is a masterpiece of cinematic economy; the pan, by gradually revealing three ontological dimensions (Johnny's "schizophrenia," acted out under the approving glance of Swanee, the whole being watched by Cathy in disgust) indicates the three layers of reality: the subjective/objective, the false/true, the insane/sane. At the same time, the camera describes, as it were, a spiral of decreasing involvement, which is, however, also one of increasing reflection and sanity. At the centre is Johnny, filled with an intense desire to

get to the truth--amoral, irresponsible, insane. On the periphery is Cathy, equally intense in her disgust. From that moment on we know that Johnny's fate is inevitable. Between the two are a doctor and a newspaper editor--both socially sanctioned guardians of sanity and truth--colluding in a scheme of deceit and madness.

Johnny's penetration into the world of insanity is--visually--a progress towards fragmentation, in which the movement towards objective truth is intercut with one of subjective revelation (the frequency of tracking shots alternating with flash close-ups). Once again, one notes the element of fascination which seems to draw Johnny deeper and deeper into his fatal obsession: the corridor is the supreme symbol of that fascination, the geometrical line to an infinity which is also a void. In its symbolism Fuller has perfectly balanced the internal and external dimension of the drama, because we cannot fail to see how the urge to penetrate to the truth gradually turns into a violent and vertiginous descent into Johnny's own self.

One scene is particularly telling in this respect: when Johnny loses his voice trying to talk to Boden. The discovery of the name of the murderer coincides with the finishing of the portrait--a portrait in which Johnny finally recognizes himself as he really is.

In a sense, the killing of Sloan is paralleled in Johnny's pursuit of his desires, regardless of the suffering he inflicts on Cathy--ultimately having to "kill" their relationship in order to achieve his goal. Thus the final encounter with Wilkes becomes profoundly symbolic! In Wilkes Johnny meets his alter-ego, and the fury with which he attacks him is the suicidal fury of his own irrational pursuit. The moment of final lucidity is at the same time the moment when the inherent madness of the whole enterprise explodes with full force, and when the wholly irrational nature of Johnny's drives burst upon the spectator with a violence and intensity that makes its emotional logic irrefutable: the accumulated energy of frustration finds its issue in pure violence, in an apocalyptic crescendo where all the contradictions discharge themselves like the lightning in Johnny's nightmare.

-- Thomas Elsaesser

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THE NAKED KISS. 1964. Written and directed by Samuel Fuller. Produced by Leon Fromkess, Sam Firks and Samuel Fuller. Photographed by Stanley Cortez. 90 minutes. Cast: Constance Towers (Kelly), Anthony Eisley (Griff), Michael Dante (Grant), Virginia Grey (Candy), Karen Conrad (Dusty), Barbara Perry (Edna), Neyle Morrow (Officer Sam), Charlie (Charlie).

Sam Fuller:Did you like that beginning? There's no fade-in. We open with a direct cut. For the first shot, the pimp has the camera strapped on his chest. I say to Towers, "Hit the camera!" She hits the camera, the lens. Then I reverse it. I put the camera on her, and she whacks the hell out of him. I thought it was effective.

Martin Rubin: What were you intending with the imaginary trip to Venice during the big love scene?

Fuller: What I wanted more than anything else was to use that to build up to The Kiss, The Naked Kiss. I had to have something highly molasses-like, even cornily romantic. I couldn't just have them kissing on the couch. The minute she kisses him, she draws away. He says, "What's the matter?" She says, "Nothing." That's when she should have said, "There's something wrong with you." But she didn't. I had to have all that phoney mood for one reason: I thought if I gave him an overload of gibble-gabble--about poets and painters

and writers and musicians--we would understand why she doesn't object right then. I had to get a man who symbolized everything she was hungry for. I went overboard. I had to.

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America: Fuller's constant theme. THE NAKED KISS is set in a small town full of nice people. It is the kind of small town which traditionally is seen as the backbone of America, repository of decency, virtue, clean-ness, purity. THE NAKED KISS is an expose. It destroys the myth of the small town idyll. Its heroine, Kelly, is a whore, an honest woman. Its villain, Grant, the beau ideal, the Korean war hero, is revealed as a child violator, corrupt and corrupting.

The two central and contrasted images which dominate the film are those of the brothel ("Candy Ala Carte") and the children's hospital. The brothel is outside the city limits: vice is expelled from the realm of virtue ("This town is clean"). It represents hate and sterility. The children's hospital, an orthopedic centre, represents love and possibility, potentiality. Just as the bonbons who are for sale in Candy's brothel are outwardly beautiful and attractive but inwardly hard and unscrupulous, so the deformed and mutilated children in the hospital are outwardly warped but inwardly pure and innocent.

The film hinges on three extraordinary episodes of violence. First, in the opening, Kelly attacks the pimp, Farlunde, with her bag. Then, second, she attacks the madam, Candy, and stuffs her mouth with dollar bills. Thirdly, she kills Grant, her fiance, by striking him with the telephone. The three victims of her attack are all corrupters. Farlunde seeks to corrupt Kelly herself by using her, not simply as a prostitute, but as bait in a crooked political intrigue. Candy seeks to corrupt one of the nurses at the hospital by inveigling her into becoming a bonbon girl. Grant seeks to corrupt the little girl who comes to his house. There is a descending order of age in the corrupter's targets; the experienced woman, the teen-ager, the young child. The retribution conversely rises on an ascending scale, culminating in the murder of Grant.

For innocence to be protected there must be guardians, almost in a sense crusaders, prepared to use violence in its defense. Since the innocent child cannot defend himself he needs the violence of the prostitute or mercenary or criminal. The real battle between good and evil is displaced from the centre of society to its margins.

In THE NAKED KISS the judgement is on America and the disenchantment with America. The moralist is confronted with an insoluble dilemma. Society is evil and corrupt, but there are only two alternatives to it. The first is madness, and this alternative is traced in SHOCK CORRIDOR. The second is exile or, at the extreme, martyrdom. As long as moral regeneration is seen as the condition for social change, Kelly is doomed to be a whore and an outcast, a saint and a true American.

-- Peter Wollen

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PICKUP ON SOUTH STREET. 1953. Directed by Samuel Fuller. Produced by Jules Schermer for Twentieth Century Fox. Screenplay by Samuel Fuller, from a story by Dwight Taylor. Photographed by Joe MacDonald. 80 minutes. Cast: Richard Widmark (Skip McCoy), Jean Peters (Candy), Thelma Ritter (Moe Williams), Richard Kiley (Joey), Milburn Stone (Winoki), Stuart Randall (Police Commissioner), Victor Perry (Lightnin' Louie). Thelma Ritter received an Academy Award nomination for best supporting actress. The film won the Bronze Lion Award at the Venice Film Festival in 1953.

Sam Fuller: A Commie doesn't mean to me what he does to a lot of other people. Frankly, I don't understand what they're talking about. It's all meaningless. Politics bore me, but the politicians do not bore me, because they're characters.

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When I finally saw PICKUP ON SOUTH STREET for the first time last summer it was an affirmation of Fuller's genius beyond my expectations. Here was the most dreaded of his works by the liberal critical establishment, a work which revels in apparent right-wing fascism, yet I suspect that a true radical would like this film more than would a reactionary. If America is a beautiful country whose patriotic citizens will defend it forever with the noblest and purest of motives, why is it that the core of Fuller's perception of American society (at least that part of society which is most meaningful) is always the pickpockets, prostitutes, and finks who exist only for the sake of strictly personal interests? The energy of Richard Widmark in PICKUP, Cliff Robertson in UNDERWORLD, U.S.A., or Constance Towers in THE NAKED KISS is a notably American quality and a very positive one, but this energy seems to be animated solely for the sake of struggling against a hostile environment. To be sure, Widmark defends America in the end against the communists, but he does so only because the girl he loves has become a pawn in an elaborate game. What one remembers is the exhilarating scene in which the federal agent asks soberly, "Do you know what treason is?" and Widmark breezily answers "Who cares?"

The commies in PICKUP are not bearded Marxist revolutionaries. They are simply professional spies with no more theoretical stakes of the cold war than the mercenaries and psychopaths who make up Fuller's gallery of protagonists. In the end, there really is no political attitude behind a Fuller film, and a movie like PICKUP ON SOUTH STREET puts the work of any simple-minded political director in its proper prospective. A work like Haskell Wexler's MEDIUM COOL, muddled in any case by the heavy-handed stupidities of its realization, is actually as intellectually flabby as THE GREEN BERETS. The truest artist is the one with an individuality, the one not afraid of the ambivalence of his ideas. While PICKUP is great in its own right, it is perhaps still more interesting in the light of a film like UNDERWORLD, U.S.A. In UNDERWORLD the hero has become a psychopath, there is not even the possibility of a happy resolution for him, and related to this, the infiltrating communists have become true Americans, a syndicate which rules by violence.

PICKUP is further related to UNDERWORLD, U.S.A. by its brutal love scenes. These scenes contain such a measure of feeling that it is difficult to gauge whether it is violence, tenderness or sheer eroticism which rivets ones attention to them. Ultimately, Fuller is moving not because of his ideas, fascinating though they may be, but because of his resolutely modern approach to his work. He never conceives of scenes as alternations between varying moods. The moods that make up a film overlap in each scene. Violence is beautiful, beauty is violent. Sensitivity is but a mask of brutality and brutality is but a mask of sensitivity. The most hysterical barrage of image and sound is but an echo in the stillness of eternity. To put it another way, the lovely children's song in THE NAKED KISS, heard as Kelly enters Grant's house, is nothing but the accompaniment to the rape of a child. There will always be those who doubt Fuller's intellectual lucidity, but such doubts cannot begin to penetrate the impression of depth he conveys by virtue of so inspired a sense of structure. Like certain other great directors--Griffith, Dreyer, Ford,

Antonioni, Godard--he is a natural. To such a director, the medium cannot help but manifest perfectly the dimensions of his perception.

-- Blake Lucas

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PARK ROW. 1952. Written, produced and directed by Samuel Fuller. Photographed by Jack Russell. 83 minutes. Cast: Gene Evans (Phineas Mitchell), Mary Welch (Charity Hackett), Bela Kovacs (Ottmar Mergenthaler), Herbert Heyes (Josiah Daveport), Don Orlando (Mr. Angelo), Neyle Morrow (Thomas Guest).

For Fuller, PARK ROW is an affectionate and sentimental return to his roots in newspaper reporting. The young copy boy in the film must be a young Sam Fuller in some of the most exciting days on Park Row. As a bit of nostalgia, this would be a slight film if it were not for the incredible moving camera work which follows the characters up and down Park Row, in and out of buildings and around the Globe newspaper office in stunning long takes. Coming as it did in 1952, this film ranks with the work of Max Ophuls as one of the greatest examples of moving camera in the history of the cinema.

Fuller: Did you like the street? That whole set was based on memory. It was authentic. I wanted it to look like Park Row as I remembered it. I made them build the sets four stories high, because that's how it really looked. Usually, you don't even build two stories. They said, "What do you want four stories for? You'll probably never even show it that high up. Nobody'll know it's there." I said, "I'll see it, and I'll know it's there. It means something to me." A lot of inside stuff is in the picture. Newspaper stuff. Little things that most people wouldn't notice. But I wanted it there.

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THE BARON OF ARIZONA. 1950. Written and directed by Samuel Fuller. Produced by Carl K. Hittelman for Lippert Productions. Photographed by James Wong Howe. 93 minutes. Cast: Vincent Price (James Addison Reavis), Ellen Drew (Sofia Peralta Reavis), Beulah Bondi (Loma Morales), Vladimir Sokoloff (Pepita Alvarez), Reed Hadley (John Griff), Karen Kester (Sofia as a child).

Fuller: What I was interested in was a man with a child. When the child grows up, and the man sleeps with her, I wanted to get a funny feeling there. I wasn't trying to be provocative or incestuous, but I did have an idea about how exciting it must be to see a man with a nine- or ten-year-old girl, and you know that in so many years, he's going to lay her. That's what got me started on the yarn, because I like those sorts of stories; they get people nervous. I tried to get that into the picture, but I had to soft-pedal it. Today, I'd hit it. Oh, would I hit it!

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Though he claims he was not engaged by the specific potentialities of the medium until PARK ROW, the four predecessors of that film are nevertheless remarkable for their msinfestation of cinematic intelligence. These are notablt compressed, the action characteristically expressed in intense close and medium shots. One must read the story from the expressiveness of these shots, not from conventional exposition (the only routinely directed scene in I SHOT JESSE JAMES is a

saloon fight). With this in mind, we may perceive that THE BARON OF ARIZONA documents an adventure, not because of any spectacular sequences (there are none) but because of the soul of the adventurer. Reavis plans and subjects himself to a strange process of treachery, not realizing the implications of this process can never be what he intended. We see him as he sees himself, first as villain then as hero. His emotion in discovering the love of his wife, and in turn his own love, is visually expressed by the rain which falls the night he discovers her as a child and again many years later when he is released from prison.

If this film seems less intense than some of Fuller's others, it is because the intuitive quest for serenity which goes unanswered in most of his films is here realized and informs the whole with an uncharacteristic feeling of stability. It is perhaps curious that the protagonist whose neurotic impulses seem most excessive would become the manifestation of this stability, but this is what gives the film its particular distinction.

-- Blake Lucas

It should be noted that the marred slightly by an added commentary, for which Fuller is not responsible.

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Fuller's filmography: 1949--I Shot Jesse James. 1950--The Baron of Arizona, The steel Helmet. 1951--Fixed Bayonets. 1952--Park Row. 1953--Pickup On South Street. 1954--Hell and High Water. 1955--House of Bamboo. 1957--China Gate, Run of the Arrow, Forty Guns. 1959--The Crimson Kimono. 1960--Verboten! 1961--Underworld, U.S.A. 1962--Merrill's Marauders. 1963--Shock Corridor. 1965--The Naked Kiss. 1970--Shark.

Fuller made SHARK in 1966 in Mexico (it was then called CAINE), but this film was subsequently re-cut by the producers and is still waiting for release probably this summer. Fuller has been unable to realize any other projects in the years since THE NAKED KISS, although he has prepared many, some of them (like the Vietnam war story THE RIFLE) very important to him. How ironic that the two directors who have represented most decisively a modern, revitalized approach to the American cinema, Fuller and Nicholas Ray, are both idle as the voices of revolution clamor in this country. Between them, these two directors, very different in many ways, have represented the most radical challenge to traditional American values.