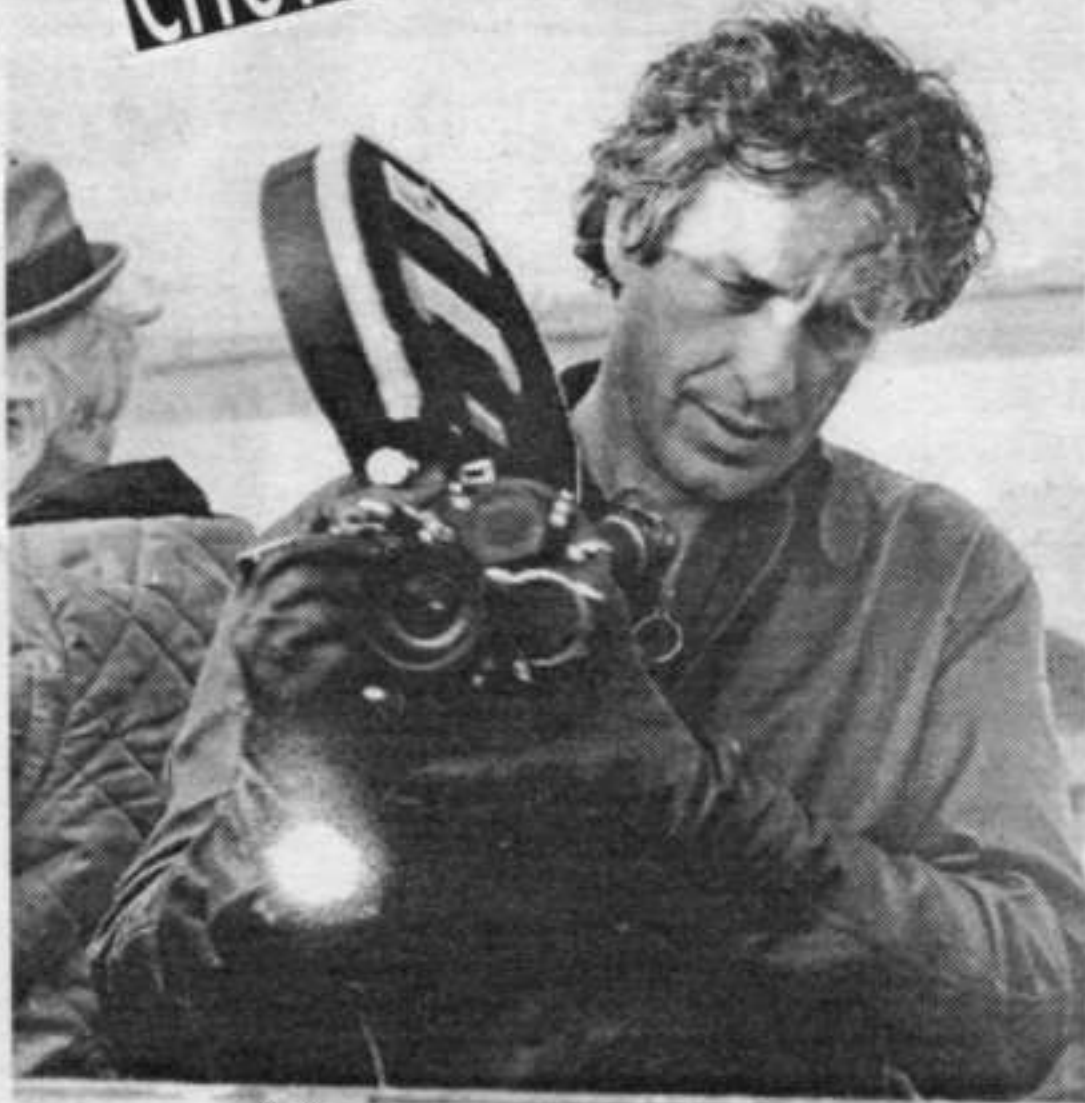


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A Constant Forge

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These days, most accounts of John Cassavetes's work and career tend to be either uncomprehending dismissals, which often wrongly assume that his scripts were mainly improvised by his actors, or uncritical hagiography. At least the hagiography is better informed, and this is especially true of Charles Kiselyak's 200-minute video documentary, finished last year—possibly the most complete look at the man we've had yet and much easier to follow than most of the books published about him. The narration is drawn from Cassavetes's own words—a drawback as well as a plus, because sometimes he created as much confusion around his work as his detractors—but the biggest value of this chronicle lies in the interviews with most of the writer-director's main actors, including Gena Rowlands, Peter Falk, Ben Gazzara, Seymour Cassel, Lelia Goldoni, and Lynn Carlin, who perceptively discuss their own performances and those of their colleagues. We even get some insights into Cassavetes's theater work, from Jon Voight and Carol Kane, among others, and into his handling of music in his films—subjects that are usually neglected in other accounts. There's also a generous supply of clips, many of which will mean a lot more to those who already know the films. To be shown on DigaBeta video as part of the Film Center's ongoing Cassavetes retrospective. Kiselyak may appear at the Friday screening to discuss his work. Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State, Friday, July 20, 6:30; Saturday, July 21, 3:00 and 7:00; Sunday, July 22, 3:00; Tuesday, July 24, 6:30; and Thursday, July 26, 6:00; 312-846-2800.

—Jonathan Rosenbaum