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Arthur Penn (1922-): **Themes and Variants**





Arthur Penn (1922-) Themes and Variants



1970 86 Min. 16mm Sound Film Color Rental: D

ALSO AVAILABLE FOR 5-YEAR LEASE: \$1200

Directed, written and produced by Robert P. S. B. Hughes; editor and associate producer—Bernard Stone; photographed by Paul Goldsmith and Robert Fiore. With Dede Allen, Anne Bancroft, Warren Beatty, Alice and Ray Brock, William and Margaret Brenman Gibson, Arlo Guthrie, Dustin Hoffman, Arthur, Peggy, Matthew and Molly Penn.

Winner 1970-71 Emmy Award for Outstanding Achievement in Cultural Documentary Programming.

Academy Award-winning documentary film-maker Robert Hughes (ROBERT FROST: A LOVER'S QUARREL WITH THE WORLD) has created a powerful and incisive portrait of Arthur Penn. The film, which took several months to shoot, depicts Penn at work (photographing LITTLE BIG MAN on location with Dustin Hoffman); at home (with his wife and two children); and as seen by colleagues and friends (Arlo Guthrie, Warren Beatty, William Gibson).

Hughes intercuts Penn's discussion of his background and work with many relevant moments from his films. The roles of violence and sexuality in Penn's films are reflected in scenes from THE CHASE and MICKEY ONE. His preoccupation with both fame and lost parental figures is revealed in scenes from THE LEFT HANDED GUN and ALICE'S RESTAURANT.

Outstanding sequences portray Penn as he rehearses Dustin Hoffman for two striking scenes in LITTLE BIG MAN: a comic episode in which he learns to shoot, and a highly dramatic moment in which he tries to dissuade General Custer from hanging him. These scenes vividly demonstrate Penn's love of improvisation and his stress on the physical aspects of a performance (concerns which are further illustrated by highly charged moments from THE MIRACLE WORKER and BONNIE AND CLYDE).

Hughes dynamically captures the balance of intense joy and grief which has characterized the director's life and work. Penn's humor is revealed in a contagiously funny sequence in which he reads to his family from Mark Twain's scatological "1601." This vital comic sense has pervaded many of his characterizations. The dark aspect of Penn's personality is uncovered in a highly moving scene, during which Penn describes the deep scars left on him by his father's tragic death. This enduring grief seems especially evident in the scenes between Arlo and his dying father in ALICE'S RESTAURANT. Robert Hughes' film captures the broad range of emotions underlying Penn's personality, and is a compendium of some of the most impressive passages from the director's films.

Selected for exhibition at the American, Cannes, Edinburgh, Melbourne and Sydney Film Festivals.

"An excellent ninety-minute essay on Arthur Penn, remarkable for the lack of cliché in its documentary method . . . The most attractive quality of Robert Hughes' production is its openness, its flexible combination of personal insight and critical analysis. The static quality and stumbling development of the usual interview is avoided, both by the device of keeping the interviewer out of frame and excluding his questions entirely, and by the appositeness of the clips from Penn's films that are cut in to illustrate his remarks . . . Most successful of all is the way the interviews are edited together (with changes in setting providing a certain visual variety) to follow Penn in his examination of his recurring themes . . . And Hughes' method is neatly justified towards the end of the film when, discussing Bergman's WILD STRAWBERRIES with his wife, Penn talks of the universal need to 'revisit . . . these experiences of self-definition.' "

—Richard Combs, *British Film Institute Monthly Film Bulletin*

"A model of its kind."

—Michael Capdenac, *Les Lettres Francaises*

"Excellent."

—Amos Vogel, *The Village Voice*

"National Educational Television continues to lead the way in producing excellent films . . . Robert Hughes' intelligent and empathetic study of a film director (is) brilliant."—Margot S. Kernan, *International Film Guide 1971*

"Hughes has come up with another work whose distinction cannot be gainsaid."

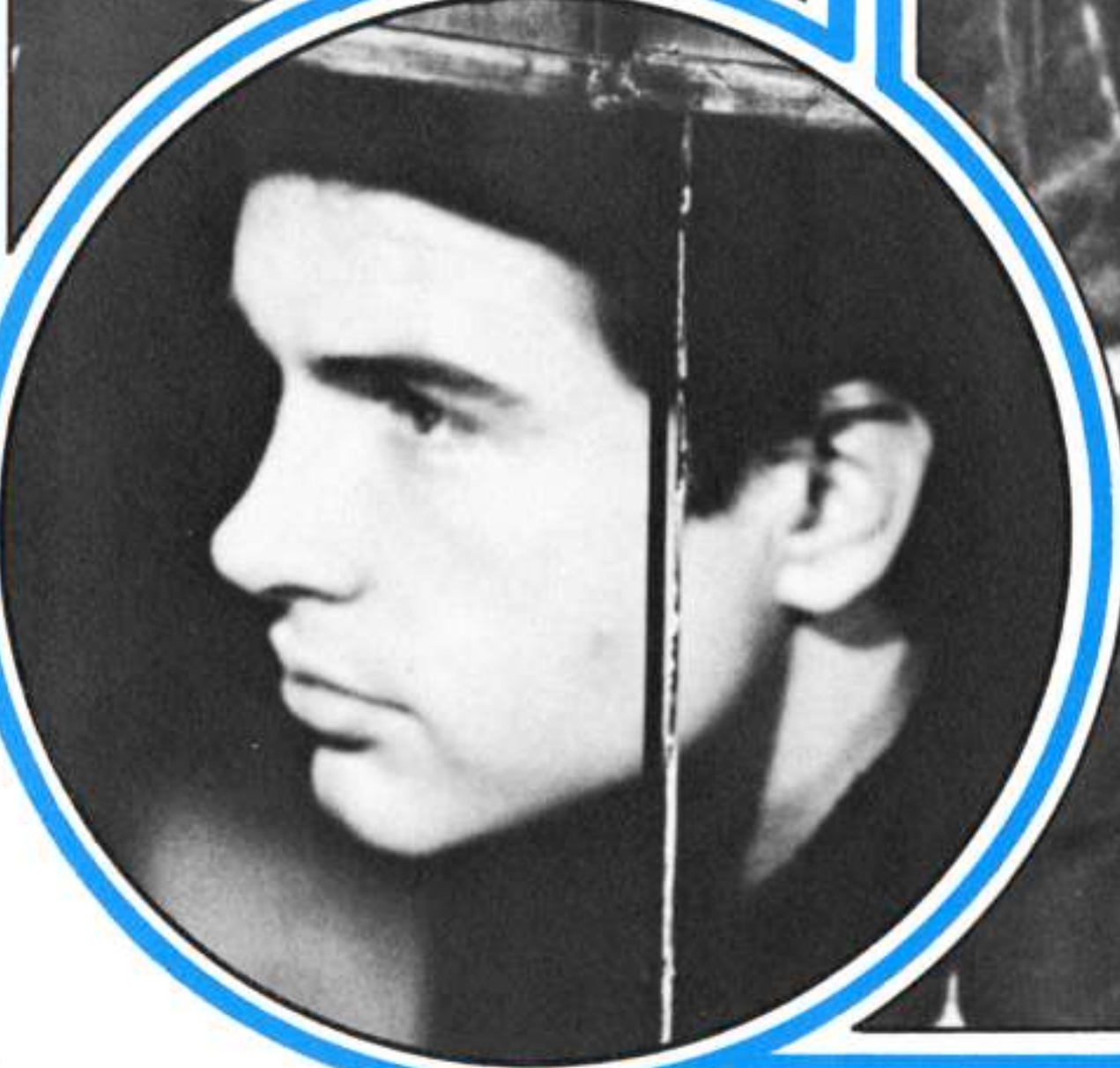
—William Tusher, *Hollywood Reporter*

"Restless, jazzily shot portrait . . . very much a filmy film."

—*The Observer* (London)

" . . . an extraordinary documentary . . . fascinating explanations of important scenes . . . Mr. Hughes has gone in tight on Penn's gifts as a director; his intuitive talent for coaxing the most from an actor, the ability to channel his violent genius into visceral drama, as well as the family problems and psychological introspection which have shaped his talent . . . a fascinating and highly informative look at one of our top directors, a must-see for any student of film."

—Louise Sweeney, *Christian Science Monitor*



The Film-makers



ARTHUR PENN has become one of the most successful and celebrated of contemporary American filmmakers. He directed a number of successful TV shows during the 50s, including the original production of THE MIRACLE WORKER. In 1957, Fred Coe, an old army friend, hired Penn to direct THE LEFT HANDED GUN, his first film. The director's other films include: THE MIRACLE WORKER ('62), MICKEY ONE ('64), THE CHASE ('65), BONNIE AND CLYDE ('67), ALICE'S RESTAURANT ('69) and LITTLE BIG MAN ('70). Penn has also directed several award-winning Broadway shows, including TWO FOR THE SEESAW, THE MIRACLE WORKER, ALL THE WAY HOME, AN EVENING WITH NICHOLS AND MAY and TOYS IN THE ATTIC. He is the director of the annual Berkshire Theatre Festival in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

ROBERT HUGHES (1929-) won an Oscar for his first feature-length film and an Emmy for his latest. His best known works are concerned with the creative process: ROBERT FROST ('63), VLADIMIR NABOKOV, RALPH ELLISON (both '66) as well as ARTHUR PENN ('70). Each of these biographical studies was sponsored by public television: WGBH, then NET and, lately, CBC and BBC. During the summer of '70, for ORTF, he made a film starring photographer Jacques-Henri Lartigue; he will reshoot this in English as LARTIGUE LIVES! From 1958 until recently he edited the Grove Press film book series. Also in '58, while president of AFFS, he began moviemaking at the U.N. Hughes has taught at UCLA and has often lectured on films.



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