

Document Citation

Title	Shadows
Author(s)	
Source	<i>Harvard Film Archive</i>
Date	2000 Sep 29
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	4
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Shadows, Cassavetes, John, 1960



John Cassavetes *Shadows* 1959

♦ September 29 (Friday) 7 pm

♦ October 3 (Monday) 7 pm

Shadows

Directed by John Cassavetes

US 1959, 35mm, b/w, 87 min.

*With Lelia Goldoni, Ben Carruthers,
Hugh Hurd*

MADE FOR \$40,000 with an amateur cast and crew, Cassavetes's first film established not only his reputation (it took five prizes, including the Critics' Award at the Venice Film Festival) but a new approach to filmmaking. Expanding the improvisational techniques explored in an Actors' Workshop class he was teaching, Cassavetes fashioned a deeply affecting portrait of three siblings who live "just beyond the bright lights of Broadway." Shot on location in New York with a hand-held 16mm camera, the film follows a struggling black nightclub entertainer (Hurd), his aimless younger brother (Carruthers), and their vulnerable sister (Goldoni)—the latter two more or less "passing" for white. Groundbreaking in its emotional complexity, its free-form style, and its striking naturalism, *Shadows* proved as much a landmark for American independent filmmaking as Godard's *Breathless* (made the same year) did in France. For its director, *Shadows* remained "the film I love the best."

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