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TRACING THE ERA OF THE HIGH-CONCEPT FILM:
A STUDY OF CINEMATIC TRENDS IN POPULAR
MOTION PICTURE PRODUCTION

presented by

Douglas Clark Osman

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Master of Arts degree in Telecommunication

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TRACING THE ERA OF THE HIGH-CONCEPT FILM:
A STUDY OF CINEMATIC TRENDS IN POPULAR MOTION PICTURE PRODUCTION

By

Douglas Clark Osman

A THESIS

Submitted to

Michigan State University
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ABSTRACT

TRACING THE ERA OF THE HIGH-CONCEPT FILM: A STUDY OF CINEMATIC TRENDS IN POPULAR MOTION PICTURE PRODUCTION

By

Douglas Clark Osman

This thesis examined the existence of thematic cycles in motion picture history and their relationship to audience and economic variables. The aim of this research was to trace the history of these trends up to the current film industry, then make a prediction for the next upcoming trend. Finally, a feature-length screenplay which embraces the characteristic elements of this next trend was written by the author.

The author distinguished four previous, completed filmmaking cycles--early spectacles, musicals, epics, and introspective films of the 1970s. There is also an analysis of the current outgoing cycle called high-concept, lavish, fantasy-oriented productions popularized by filmmakers Steven Spielberg and George Lucas. The author predicts the next trend to be low-concept biographical films, initiated by the successes of Amadeus and Out of Africa.

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DEDICATION

For my mother and father, Marilyn and Albert. None of this was ever possible without you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

High-concept and the Idea of Filmmaking Trends

The business of making motion pictures is an enterprise that, historically, has often been viewed with contempt. The American filmmaking industry is the bastard artform in contemporary culture, trapped between critic appraisal and box-office expectations. Producers and directors are constantly faced with the types of decisions that test professionalism and integrity: should a film be artistic or commercial?; original or copied?; mainstream or revolutionary? Because Hollywood is an industry of profit, these decisions are rarely pondered upon for very long.

When we keep in mind the pecuniary interests of the American filmmaking trade, it is not difficult to ascertain specific trends, or cycles, in the types of films that were made during the last 75 years. Among a motion picture producer's primary functions is to insure profit, so when he sees a certain genre of film succeed, his instinct is understandable: if the audience paid to see it once, they will pay to see more of the same. More often than not, the conclusion is correct.

Whatever the reasons might be, audiences seem to popularize movies in waves. During the 1930's the American public fell in love with the Hollywood musical, and for nearly 30 years, this was the genre of film that dominated our theatres. In the 1970s, the

"disaster" film and movies analyzing the fabric of society prevailed. During two distinctly different periods in American history--the 1920s and the 1960s--motion picture spectaculars, or epics, commanded the majority of the profits at our box-offices. Today, following the introspective, and sometimes depressing cycle of the early 1970s, a much lighter, more frivolous trend has taken form: the high-concept film. High-concept films introduced the term "blockbuster" in cinematic terminology by uniting simple storylines with glossy special effects and flagrant budgets. The cycle began in 1975 and prospered until 1985, when its demise gave birth to the newest model in filmmaking, called low-concept. By purposely counter-programming against the extravagant high-concept formula, producers with smaller movies and smaller budgets are making respectable profits with more intelligent, complicated films. Low-concept motion pictures like El Norte, Kiss of the Spiderwoman, and Places in the Heart are attracting older audiences by telling stories about people, not fantasy. Their box-office successes suggest that audiences are losing interest in the tired formulas of high-concept and are ready to cast their attentions on an entirely new cycle of films.

The Production Thesis

This research examines the cyclical nature of popular motion picture production in the United States. The study will rely on available financial data -- production costs and box-office revenues - - in order to identify tendencies in the types of films produced during the last 90 years. The research will attempt to look beyond the surface of these trends in an effort to determine catalysts, elements both within (such as economic decisions) and outside (such

factors as audience preferences) the industry which help to initiate these cycles.

The aforementioned study serves as a foundation for Chapter IV of this thesis. The ultimate goals of the conducted historical research are to better understand the nature of the high-concept cycle, the most recent (and, in an increasingly diminishing sense, current) trend in popular, commercial filmmaking. Because the cycle is gradually being supplanted by its heir apparent, the low-concept film, the situation represents a unique opportunity for study.

The objectives of this research are threefold. First, the initial historical research will serve to illustrate the commercial evolution of the filmmaking industry; that is, the elements from within and outside the business which helped propel its success. The second objective is to utilize our understanding of motion picture history as an approach to comprehending the mechanics of the business today. This analysis will highlight the origins of high-concept, the successes which fueled its popularity, and, ultimately, the reasons for its decline. Finally, the last objective is to execute a feature-length screenplay which attempts to exhibit the burgeoning low-concept style.

Chapter II of this research is a review of literature probing the nature and industry interpretations of high concept. Chapter III is an historical perspective on the development of American filmmaking as a cyclical industry. Chapter IV will investigate the era of high-concept, its origin, proliferation, and decline. This chapter will conclude by making predictions for the types of films which will populate the upcoming low-concept era. Chapter V is a script

demonstrating the low-concept style of film. Chapter VI will include an analysis of the script and author conclusions.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Though it seems no formal research has ever been conducted on the high-concept phenomenon, many authors have included personal observations as peripheral material in their related work. Numerous comments devoted to the origins and criticism of the high-concept era exist in recent literature, but there remains a dearth of substantive writing on the evolution and future implications of the model. Indeed, even the accepted label, high-concept, rarely appears in print.

In his 1983 discourse on the motion picture industry, screenwriter William Goldman speculated on the decision-making process of producers, and the types of films that, more often, seem to get made:

There's a whole world of subject matter that will never be touched by the major studios. Because the executives know the sort of film that may work. Just like the bright boys in Detroit knew, a while back, that what the American public really wanted was a great big glossy gas-guzzling car. And all that interest that was starting in Japanese cars? Just another nonrecurring phenomenon.¹

Goldman's philosophy of nonrecurring phenomenon suggests a rationalization for the illogical successes in the industry. "What it means, of course, is this: It was a freak, a fluke, a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence."² The author poses the film The Four Seasons

as an example. "Four Seasons had nothing going for it--no movie stars, no violence, it wasn't even all that funny. It was just this lovely movie about--about friendships, for Chrissakes. So it's success both depresses and frightens studio people."³ The unpredictable nature of motion picture production, Goldman suggests, makes the industry's important decision-making process unclear. How do producers decide what to produce when they are not always certain what audiences want to see?

Rebello investigated a number of his favorite, unproduced screenplays in Hollywood (most have been optioned but remain unproduced) and reveals a distinction between those and what is making it to theatres instead. Much of what is successful today is commercial and "...all too often high-concept junk."⁴

A Vice-President for New World Pictures concurs on the issue: "Perhaps, unlike novelists, in recent years screenwriters have become more concerned with writing high-concept or obviously commercial material which has resulted in a decline in quality."⁵

Much of the recent literature concerning high concept has been critical of the formula's shortcomings. Cagin and Bray defined the hit films from the late 1970s as defiant escapism and happy, introspective movies, then illustrated a recent scenario: "How different things had been earlier in the decade, when an epic political metaphor, The Godfather, held sway and an escapist blockbuster like Love Story was blasted for its insipidness."⁶ That analogy, the authors maintain, was a paradox of the Hollywood mentality that would later preside: "By the late seventies, Hollywood was holding onto its audience with movies that exhausted every means

at their disposal (dramatic and technical) to say as little as possible. It was only by deliberately avoiding strong viewpoints, by devaluing their work, that filmmakers could erect a tent large enough to embrace an audience big enough to pay for it."⁷

Cook lauds the founding efforts of George Lucas and Star Wars, with its unprecedented use of computer-generated special effects, but he criticizes the film and its creator for manipulation of the audience's perception. "There is no room for interpretation or speculation in Star Wars: everyone who sees it has precisely the same experience. The same might be said of Steven Spielberg's Jaws (1975) and Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977), both technically polished to a degree but so calculated in terms of effect that they have all the predictability of a Big Mac hamburger."⁸

In the late 1970s, when America clearly seemed in a state of transition,⁹ Hollywood felt the impulse to change, as well. Cagin and Bray see the metathesis as the result of the competition of message: "Once again, Hollywood met a transitional crisis by offering the public what television, cable and video could not: with sex and violence abundant on the small screen, Hollywood turned to technological razzle-dazzle and large-screen spectacle conspicuously devoid of the "taboo" subjects and social problems which had become television's bread and butter."¹⁰ The authors seem to acknowledge that the escapist high-concept movies have only two purposes: to not demand much of their audience's intelligence, and to simply amuse for a few hours.

The reasons for the perpetuation of high-concept motion pictures seem abundant. Pirie cites the tremendous pressure put upon producers

and directors by their agents, and the studios, who urge filmmakers to strive for the blockbuster productions.¹¹ Business Week claims that summer successes like Friday the 13th, which grossed \$40 million in 1980, simply encourage studios to churn out more of the same.¹² The author indicates the growing industry conservatism, the impulse to follow safe, established trends, as the excuse.¹³ New York Times critic Vincent Canby, in Mark Litwak's Reel Power, concurs: "The trends are all dictated by economics. The films that make money get made again and again."¹⁴ Actress Jane Fonda, in the same source, describes motion picture executives as "...a herd of turtles. If one particular genre becomes successful [they all emulate it]. When Easy Rider... made a lot of money, everybody who came in with long hair and looked like Dennis Hopper and my brother got hired to do a film."¹⁵

Shales suggests that, although much of the dilemma is financial in nature, there seem to be other factors at work. The author offers six possibilities: (1) the narrow-minded urge of movie stars to appear in "hits"; (2) the corporate takeovers of the motion picture studios; (3) the recent lack of inventiveness and style that directors seem to have; (4) the failure of critics to educate their readers of the potential that films can have; (5) the lack of sensuality (as opposed to teenaged sex) in today's films; and (6) the vanishing maverick directors of the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁶

Shales mentions the recent corporate bent in the industry as a strong influence on the origination of high-concept. Ironically, in her 1950 study of the Hollywood film industry, anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker seemed to prophesize the current state:

Behind the lack of faith in their own judgement about doing something different from the hackneyed rules, may be the fact that most of the top executives seem to be men without real understanding of what makes a good movie. When they have an unexpected success or failure, they appear unable to analyze the reasons for either, but attribute it to the public or to luck. In other businesses, successful designers of clothes, hats, jewelry and architecture launch new styles and take chances on their success. Theatre and publishing, which are taking on more and more characteristics of big business, still constantly take chances with new ideas. But the motion picture industry rarely has this courage, and its system of production discourages originality. This is not only detrimental to the artists who work in Hollywood, but also bad business practice.¹⁷

In a surprising comment, high-concept producer, Steven Spielberg agrees:

"There is a paranoia today. People are afraid. People in high places are unable to say "okay" or "not okay," they're afraid to take the big gamble. They're looking for the odds-on-favorite. And that's....very very hard when you're making movies. All motion pictures are a gamble. Anything having to do with creating something that nobody's seen before, and showing it, and counting on 10 or 20 million people, individuals, to go into the theatre to make or break that film--that's a gamble. And I just think in the old days, in the golden age of Hollywood, gambling was just taken for granted."¹⁸

Denby seems to believe that the problem lies not only with the big business moguls of today's industry, but with the marketing men who push contemporary films into our theatre. "At the moment, the only thing the system does well is market. But that's a very sinister development, for the marketing strategies not only determine how the pictures are presented to the public, they determine which movies get made and which don't, what the movies are about, and sometimes which actors appear in them."¹⁹ Corliss points out that the average motion picture budget today is somewhere near \$10 million, with another \$6 million used to market the film. The situation, understandably,

convinces producers and studios to recoup their investment as quickly as possible; hence, the inclination to "recycle the familiar into the surefire."²⁰

High-concept filmmaking suggests a broad financial potential. As well as cashing-in record box-office receipts, high-concept movies often inspire expensive high-tech toys, such as robots, videogames, electronic games and toy guns. Wasko indicates that motion picture financing of current films can depend largely on these high-concept spin-off consumer producers, including children's toys, cereal, lunch boxes, and clothing.²¹ Kael takes the issue one step further: films that are large-scale adventures, or have big-name talent, can command network licensing fees between \$15 million and \$25 million. Guarantees of this size can often come in at double the film's budget.²²

American Film solicited comments from professionals closely associated with the film industry regarding past influences and future projections for the business. The article gathered a number of interesting reactions. Screenwriter Ring Lardner criticized the megahit producers for subordinating content to technique:

Their superhits, when screened by future scholars, will suggest that among the great issues of our day, were the malevolent forays of the great white shark, the imperialist assaults of an alien galaxy, the international struggle for possession of a biblical scroll booby-trapped with deathrays, the unfriendly occupation of innocent buildings and children's bodies by ghostly intruders, and the continuing conflict of attitudes about social relations with interplanetary visitors.²³

More optimistically, Choy suggested that the high-concept trend signals a revitalization period for "minority artists" who offer

filmgoers something other than the status quo."²⁴ While the mass audience throngs to see the sequels to Star Wars and Jaws, Choy believes a smaller, eclectic, more often cultured and educated audience will seek out more intelligent films to watch. Schrader attributes the high-concept style of filmmaking partially to MTV (the heavy use of rock music, special effects, rapid editing), but acknowledges that the future will be a reemergence of the kinds of film technique that MTV cannot provide: narrative, character, and theme--the basic elements of low-concept.²⁵

Despite the lack of investigation into the high-concept phenomenon, references and observations in other sources do shed some light on the subject. From this literature review, it appears as if: (1) the motion picture industry is definitely moving away from the high-concept movie and more towards the quieter, more intelligent low-concept film; and (2) that the high-concept era has become in many instances, nothing more than a financial bonanza for ill-informed executives who know little about motion picture production. The observations seems encouraging, suggesting that this present transition of cycles will move Hollywood from an era of growing flagrance to one of intelligence in filmmaking.

CHAPTER II--ENDNOTES

- ¹William Goldman, Adventures in the Screen Trade. New York: Warner Books, 1983, p. 52.
- ²Ibid., p. 50.
- ³Ibid.
- ⁴Stephen Rebello, "The Ten Best Unproduced Screenplays," America Film, April 1987, p. 31.
- ⁵Ibid.
- ⁶Seth Cagin and Philip Bray, Hollywood Films of the Seventies: Sex and Drugs, Biolence, Rock 'n' Roll, & Politics. New York: Harper & Row, 1984, p. xiv.
- ⁷Ibid.
- ⁸David A. Cook, A History of Narrative Film, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1981, p. 639.
- ⁹For example, it was in 1977 that the first post-Vietnam administration was elected, that the discovery of "punk rock" music and style gave many major cities the first anti-sixties culture.
- ¹⁰Cagin and Bray, p. 254.
- ¹¹David Pirie, editor, Anatomy of the Movies. New York: MacMaillan, 1981, p. 131.

CHAPTER II--ENDNOTES (continued)

- ¹²"Is Hollywood Making the Right Kind of Film?" Business Week,
October 27, 1980, p. 62.
- ¹³Ibid.
- ¹⁴Mark Litwak, Reel Power. New York: Morrow, 1986, p. 110.
- ¹⁵Ibid., p. 109.
- ¹⁶Tom Shales, "Seen Any Good Movies Lately?" Esquire, July 1986, pp.
93-96.
- ¹⁷Hortense Powdermaker, Hollywood, The Dream Factory. London: Secker
& Warburg, 1950, p. 91.
- ¹⁸Litmak, pp. 100-101.
- ¹⁹David Denby, "Can The Movies Be Saved?", New York, July 21, 1986, p.
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- ²⁰Richard Corliss, "The New Hollywood: Dead or Alive?" time, March
30, 1981, p. 66.
- ²¹Janet Wasko, Movies and Money: Financing the American Film Industry
Newport, New Jersey: ABLEX Publishing, 1982, p. 158.
- ²²Pauline Kael, "Why are Movies So Bad? or, The Numbers," The New
Yorker, June 23, 1980, p. 85.
- ²³"The Big Picture," American Film, June 1985, p. 80.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 87.
- ²⁵Ibid., p. 79.

CHAPTER III

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN FILMMAKING

The Notion of Motion Picture Trends

Throughout the relatively brief history of the motion picture industry, cinematic scholars and historians have delineated certain cycles, or trends, in popular film genre. Unlike the pure artforms (dance, music, painting, poetry), movies perform in an economic arena; they rely entirely upon the capricious tastes of the film-going audience. Hence, as the public abandons one popular genre of film for another, so goes the industry.

This idea of trends existing in motion picture production is nothing new to the industry. Hollywood has obviously acknowledged the existence of popular genres in its history, and has often drawn upon them to satisfy its audience. Yet, while identifying these cycles requires no significant effort, delineating and charting their courses does.

We can begin our analysis of cinematic trends by assembling an annual list of the most successful domestic films (See Appendix A). This list inventories popular films beginning with 1930 (information prior to this date is incomplete and often inaccurate), and includes financial information after 1946. By scrutinizing this information, this author can distinguish five significant trends in film

production, cycles that were made popular over varying periods in motion picture history.

Since trends are dictated by audience discrimination, it holds that significant drops in annual theatre attendance (measured by the industry on an annual, average weekly basis; See Appendix B) might signify the end of a cycle. Likewise, subsequent increases in attendance would suggest the beginning of a new trend, the proliferation of a new film genre that appeals to movie-goers. As will later become evident, this theory seems to bear substance.

The Formative Years

It took Hollywood roughly 20 years to outgrow its infancy. Between the late-1800s, when the medium was introduced commercially, and 1915, motion pictures were in the throes of an experimental period. Directors like Edwin S. Porter and Georges Melies toyed with strikingly divergent styles of filmmaking and storytelling, and discovered that the movie-going public would pay to see just about anything imaginative. Early melodramas and comedies entertained audiences in nickelodeon galleries with productions like Uncle Tom's Cabin (1903), The Great Train Robbery (1903), Broncho Billy's Adventure (1911), Faust (1908), Carmen (1908), The Stage Rustler (1908), The Life of Moses (1908), In the Days of the Thundering Herd (1910), and The Bearded Bandit (1912). Film styles and techniques were understandably crude, but this didn't seem to bother audiences of the time. Cinema was an exciting new medium that captured attentions, and as long as Hollywood had something new to show, the public was willing to pay to see almost anything.

The First Cycle: The Early Spectacles

Although it seemed, at times, as if this new medium could never fail, audiences were quickly becoming more sophisticated. After 20 years, the novelty of motion pictures was finally ending. Theatre attendance in many cities was beginning to drop dramatically, and, more often, producers were losing money. The public was becoming a discerning audience, demanding something new and different for its money. As a result, the premiere of Birth of a Nation (1915), and the successful establishment of its director, D.W. Griffith, launched the first cycle in motion picture history that was a direct response to sagging ticket sales: the early spectacle.

Public response to Birth of a Nation was overwhelming. By 1939, the film had grossed \$18,000,000 and netted \$5,000,000 in profits. With the release of the film, Griffith had accomplished two important feats for Hollywood. First, he introduced a successful new film genre, the spectacle, that audiences would popularize until the late 1920s (and later again, during the 1950s and 60s). And second, he was among the first in Hollywood to unite the talents of great directors with excellent talent. Indeed, the era introduced the public to the first Hollywood movie stars: Douglas Fairbanks, John Gilbert, Mary Pickford, Chaplin, et al., and some of the industry's finest directors: DeMille, Eisenstein, Chaplin. Between the years 1915 and 1927, audiences attended spectacles like The Three Musketeers (1921), The Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (1923), The Four Horseman of The Apocalypse (1921), Cecille B. DeMille's The Ten Commandments (1923), The Thief of Bagdad (1924), The Big Parade (1926), Ben Hur (1926), Old Ironside (1926), Wings (1927), and The King of Kings (1927).

Curiously, industry reaction to successful trends is always the same: bigger is better. Movie studios and producers seem to harbor suicidal delusions of grandeur, always assuming that success is eternal and that popular trends will last forever. Not surprisingly, the biggest financial failures always signal the end of a cycle. Just when movie budgets soar to the astronomical realm, audiences seem to lose interest in the trend. The results, naturally, are multi-million dollar losses and the end of that cycle in film history. This, coupled with the introduction of the talking motion picture, served as the segue for the next cycle in popular filmmaking, the musicals.

The Musicals

Beginning in 1927, with the release of The Jazz Singer, talking motion pictures seemed able to offer something unique enough to coax audiences back into movie theatres. Though, initially, they all didn't contain feature-length dialogue, sound-on-film productions spotlighting musical sequences were undeniably the most popular. After grossing \$3.5 million on the The Jazz Singer, Al Jolson went on to star in the less critically-acclaimed The Singing Fool (1928). Critical aspersions notwithstanding, the film grossed \$5 million and became the box-office champ of all time. By 1943, the height of the musical cycle, 40 percent of Hollywood film production was devoted to musicals. Films which followed the established musical formula flourished. According to Variety and International Motion Picture Almanac, some of the most popular productions of the era included: City Lights (1931), 42nd Street (1933), Gold Diggers of 1933 (1933), Follow the Fleet (1936), The Great Ziegfeld (1936), The Goldwyn Follies (1938), Happy Landing (1938), Babes in Arms (1939), Road to

Singapore (1940), The Ziegfeld Girl (1941), Yankee Doodle Dandee (1942), Irish Eyes Are Smiling (1944), Music for Millions (1944), A Song to Remember (1945), The Harvey Girls (1946), Ziegfeld Folies of 1946 (1946), The Jolson Story (1947), Easter Parade (1948), Jolson Sings Again (1949), Words and Music (1949), Take Me Out to the Ballgame (1949), Annie Get Your Gun (1950), On the Town (1950), Showboat (1951), An American in Paris (1951), Singin' in the Rain (1952), Stars and Stripes Forever (1952), White Christmas (1954), The Glenn Miller Story (1954), Seven Brides for Seven Brothers (1954), Brigadoon (1954), Guys and Dolls (1956), The King and I (1956), and South Pacific (1958). Musicals became one of the most durable and profitable cycles in cinematic history; they formed a trend that began slowly, ended rather abruptly, and lasted nearly 30 years. (See Figure 1.) Naturally, during this same time period, other shorter cycles flourished briefly: the "reaction" films to World War I; the horror films, exploited more notably by Universal and RKO; and the war dramas of World War II.

The Epics

In 1950, near the last years of the musical era, Hollywood seemed to sense the approaching end of the cycle. Studios began producing fewer of the musical films, which were grossing less money each year, and recast their attentions on the big budget epics which prospered during the 1920s. Following the example of DeMille and his peers, Hollywood soon discovered that bigger profits could be had with bigger-budgeted films. Included among the hits, a curious number of which were drawn from the Bible, were (NOTE: figures in parentheses represent theatre rental revenues, and the year of the film's

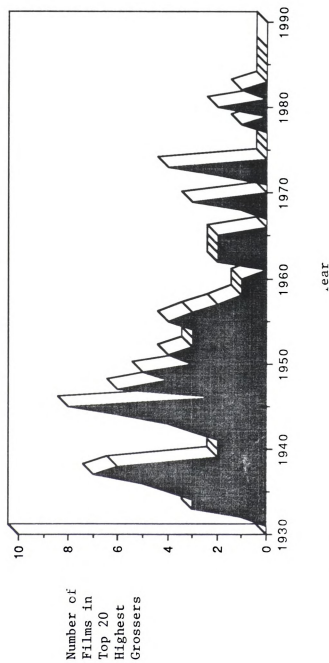


Figure 1. The Musical Cycle in Motion Picture History.

release): Samson and Delilah (\$11 million; 1950), David and Bathsheba (\$7 million; 1951), The Greatest Show on Earth (\$12 million; 1952), Quo Vadis (\$10.5 million; 1952), Ivanhoe (\$7 million; 1952), The Robe (\$20-30 million; 1953), The Egyptian (\$6 million; 1954), Battlecry (\$8 million; 1955), 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (\$8 million; 1955), War and Peace (\$6.25 million; 1956), The Ten Commandments (\$18.5 million; 1957), Around the World in 80 Days (\$16.2 million; 1957), The Bridge on the River Kwai (\$18 million; 1958), The Vikings (\$7 million; 1958), Ben Hur (\$17.3 million; 1960), Exodus (\$7.35 million; 1961), Spartacus (\$13.5 million; 1962), King of Kings (\$7.5 million; 1962), The Longest Day (\$12.75 million; 1963), and Lawrence of Arabia (\$9 million; 1963).

Budgets for the epics continued to escalate annually but ticket revenues, it seemed, would go no higher. Apparently there was still an audience for the monumental spectacles, but prohibitive production costs forced an end to the cycle. (See Figure 2.) Cleopatra, among the last of the epics, is still considered the most expensive motion picture ever produced in Hollywood. With a budget of \$45 million, the film grossed only \$15.7 million in its short theatrical run. The same film today would cost \$110 million to produce.

The Seventies

At first glance, it might seem that the end of the epic era was not met by the beginning of another trend, but the types of films that formed the popular cycles of the late-1960s and early-1970s were simply more elusive in definition. Besides occupying trends that were much shorter and less populated, some of the films of the 1970s defied the traditional classifications of genre. During this time frame in American history, the public conscience was entering an introspective

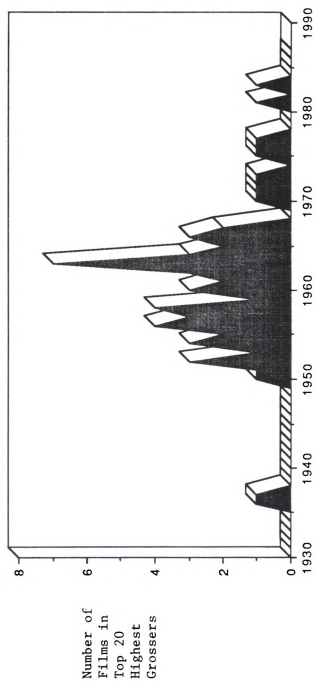


Figure 2. The Epic Cycle in Motion Picture History.

and politically-conscious era. Spurred by the Vietnam War, economic turmoil, political scandal and concern for the future, American ideology matured. The adult American public seemed to realize, especially with the discovery of the bomb, that everything in life was not as simple and carefree as the movies depicted. Naturally, this change in philosophy was soon mirrored in Hollywood.

With representation from nearly every genre that Hollywood had ever offered, films reflecting society and its inherent paranoia formed the most important cycle of the time. Beginning in 1966, the success of films like Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf? (\$10.3 million 1966), The Graduate (\$39 million; 1968), and Guess Who's Coming to Dinner? (\$25 million; 1968) suggested that not only was the viewing public willing to forego the superficiality of the musical production, it was willing to endure a depressing storyline if it could better understand itself. The trend continued onto and into the 1970s with Rosemary's Baby (\$7.2 million; 1969), Easy Rider (\$7.2 million; 1969), Midnight Cowboy (\$11 million; 1969), Catch-22 (\$9.25 million; 1970), A Clockwork Orange (\$2 million; 1972), The Trial of Billy Jack (\$15 million; 1974), Lenny (\$11 million; 1975), and One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (\$56.5 million; 1976).

Despite the extent of its introspection, however, the American public has never been able to tolerate depressing movies for lengthy periods. The cycle was inspired by the social turmoil of the time, but after a while audiences grew tired of dwelling on its problems and issues. Daily broadcasts brought news of the Vietnam War and Watergate, and this seemed to sate the public interest. Almost as quickly and quietly as it had begun, the most important cycle of

filmmaking in the 1970s ended, and the next was about to begin. (See Figure 3.)

The High-Concept Era

Although many insiders first considered it just another offering in one of the minor cycles of the 1970s, Steven Spielberg's disaster film, Jaws (1975) was actually much more than that. The film blended a simple storyline with state-of-the-art, high tech effects to produce one of the most disturbing films to ever reach the movie-going public. In its first release alone, Jaws netted \$102,650,000 at the box office and became the highest grossing film in movie history. With the premiere of the movie, the industry gave birth to its first true "megahit" and Hollywood entered the era of high-concept.

We assume that audience tastes in motion pictures dictated the nature of these trends, and, consequently, influenced the production decisions of that time.

Analysis of Audience and Production Data

We assume that audience taste in motion pictures dictated the nature of these trends, naturally, and influenced the production decisions of that time. Three important modes of analysis collectively lend credence to the theory of cycles in motion picture production. First, graphic data which demonstrates the existence of cyclical production; second, data concerning audience attendance; and lastly, overlay comparisons of the aforementioned data, which offer evidence that audience fluctuations closely match the beginnings and endings of cinematic cycles.

While Figures 1-3 do demonstrate that distinct film trends seem to exist, a more indepth analysis can compare these cycles against audience data. Figure 4 represents an overlay comparison of theatre attendance data (reduced by constant) in shade against film cycles in dark. The results, obvious on the graphs, are striking correlations between the two sets of information. The musical overlay exhibits similar peaks on both graphs for the important pinnacle years 1937 and 1945. For epics, a similar phenomenon occurs in 1963. The pinnacle years of 1971 and 1976 in the seventies trend of motion pictures also correlates with the audience fluctuation. The conclusion drawn from this, naturally, is that the existence of these cycles is a phenomenon of audience, trends that are dictated by viewers' tastes and changing interests in motion picture fare.

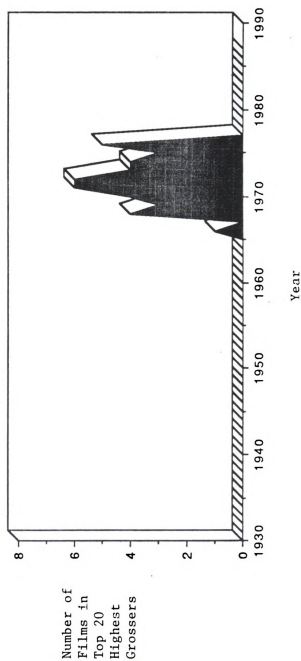


Figure 3. The Early 1970s: Cycle in Motion Picture History

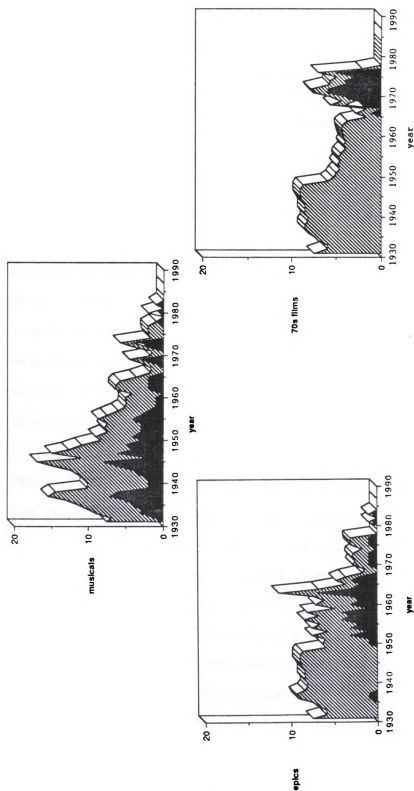


Figure 4. Overlay Comparison: Film Trends Against Average Weekly Attendance.
 (shaded area = average weekly attendance)
 (dark area = film cycle)

*for graphic comparative purposes, average weekly attendance is divided by 10

CHAPTER IV

THE ORIGIN OF HIGH CONCEPT

Origins of the Cycle

In 1975, near the end of the short 1970s introspective cycle in motion picture history, a young director named Steven Spielberg precipitated the beginning of the next dominant trend. With the release of his film Jaws, a contemporary horror film involving the attacks of a man-eating great white shark, a stylish formula for successful storytelling was discovered. The film united simple, exciting storytelling with excessive special effects and healthy financial backing. The film garnered domestic rentals of \$102,650,000 in 1975, and another \$16,077,000 in its 1976 re-release. In addition, after its multi-million dollar sale to broadcast network television, Jaws reaped enormous "after the fact" profits from the videocassette retail and rental market. In all, the film boasts net revenues of \$129,961,081 to date, and is ranked at number five on the list of financially successful motion pictures. (See Appendix C.)

It took most Hollywood insiders a few years to understand the significance to the industry that Jaws represented. At about the same time that the film was packing theatres across the country, another young director named George Lucas (not yet an acquaintance of Spielberg's) was preparing his next feature for motion picture audiences, a splashy, special effects space opera called Star Wars.

Despite the filmmaking talent which he demonstrated on his previous film, American Graffiti, Lucas had some minor difficulty in locating a studio to finance and distribute his film. Star Wars was picked up by a cautious Twentieth Century Fox, however, and opened in May 1977. From the outset, it was obvious the film would make box-office history. Star Wars wasted little time in surpassing the records set by Jaws. Lucas' film netted \$127 million in domestic rentals for 1977 and remained in many theatres for well over a year. It dropped into the top spot as the most successful film in history, and remained there until 1982. Star Wars also became the first movie in recent motion picture history to thoroughly capitalize on the "tie-in" markets; additional profits in the millions of dollars were made through the sale of the Star Wars name and logo for use on clothing and other children's items.

Immediately after the release of Star Wars, Spielberg followed up his earlier success with Close Encounters of the Third Kind. The film was the second major release of the year that featured both outer space and a big budget. Though it told its story in a more realistic setting, Close Encounters found strong audience favor. The Columbia Pictures production generated \$77 million in domestic rentals, was re-released in a "special edition" (which included some new and previously edited footage) a few years later, and now stands at number eleven on the top ten list of financial successes.

Collectively, the three films established the foundation and formula for the cinematic cycle that was about to begin. A single successful film will often generate a few imitations of its kind, but a trio of similarly styled hit movies invariably signals the birth of a trend. As appears to be the case with all of the cycles identified

in motion picture history, the trend begins with a scattered number of hits, followed within a few years by a plethora of similarly constructed films. (See Figure 5). The initial delay that seems to occur is apparently the production time that exists between the recognition of a successful trend and the studio response it initiates.

So it was with the release of three films--all top ten hits, released within a two-year period--that the notion of "high-concept" began. Though no one seems to recall exactly where the label of high-concept originated, the principle was accepted, and is still referred to in Hollywood today.

The Definition of High Concept

Simplicity. There are several characteristics inherent to the definition of a high-concept film that distinguish it from all other genres. First, the premise of the film must be as simple as possible. At the zenith of his megahit success as both producer and director, Steven Spielberg was widely quoted as saying, "If a person can tell me the idea in 25 words or less, it's going to make a pretty good movie. I like ideas, especially movie ideas, that you can hold in your hand."¹ As ingenuous as it may seem, the filmmaker's quote offers an interesting understanding of how high-concept might function: If a viewer enjoys a film which he can "hold in his hand"--describe in a sentence or two--it becomes that much easier to describe the film to friends, making the picture's potential for success that much more realistic.

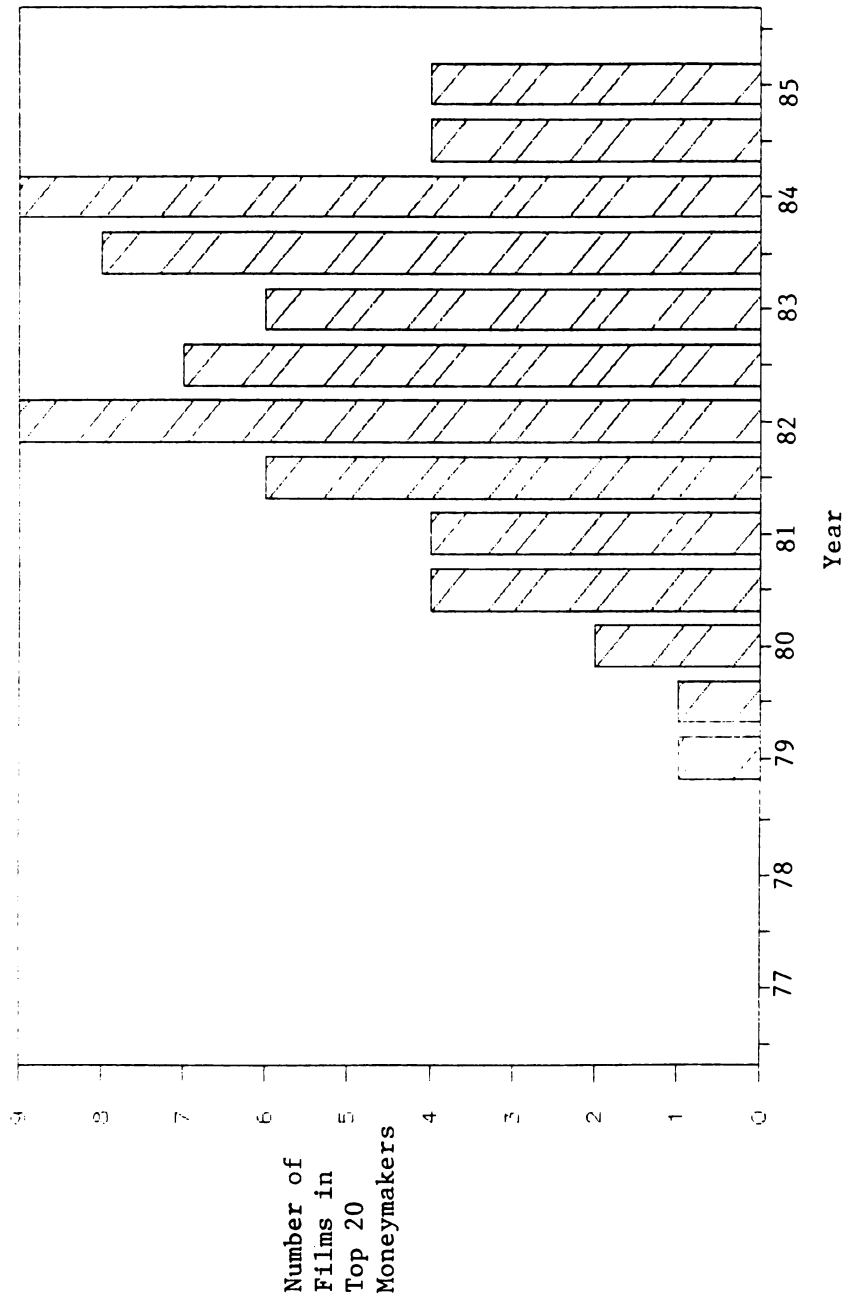


Figure 5. The High-Concept Cycle in Motion Picture History.

Fantasy. High-concept films tend to employ fantastic, or larger-than-life, elements in their stories. Patterned strikingly similar to the cliffhanger serials of the 1930s and 1940s (Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon,...) the contemporary plots of high-concept usually involve: (1) extraterrestrial characters in their own settings (Star Wars); (2) extraterrestrial characters visiting earth (ET: The Extra Terrestrial; Close Encounters of the Third Kind; Cocoon); (3) Human characters visiting extra-terrestrial settings (Flash Gordon; Star Trek: The Motion Picture); or (4) some other type of fantasy element occurring in a contemporary realistic setting (The Goonies; Raiders of the Lost Ark; Gremlins).

Special Effects. Finally, as a direct result of the cycle's propensity for fantasy, high-concept films depend heavily upon special effects in their productions. The inclusion of dazzling visual effects in these films seems to have supplanted any need for either characters of any real depth, or any degree of intellectual level to the film. Yet, since children represent the dominant demographic goal in the high-concept audience, the presence of these visuals comes as little surprise. Needless to say, the technology with which these effects are created has made remarkable advances during the last decade.

The Proliferation of High-Concept

Perhaps the most important aspect in understanding the nature of cinematic trends is distinguishing how a cycle perpetuates. When the series of early high-concept films proved to be successful, what factors existed that allowed the trend to continue? Essentially, two components accomplished this.

One element that appears to have fueled the high-concept era is demographics. What Spielberg and Lucas tapped into, apparently, was the pulse of American youth, a large and financially healthy age bracket (12-25) that was eager to watch exciting movies. Much of high-concept's success has been attributed to the demographic's habit of paying to see an appealing film over and over again. Some youngsters at the time boasted of having seen Star Wars in excess of one hundred times.

Another strong perpetuator of high-concept was the new administration that began working in Hollywood studios just before the cycle began. Though Spielberg is saddled with most of the blame for "infantilizing" the film industry,² the perpetuity of high-concept was most likely an unavoidable consequence of the influx of network television executives and advertising men into studio production slots. After a series of corporate buyouts and takeovers by a veritable Who's Who of Fortune 500s, executives who previously were administrators to the production of soda pop and sitcoms were now overseeing studios whose existence depended upon the success of roughly a dozen films annually. These new executives, for the most part, had little understanding of the budgetary complexities in

filmmaking and even less of what it took to make a good film. This lack of knowledge has led to a disturbing trend in escalated motion picture budgets and, as a result, a series of alarming box-office failures. Between the years of 1979 and 1985, the average film budget increased from \$4 million to \$12 million, a growth of 300 percent. (See Appendix D.)

Like all of the cycles in cinematic history, the high-concept era was imbued with an intrinsic notion of perpetuity. These cycles are given birth to because the industry is both cost-intensive and extremely profit-dependent. Unlike many American industries, Hollywood has trouble working with economies of scale. Each film is a product in and of itself; the product is designed, created, marketed, then distributed to the public. When a production is completed, that product is no longer manufactured on a continuing basis, like newspapers or magazines. Some production personnel are kept on, while others are laid off. Certain pieces of equipment are reused in other films, but little else promotes an economy of scale in the industry. Because of this, and because the average studio today produces only 10 to 12 movies annually, the individual success of each film produced is critical.

History has demonstrated to Hollywood that not every film it makes will succeed. Therefore, it makes better sense to the moguls, especially given the recent inflation in production expenses, that making 'safer' films is a better strategy to follow. Hence, much of what is produced during these filmatic trends, and most notably during the high-concept era, is sequels, prequels, remakes, and blatant ripoffs of previously successful pictures. This habit continues, and

sometimes even crosses over into television programming,³ until the industry is churning out copies of its own copies. Films that attempted to capitalize on the Star Wars phenomenon--including Laserblast, Battle Beyond the Stars, and Message From Space--and Jaws--including Piranha, Piranha II, Tentacles, and Orca--failed to satisfy audiences and performed miserably in theatres.

In defense of the studio tactics, however, it seems important to emphasize that high-concept isn't necessarily the "force feeding" of a fatuous movie-going public. Like all of the trends we have witnessed in the evolution of cinema, high-concept resulted from the direct response of an audience to a particular type of film. For one reason or another, audiences either gleaned or purged an emotion from viewing Jaws, Star Wars, and Close Encounters of the Third Kind. At the time, psychologists suggested that the audience's affection for these fantasy films was an escapist reaction to a troubled economy and a turbulent political atmosphere in the country. The public needed an escape from its problems and merely sought a cathartic outlet. Given the theory, it seems difficult to fault an industry for responding to a demand that is recognized in its own marketplace.

The Evolution of High Concept

The evolutionary patterns that the high-concept cycle followed were, generally, reflections that were identified in earlier trends. The enormous financial successes of the first films in this cycle were necessary to initiate the trend. These films demonstrated that, more than any other influence, financial elements in motion picture

production acted as catalysts in the industry, and erected the foundation for the high-concept films that followed.

1978

Following the initial successes of Jaws, Star Wars, and Close Encounters of the Third Kind, 1978 delivered the first set of films that followed the established high-concept formula. Jaws 2 reproduced the look and emotional impact of its original, and grossed \$49,299,000 in domestic rental receipts. The film ranked as the fourth top money-maker for the year.

Heaven Can Wait, a remake of the classic fantasy, Here Comes Mr. Jordan, took in a total rental of \$42,517,000 and ranked as the fifth top moneymaker for 1978. Pete's Dragon, a Disney production that mixed animation with live-action footage, made \$16,100,000 for the year and finished out its theatrical run in sixteenth place. A reissue of Star Wars and the continuing run from 1977 of Close Encounters of the Third Kind complete the list of high-concept films among the year's top twenty grossers.

Nineteen seventy-eight represented an important year in understanding how the evolution of high-concept might develop. Rather than risk a multi-million dollar budget on an original, yet unproven, script, studios appeared to be more interested in opting for safe alternatives. Besides the inventive production of Pete's Dragon from the Disney Studios, 1978 offered movie audiences a sequel, a remake, and a reissue of an already successful film. A strong agenda was being set for Hollywood's near future, and as long as audiences would pay to see the rehashed entertainment, the industry would oblige us by producing it.

1979

Nineteen seventy-nine offered a bit more promise. The year's biggest hit was the expensive US/UK production of Superman. Though the film borrowed characters that had already been popularized in comic books and on television, it brought its story to the screen in a realistic and original manner. The film grossed \$81 million in domestic rentals, and almost as much overseas. Superman was the year's biggest moneymaker in the United States.

Alien, the story of a metamorphosing alien lifeform set loose on a spaceship, came within \$3 million of 1979's third place hit, Rocky II. Alien garnered rentals of \$40,086,573, and spawned a myriad of cheap imitations, many of which made minor profits.

Star Trek: The Motion Picture, despite a long-winded storyline and disappointing direction, earned \$35 million and a tie for fifth place that year. While it was an expensive production, the film still made money, and the movie's fourth sequel, Star Trek V, is currently in pre-production.

Traits of the high-concept formula even spilled over into other genres that year. The James Bond production originally slated for 1979 was For Your Eyes Only, but because of the influence of high-concept, the series' producers made a last minute change. Instead, Bond tackled the outer space fortress of Hugo Drax in Moonraker, and cashed in a sizeable \$33,934,074, more than any other in the series' history.

1980

An important year in the history of the cycle, 1980 seemed to suggest the potential--even inevitable--scope of the high-concept formula. Five of the year's top 20 moneymakers fell into the definition of high-concept; one of these was an alarming failure.

The year's biggest moneymaker--50 percent bigger than 1978's or 1979's--was George Lucas' much anticipated The Empire Strikes Back. The movie was the first sequel to Star Wars, and garnered \$120 million in domestic rentals, twice that of the year's second place hit, Kramer vs. Kramer. If nothing else, the film fueled the sequel philosophy that would continue to prevail in the industry.

Fourth place on the year's list was Airplane, a high-concept comedy that produced revenues of \$38 million. The Shining came in at tenth place with \$28,456,000, followed closely at twelfth place by The Black Hole, a Disney science fantasy that made \$25 million.

The most unsettling news in Hollywood that year was the major financial failure of the Steven Spielberg-directed comedy, 1941. Though not considered science fiction or fantasy, the film is technically still high-concept due to its larger-than-life storyline and immense special effects budget. The film earned \$23,400,000 in domestic rentals, but because its budget--an estimated \$35 million--1941 lost a staggering amount of capital for Universal. If nothing else, 1941 proved two important things to filmmakers: first, that there would be a budgetary ceiling which would have to be respected by the industry, and second, that audiences wouldn't pay to see just anything.

1981

Eight high-concept films penetrated the year's top twenty moneymakers, and only those with the most flagrant budgets failed to make money.

Nineteen eighty-one's biggest hit was an industry coup de grace, Raiders of the Lost Ark. The film marked the first professional union of Steven Spielberg (as director) and George Lucas (as producer) and earned a healthy \$90,434,000 in U.S. rentals. Unlike so many of its high-concept predecessors, Raiders owed its success to an original storyline and a slick directorial style and pace. The film was rereleased in 1981, when it garnered another \$21,566,000.

Other high-concept productions during 1981 included: Superman II (\$64 million; 2), Excalibur (\$17 million; 14); Flash Gordon (\$16.1 million); Time Bandits (\$16 million; 16); The Great Muppet Caper (\$16 million; 16); Tarzan, the Ape Man (\$15,642,396; 18); and Clash of the Titans (\$15,632,341; 19).

1982

May 1982 presented audiences with another Spielberg production that would eventually become Hollywood's biggest grossing film of all time. ET: The Extraterrestrial was one of seven high-concept movies that would break into the top twenty that year, though excessive budgets would force a few to claim minor losses. Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan boasted revenues of \$40 million at seventh place, and was followed closely by another Spielberg production, Poltergeist, which garnered receipts of \$36,175,949 at eighth place. Two other new releases, Firefox and Conan, the Barbarian, totaled revenues of \$24

million and \$23 million, respectively, while Time Bandits continued its run from 1981 with additional revenues of \$17,950,000.

Perhaps the most important mention regarding 1982 is the flurry of smaller budgeted high-concept productions that were in evidence. The top fifty grossing films from that year boasted no less than nineteen high-concept formulas, representing 38 percent of the list. Though high-concept had not yet reached its zenith, producers were becoming both more comfortable with the formula, and willing to wager the budget dollars to prove it. Productions like Tron (\$15.2 million), Blade Runner (\$14.5 million), Sword and the Sorcerer (\$11 million), The Road Warrior (\$10.5 million), The Dark Crystal (\$10 million), and Zapped (\$6.6 million) demonstrated, with varying degrees of success, the range in story and budget that high-concept could embrace. Tron and Blade Runner displayed intelligent stories within stylishly beautiful productions, yet failed to attract sizeable audiences. Sword and the Sorcerer, The Dark Crystal, and The Road Warrior were simpler, more adventurous stories that succeeded in theatres, while the sophomoric Zapped attained marginal profits.

1983

Curiously, 1983 represented a minor slump in the burgeoning high-concept phenonemon. Fewer films fitting the definition were produced that year (only 11 of the top 50 grossers), and even fewer made profits. The only big hit of the year was the third Star Wars installment, Return of the Jedi, which grossed \$165.5 million in domestic rentals. Wargames (\$36,595,975) took fourth place for 1983, followed at fifth place by Superman III (\$36.4 million), fourteenth place by Jaws 3-D (\$26,439,000), and nineteenth place by The Dark

Crystal (\$23,375,000) which continued its 1982 theatrical run.

Excessive budgets, created by both inflation and foolhardy administrative decisions, reached all-time highs, and precluded the possibility of break-even for most of these productions.

1984

Nineteen eighty-four represented the pinnacle of the high-concept era. The industry released sixteen high-concept movies that placed in the top fifty grossers of the year. Additionally, bigger average revenues and more realistic budgets made profitability a more realistic possibility for filmmakers. Five of the top ten films of 1984 were in the high-concept image.

Ghostbusters ranked at number one for the year with domestic rentals totaling \$127 million. Second place was the Raiders of the Lost Ark sequel, entitled Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, which garnered rentals of \$109 million. Third place was another Spielberg production, Gremlins, which totaled \$78.5 million in rentals. Star Trek III: The Search for Spock (\$39 million; 7), Romancing the Stone (\$36 million; 9), Splash (\$36 million; 12), Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes (\$23 million; 16), and 2010 (\$19,630,000; 18) finished out the top twenty.

The most telling aspect of these films was the fact that most were sequels to previously proven hit movies. At the peak of the high-concept era's success, filmmakers cashed in more dollars by copying their earlier hits, as well as those of others. Of the sixteen high-concept films in the 1984 top fifty list, seven were original stories, five were sequels, one was a remake, and at least three owe their style and storylines to other successful films. Nineteen eighty-four

was the year of both the remake and the palely disguised rip-off. This fact, perhaps more than any other, explains why this was the pinnacle year for high-concept success.

1985

The total number of high-concept films produced by Hollywood declined in 1985. In the year's top fifty list, twelve movies bearing the signature of high-concept were released, most notably Back to the Future (\$94 million; 1), Cocoon (\$40 million; 5), The Goonies (\$29.9 million; 6), and The Jewel of the Nile (\$20 million; 14). The others bottomed out the list with significantly smaller earnings and, more importantly, bigger budgets. The common tendencies among these films were important: 1) production budgets continued to escalate; 2) profits by successful films were decreasing on the average; and 3) losses by the unsuccessful films were growing by 1985, the average budget for a motion picture had grown to \$12,000,000 (See Appendix D).

1986

The total revenues and the number of high-concept films produced in 1986 continued to drop. Only five of the top twenty theatrical rentals of the year were high-concept, and only eight more populated the top fifty list. The revenues of the top rental, Crocodile Dundee (3), only reached \$51 million in 1987), while Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home (\$45 million; 4), Aliens (\$42.5 million; 5), The Golden Child (\$41 million; 8), and Poltergeist II (\$20,327,000; 20) performed reasonably slower business. The important issue was not the relative success of these films--they all did make money--but that their overall rentals were markedly smaller. The suggestion here was that

either high-concept had reached its saturation point (resulting, perhaps, in a stable number of movie-goers viewing a growing number of films), or that the overall audience size was decreasing. In either instance, the result was the same: high-concept revenues were plummeting. Furthermore, more of the high-concept formulas released that year were tremendous box-office disappointments, including one devastating fiasco, Howard the Duck, a George Lucas production which reportedly cost in excess of \$30 million and only earned back \$10 million.

1987

Nineteen eighty-seven proved to be even worse for high-concept. Only three films fitting the formula made it into the top twenty that year, The Witches of Eastwick (\$31.8 million; 6), Predator (\$31 million; 7), and Robocop (\$23,571,784; 14), while the eleven others filling out the top fifty were almost all unanimous failures.

The most notable box-office disappointments during 1987 were probably the biggest surprises, as well. Three of these, Innerspace, Batteries Not Included, and Harry and the Hendersons, were either produced or presented by Steven Spielberg. Many of those associated with the productions attributed the lack of performance to Spielberg's television anthology Amazing Stories. According to Innerspace screenwriter, Jeffrey Boam, "Amazing Stories, which was not that amazing, took some of the luster off Spielberg's name as a presenter."⁴

The television series' inability to maintain sufficient ratings probably undermined the novelty of high-concept in two different ways:

first, by making the formula available to interested viewers on a weekly basis; and second, by disappointing audiences with weak stories and scripts. The anthology's cancellation was yet another indication that the industry might be spurning the high-concept idea.

Emergence of Low-Concept

The mounting failures of the dominant cycle signalled another period of transition in Hollywood. With fewer and fewer big-budgeted high-concept films succeeding at the box-office, wary studios and independent filmmakers began to rediscover an interest in smaller movies that featured lower budgets and indepth plots. Once again, a growing number of motion pictures were emphasizing stories that employed complicated characters and issue-oriented themes. The style of production resulted as a response to the budgetary imprudence of high-concept, so, logically, it was dubbed "low-concept" by Hollywood insiders.

Films like The Gods Must Be Crazy (\$11.4 million; 25), El Norte, Kiss of the Spiderwoman, and Stop Making Sense (all placing out of the top 50) were making profits while many high-concept fantasies were not.

The secret behind the change in philosophy is a simple one: demographics are changing, audiences are growing up, so the tastes in popular film are maturing. If a film with virtually no expensive special effects can be produced with a reasonable budget--a few million dollars, perhaps--then profit potential becomes realistic. Inexpensive, well-produced films featuring strong story and characters could attract medium-sized audiences and prosper at the box-office.

The popularity of these types of film suggested what the next cycle might be, and continued to prosper during the next few years.

The demarcations of low-concept, because of their authenticity, seem easier to grasp. "A low-concept movie...is one whose premise can't be expressed in a single sentence. It presents a realistic world and stresses character, dialogue, and texture. Dirty Dancing is the low-concept version of Flashdance. The response to Dirty Dancing is "That was so real, I thought I was there," while the response to Flashdance is, "Wow, what a movie!"⁵ By blending realistic story elements with realistic financial backing, filmmakers have brought popular motion pictures back down to eye level. The success of 1987s low-concept productions suggests that the transition could work.

Nineteen eighty-seven offered maturing movie-goers an unprecedented quantity and quality of low-concept films, including: Raising Arizona, a quirky black comedy; Tin Men, another black comedy from director Barry Levinson, who gave us the low-concept Diner; Nuts, a Barbra Streisand vehicle; Cry Freedom, which featured two plots interwoven into one movie; Hope and Glory, two separate stories with an indistinguishable plot; Ironweed, with its indiscernible plot; Wallstreet, a reality-based moral film; Broadcast News, another reality-based motion picture that plays a twist on the traditional "boy-gets-girl" story; Hoosiers, a very small story with only one box-office star; and Good Morning, Vietnam, a film that told its story with a curious blend of comedy and tragedy.

The Next Cycle

When we are able to sense that the end of a film cycle has been triggered, the indication is that the subsequent has already begun. There is always a gray area that exists between endings and beginnings of cycles in this theory, short overlapping periods of time when films representing both trends are being produced. It is because of this phenomenon that precise delineations of cycles are often difficult to ascertain.

The next popular trend in motion picture filmmaking was actually inspired in 1983, with the successful release of a Richard Attenborough film, Gandhi. The production offered an intelligent alternative for audiences not interested in the high-concept fantasy, and proved this by garnering domestic rentals of \$24,364,472 and capturing the Academy Award for best picture. The film borrowed an established formula from the 1930s, the biographical film, and updated it. The genre once provided an option to the 1930s musicals with productions of Disraeli (1929), Old English (1930), Cardinal Richelieu (1935), Rasputin and the Empress (1932), Viva Villa (1934), The Story of Louis Pasteur (1935), The Life of Emile Zola (1937), and Juarez (1939), and appears as if it might succeed again.

Following the success of Gandhi was a year without a single biographical film. Then, in 1984, Amadeus was released and it, too, received the academy award. Amadeus continued its run into 1985, where it was joined by the much heralded Sydney Pollack production of Out of Africa. This motion picture earned domestic rentals of \$42 million (a conservative estimate) and also received the Best Picture

Award. More than any other, it was this film that signalled the parameters of the next trend.

Presently, the imminent cycle of low-concept biographical dramas seems perched for success. According to Garter in Premiere Magazine, "Hollywood is so enamored of the so-called biopic that it currently has at least 30 in various stages of production. Five singers, two composers, a violinist, a sculptor, a painter, a doctor, a racecar driver, a train robber, an aviator, an anthropologist, a journalist, a resistance fighter, a photographer, an heiress, an inventor, a mass murderer, and a saint or two are among those likely to be immortalized on celluloid in the next year."⁶

Specifically:

--Bette Midler will portray German singer Lotte Leny, who fled Berlin with her husband to avoid Nazi persecution.

--Barbra Streisand will play Margaret Bourke-White, a photojournalist of World War II whose work appeared in the pages of Life.

--Phil Collins makes his feature film debut in Buster, the story of British train robber/folk hero Buster Edwards.

--Marsha Mason will star as Linda Ellerbee in a production of the TV journalist's best seller, And So It Goes.

--Isabelle Adjani will portray Camille Claudel in a film depicting the woman's ill-fated love affair with Auguste Rodin.

--Donald Sutherland (who recently played another painter, Paul Gauguin) will star as the revolutionary physician Dr. Norman Bethune.

--Mickey Rourke, in a film entitled Francesco, will portray St. Francis of Assisi.

--Jane Alexander portrays renowned painter Georgia O'Keefe in a production focusing on the years of her marriage to photographer Alfred Stieglitz. Maximillian Schell costars and directs.

--Sigourney Wearer will star as Dian Fossey in Gorillas in the Mist, depicting the fifteen years the scientist spent among the gorillas of Rwanda, Africa.

--Natasha Richardson will portray kidnapped heiress Patty Hearst.

--Jeff Bridges stars in the August 1988 release of Tucker, directed by Francis Coppola and produced by George Lucas. The film depicts the entrepreneurial efforts of would-be auto mogul Preston Tucker.

--Klaus Maria Brandauer will play German composer Ludwig van Beethoven.

--C. Thomas Howell will portray Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini.

--Klaus Kinski directs and stars in a film depicting the reckless violin virtuoso and composer, Nicolo Paganini.

--Placido Domingo is being sought to portray operatic composer, Giacomo Puccini.

Other proposed projects which currently lack starring talent include a film portraying the exploits of Charles Manson, aviator/author Beryl Markham, and Claus von Bulow.

CHAPTER IV--ENDNOTES

¹Peter Piskind, "Low Concept," Premiere, February 1988, p. 74.

²See articles by Biskind, Kael, and Corliss, for example.

³For example, ABC's Battlestar Galactia, which was embroiled in copyright infringement litigation with LucasFilm; Mork and Mindy, with Robin Williams; NBC's current hit series, ALF.

⁴Biskind, p. 76.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Zoe F. Carter, "Biopic Bonanza: One Life to Live," Premiere, June 1988, p. 15.

CHAPTER V

THE LOW-CONCEPT SCREENPLAY

The original screenplay which follows in this chapter is the author's example of the type of low-concept film that will dominate the upcoming cycle. Though not the blueprint for a true biographical film, the script attempts to demonstrate the complexities of character and plot inherent in the traditional low-concept production. These characteristics, as well as the screenplay's efforts to suggest the proper texture and style for the film, will be discussed in the author's analysis and conclusion in Chapter 6.

THE CRYSTAL RIVER

By

Douglas Clark Osman

FADE UP:

BLACK SCREEN

Faintly, the VOICES OF A CHOIR, distant and sad: then, the sound of WATER RUNNING AGAINST ROCKS. Peaceful, soothing. The sounds blend together seamlessly, a harmony. And slowly, the SCREEN BRIGHTENS INTO

RIVER - SUNRISE

Flowing through an emerald jungle. Gentle and shimmering. A faint mist has settled across the water, where it bends and twists with the current. There is a feeling of deep reverie in this place, solitude, tranquility. We'd stay here forever if we could. SOUNDS of the river and MUSIC PERSIST.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Enormous cypress and banyan trees tower above us like giants bending over to touch the water. Long streamers of spanish moss drape like tresses in the air.

KATHRYN (V.O.)

It's taken all this time, but
I think I know now. (beat)
We were people who believed in
God, and that is what made us
common. That was our magnet
during that brief winter. That
was what brought us all together.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

An old woman sits by herself in the enormous, darkened sanctuary of a church. There are OTHERS here, scattered, alone, praying in silence.

The old woman looks up from her prayer.

THE RIVER

A clear, shallow tributary trickles through the undergrowth and topples into the river. A large animal SPLASHES against the water not far away.

KATHRYN (V.O.)

But it's been so long, I'm not
sure anymore. Perhaps it was
God that made us so different.

A satiny white egret soars above us like an
emperor surveying his kingdom. The bird descends
upon the river and clutches a small fish, then
propels itself back into the sky.

KATHRYN (V.O.)

I suppose the river is still there.
though. After all this time. still
flowing. Searching for the sea.
For someplace to go.

A small alligator that has been basking on the
shore quietly slips into the river and disappears
beneath it.

KATHRYN (V.O.)

When I listen for it. sometimes
at night, I can still hear the
water. So I know it must still
be there.

INT. CHURCH - ALTAR - DAY

The old woman approaches the altar. kneels.
genuflects. She looks up to the face of Christ
and studies it.

KATHRYN (V.O.)

Before he left the river. Abner
said there were two truths each
of us must face before we could
die: that everything changes.
and nothing lasts forever. I
said he was a pessimist. But he
only laughed and said there was
nothing optimistic about death.

(long beat)

He was right, of course. I see
that now.

(beat)

But then. I suppose I've always
known.

INT. ROOM - NEW YORK CITY - DUSK

CLOSE on a vitrola that is playing Shostakovich. This is a sparsely furnished room: a small bed, a single reading chair, a small desk where the old woman sits, writing. She is in silhouette against the window, the fading sunlight.

KATHRYN (V.O.)

And the mermaids, who are born without their souls, they still come back to that river in the winter. Like we did.

EXT. RIVER - DUSK

Another animal SPLASHES against the surface of the water, closer this time, and soon we see DARK SHAPES GLIDING AND ROLLING underwater.

KATHRYN (V.O.)

Because someone told them this was where God lived. And they believed. Like we did.

INT. ROOM

The old woman looks up, out her window, as if she's heard someone calling her.

EXT. NEW YORK BROWNSTONE - DAY (1927)

A grey watercolor morning on a busy street in upper Manhattan. It's Autumn and a gusty wind is brushing the last of the October leaves from the trees. PEOPLE rush along the street, wrapped in heavy overcoats and carrying umbrellas.

INT. BROWNSTONE

Spacious, warmly decorated, the kind of place where anyone would feel at home. The furniture is carved oak and walnut, the cushioned chairs are deep and inviting. Every wall, it seems, is covered with family photographs.

UPSTAIRS

KATHRYN. a pretty woman in her early 30s. is sitting alone in a hallway chair: her hands are busy in movement. accomplishing nothing. She is staring blankly out a window.

POV - KATHRYN

on the Autumn morning outside--the billowing leaves, the umbrellaed people. A small CHILD is standing alone on the sidewalk when her MOTHER approaches, scoops her up in a big hug. kisses her.

ON KATHRYN

who watches all of this with hypnotized fascination.

ANGLE ON DOORWAY

at the end of the hallway. A DOCTOR emerges from a room and motions to Kate.

DOCTOR
(somber)
She's very tired.
(beat)
There's nothing more we can do.

Kate nods her head. sadly .

DOCTOR
Do you understand?

Again, she nods.

KATE
What does she know?

DOCTOR
What she needs to.

BEDROOM

The door opens and Kate enters. She moves to the bed where her sister, MARIE, a small, frail-looking woman, is sleeping. Kathryn sits beside her, strokes her hair. The woman looks up, forces a weak smile.

KATE

Hello, Marie...

Marie holds Kate's hand, touches her cheek. Every movement she makes is weak and strained.

MARIE

When Mama died I promised her
I wouldn't let you forget her.
Do you remember?

Kate shakes her head.

KATE

I try to. Sometimes I think
I dream about her.

MARIE

She's been gone a long time
now, hasn't she?

Kate nods. She shifts her gaze to the photographs on the walls.

KATE

(sadly)

I don't remember what she looks
like anymore.

Marie considers this, admiring her sister with a very sad, very faraway smile.

KATE

All these photographs and not
one of her.

MARIE

You were just a baby.

A moment, then:

MARIE
(a whisper)
Katie...

KATE
Yes?

MARIE
When did the baby die?

KATE
(a whisper)
During the night.

MARIE
I thought I woke last night.
But it was a dream. I heard
the baby crying. And Mother
was sitting here, rocking
her back to sleep. She
said it was a boy.

Marie looks up. Her face is old and tired, but a
child is looking out from behind her eyes.

MARIE
It was, wasn't it?

All Kate can do is nod.

MARIE
(after a moment)
Why does He take the little
ones?

A long pause. Then:

MARIE
Mama said the mermaids would
be coming back to the river
soon, and that she would take
the baby to see them.

Marie looks at Kate.

MARIE
Do you remember?

CLOSE on Kate

A puzzled expression. clouded memories. Then a small nod.

KATE
Yes. I don't remember being a little girl. But I remember the mermaids.

She looks to Marie for a confirmation.

KATE
There were mermaids in a river...

Marie nods.

MARIE
I remember. But it's been so long. It almost seems silly.

Another pause. Kate wrestles with her thoughts.

MARIE
(a whisper)
Read me something, Katie.

Kate takes down a book from a shelf and opens it.
(NOTE: The poem she reads is William Carlos Williams' "Willow Poem").

KATE
It is a willow when summer is over.
a willow by the river
from which no leaf has fallen nor
bitten by the sun
turned orange or crimson.
The leaves cling and grow paler.
swing and grow paler
over the swirling waters of the
river

(MORE)

KATHRYN (V.O.)

(continued)

as if loath to let go,
they are so cool, so drunk with
the swirl of the wind and of the
river--
oblivious to winter.
the last to let go and fall
into the water and on the ground.

And as Kate reads from the book, we slowly PAN
across the room, out the window, to where more
leaves are carried aloft by the Autumn wind.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - FUNERAL - DAY

More leaves falling to the ground in cold,
restless clouds. A SMALL GROUP OF PEOPLE are
gathering at a gravesite. Kate is among them,
alone, off to one side of the grave.

A group of PALLBEARERS move to the gravesite.
When they arrive, a MINISTER moves to the head
of the casket and blesses it with a silent prayer.

EXT. GRAVE - FUNERAL - DAY

The coffin in the ground. Kathryn is nearest to
the grave, the others a short distance away.

MINISTER

--to join in that room within
the house of the Lord, to be at
His side, to be with Him always.

Kathryn looks up to see a young man arrive to the
funeral. This is DAVID, 30, a handsome,
boyish-looking man who knows that he's late. He
stares at Kathryn apologetically.

ANGLE ON KATHRYN

But she looks unconcerned, distant. She turns
suddenly to look up into the trees and the falling
leaves. For the first time since the funeral
began, she cries.

EXT. FUNERAL - KATE AND DAVID - LATER

Kate moves slowly to her auto. David is behind her. She stops to look back at the gravesite. then looks to David. Her gaze holds his.

KATE

She said there were mermaids.
David. In a river.

DAVID

She was sick. Katie. The
doctor had her on medication.

Kate has no answer.

DAVID

She didn't know what she was
saying.

A moment. then:

KATE

Then why do I remember?

She stares at David for a moment. then moves off.

EXT. BUSINESS DISTRICT - KATE - DAY

Early morning in the bustling heart of a city.
She arrives at the law offices of : Cramer &
Rogerth, Attorneys at Law.

INT. LAW OFFICE - SAME

Kate pores over financial records with her lawyer,
a balding, not unfriendly-looking man named
ROGERTH.

ROGERTH

I'm sorry for you that Marie
felt compelled to handle all
of this by herself. This must
be intimidating for you.

KATE

(smiling)

Which explains why Marie saw to it.

ROGERTH

Most of your financial matters have already been seen to...the stocks, bonds, that sort of thing. I'm afraid there isn't much left.

KATE

I was afraid of that. Marie never discussed these things with me.

ROGERTH

All told, there's enough to support you for a year or so. Beyond that...

He shrugs, not knowing what to say.

KATE

Beyond that I'm desperate.

Rogerth picks another paper from the small stack and hands it to Kate.

ROGERTH

Then there's this.

KATE

What is it?

ROGERTH

It's a land title and the deed to a house. It's been in your family for some time.

Kate eyes the paper curiously.

ROGERTH (continued)

There've been a number of purchase offers over the years. But Marie
(MORE)

ROGERTH (continued)
just never seemed interested.
(beat)
I could look into it if you want.

KATE
Where is it?

ROGERTH
The house? It's in Florida. I think.

He takes the deed back from Kate. inspects it.

ROGERTH (continued)
A small town along the Gulf.
Crystal River.

Kate collects the papers. gathers her things.
stands.

ROGERTH (continued)
Would you like me to check into
the sale, Kate?

KATE
No. Albert. I think we'll hold
onto the property a little longer.

MONTAGE - MUSIC UNDER

- A. KATE'S HOME. Alone, quiet. She moves through the place like the spectator in a museum.
- B. CITY SIDEWALK. Walking by herself. a few small packages in hand. Leaves continue dropping from the skeletal trees overhead.
- C. KATE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT. In her bed. alone. Staring ahead, her eyes riveted on nothing in particular.

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - KATE - DAY

She moves through a busy CROWD until she comes to a train waiting at the tracks. David. behind her. offers her luggage to the porter. who takes it

away. David turns to face her. He looks cold.
distant.

DAVID

Am I supposed to pretend to
understand this?

KATE

(not unkindly)
I didn't expect you to.

DAVID

You think you can change things
by doing this. Finding the
answers to questions that were
asked almost thirty years ago.

KATE

Do I have a choice?

David doesn't answer her.

DAVID

I'll wait for you here until
spring. Then I'll be gone.

He turns, and Kate watches as he leaves the
platform.

EXT. MOUNTAINOUS REGION - THE TRAIN

Small against the landscape. The train lumbers
through the mountain passes with a trail of steam
behind it.

EXT. RIVER BRIDGE - THE TRAIN - DAY

The train crosses over the span of a wide, rapid
river. Two small BOYS fishing near the bridge
wave at the passengers in the windows.

EXT. WIDE PLAIN - SUNSET

Different terrain. Scattered grassy hills and
trees. An occasional palm. The train passes low
in the frame against the orange setting sun.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The train moves purposefully between towering trees on either side. THE SOUND OF THUNDER.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

As it rolls into the outskirts of a small town. The palm trees and majestic oaks which should be standing tall beside the tracks, are caught in the throes of an oncoming storm. The sky is littered with roiling, watercolor clouds. A light curtain of rain is falling.

INT. TRAIN

CLOSE ON Kate, who is concentrating on the town and the gathering storm overhead. The expression on her face is a curious blend of eager anticipation and concern. She's not entirely sure she wants to be here.

EXT. TRAIN

As the lumbering locomotive GRINDS to a slow halt, belching greasy clouds of steam.

Kate, along with a few dozen other PASSENGERS, disembarks. She searches the platform for a face, doesn't seem to find it, then heads for a nearby ticket counter.

TICKET WINDOW

The TELLER behind the window, a small spectacled man in his 40s, is eagerly closing the place down. He barely glances up at Kate in his rush.

KATE

(polite but anxious)

Excuse me.

The teller ignores Kate, seals up his window then moves on to the next. Kate patiently, but obviously peeved, follows.

KATE
(a bit more direct)
Excuse me!

TELLER
Sorry ma'am. Closed for the day.
Hurricane's coming. Next train in
in the morning.

The teller locks up the window and moves away.

KATE
A hurricane?

Kate grabs her things and steps from the platform onto the muddy street. The wind clutches at her umbrella, inverts it, whisks it away into the stormy night. Within a heartbeat Kate is completely drenched.

The handle of a suitcase breaks and the bag drops to the mud. The case breaks open. Clothes are strewn about the mud. Kate retrieves them in desperation.

Suddenly, a voice from behind her:

RICHARD
Not what I'd call a particularly
pleasant evening for a stroll.

Kate spins around, surprised.

ANGLE ON RICHARD

It's difficult to make out much of this man through the storm, but the face beneath the brim of his rainsoaked hat is strong and rugged. He looks like a tough man, but something in his eyes seems warm and sensitive. His name is RICHARD HANSON.

Behind him, with a spare horse in tow, is a tall black man named BOOKER.

KATE
What?

RICHARD

If you'd really like to make it a memorable night, wait around a few hours. Things should be really interesting by then.

KATE

Are you often in the habit of making fun of other people's misfortunes?

RICHARD

Is that what I'm doing?

KATE

(irritated)

Yes.

RICHARD

Then I apologize.

Richard steps from his horse and helps Kate with her things.

KATE

The least you could do is offer me a ride to the river. It would be the decent thing to do.

RICHARD

And the insane thing. Making it out there isn't the trick. Spending the night is.

Richard smiles. stares up into the night storm.

RICHARD

My grandmother used to say that if you found a woman out in a hurricane, she was either mentally suffering--

He stares at Kate.

RICHARD

--or she'd make one hell of a wife.

He smiles.

RICHARD
Which one you are?

KATE
(long beat) Are all the men
in this town unbearable?

RICHARD
I hope not.

KATE
I need a ride to the river.
Mr. --?

RICHARD
Hanson. But you'll call me
Richard.

KATE
I need a ride to the river.
Mr. Hanson. Do you know where
I might find one?

RICHARD
(smiles)
You are determined.

KATE
(nods)
I am.

RICHARD
I'm expected somewhere else.
But I could ask Booker to take
you.

Richard nods at the black man on the horse.

RICHARD
He's a good man. He'll get you
wherever you need to go.

Richard climbs back onto his horse.

EXT. ROAD -- NIGHT

Kate and Booker plod along through the gathering storm. The road they follow is really nothing more than a narrow trail of mud, bordered by a thick wall of palm and swamp maple.

When the wagon's wheels become buried in mud, Booker holsts himself from the board, down into the knee-high muck. He grabs the mule's halter and leads the animal on.

KATE

My name is Kathryn Livingston.

Booker, still trudging through the mud, turns to face his passenger. He tips his rain-soaked hat.

BOOKER

Pleased to meetcha'.

KATE

What is your name?

BOOKER

Peoples jes calls me Booker.

KATE

(almost to herself)
It's a pleasure to meet you.
Booker.

BOOKER

Same here, Ma'am.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FARMHOUSE - KATE AND BOOKER - NIGHT

The carriage arrives at a small wooden farmhouse in the forest. Although it's dark and raining, we can see there isn't much to the place. The roof looks thin and swayed, and the porch pillars are bowed and split. The yard, what little there is, is thick with weeds and garbage. In all, not a favorable first impression.

ANGLE ON KATE

as she stares up at the battered farmhouse. She remembers this place.

BOOKER

What'sa matter? This ain't the right place?

CLOSE ON KATE

Still lost in her memories.

KATE

Yes, this is it.

Booker takes down Kate's bags, carries them to the porch.

But Kate lags behind: she approaches the house slowly, unaffected by the rain and the wind. She steps onto the porch, touches the railing.

KATE

How long has it been empty?

BOOKER

Long back as I can remember. People say a couple white folks lived here. You know 'em?

A moment, then:

KATE

No.

BOOKER

Peoples don't come out this way much. Least no white peoples. anyway.

Kate reaches into her purse.

KATE

I have things stored at the train station. Do you think you can deliver them when the storm passes?

BOOKER

Yes'm.

KATE

Thank you, Booker.

BOOKER

Welcome.

Pensive for a moment, she considers this next thought before she asks.

KATE

Booker, do you work for Mr. Hanson?

BOOKER

When he needs me, I do.

KATE

I'll need help here. I don't know how long I'll be staying...

(beat)

Maybe I'll need some help.

BOOKER

Be happy to oblige you, Ma'am.

Back on his horse, the big black man tips his hat, shakes the horse's reins. As Kate watches him leave, he disappears somewhere down the dark road.

INT. HOUSE - SAME

Kate enters the front door, groping for a light switch. She finds one and turns it...but nothing happens.

Before she has time to search any further, there is a loud EXPLOSION from somewhere across the room, and a fist-sized hole is punched through the door. Kate stifles a scream.

Across the room, the terrified face of a young (mid 20s) black girl moves into the moonlight. Her name is DESSIE and she's carrying a shotgun.

DESSIE

Who is ye?

Kate, terrified, says nothning.

DESSIE

(loud)

I asked, who is ye?

Kate is practically speechless, but she musters up enough courage to speak.

KATE

I...own this house.

DESSIE

That's a lie! No one lived
in this house far as I 'member.
I been the first one here
since I's a baby.

KATE

I was born here. I own
the house now.

DESSIE

If that so, how comes I never
seen ya here 'fore? You a
haunt?

KATE

What?

DESSIE

A haunt! Are you a haunt?

KATE

Not at the moment.

She smiles, amused.

KATE

And if you'll put the gun down.
you won't have to worry about
me becoming one.

Cautiously, Dessie lowers the gun. She eyes Kate suspiciously.

DESSIE

Why you come back here if it
been all this time?

Kate relaxes. She sets her things down.

KATE

To see the farm. And to see
if there's any hope of selling
it.

DESSIE

Been long time since anyone
lived here. Place come to be
a mess.

Suddenly, a thought:

DESSIE

(the saleswoman)

You gonna need help! I ain't
got nothin' else. You keep me
on and I could help you sell it.

KATE

(unsure)

I don't have much money. I
don't know what I could pay
you.

DESSIE

(seizing her chance)

Alls I needs is a place to be.
No jobs for black folks, anyway.
The money don't matter.

A moment, then Kate nods. There is an immediate
trust she senses in the black woman, something she
can rely on. Determination.

KATE

Okay.

The black woman smiles, then laughs. Kate laughs
with her.

DISSOLVE TO:

DREAM SEQUENCE - THE RIVER - NIGHT

...the gentle tumbling of a river: its voice is placid, tranquil, almost hypnotic.

In her dream, Kate is swimming alone, her head just above the water. It's night-time, but a powder yellow moon shines through the treetops overhead, casting the water with faint spears of rippling light. A thin mist turns and glides with the current. (NOTE: The poem Kathryn recites in V.O. throughout the film is T. S. Elliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock").

KATE (VO)

I grow old...I grow old...
I shall wear the bottoms of my
trousers rolled.
Shall I part my hair behind?
Do I dare to eat a peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers.
and walk upon the beach.

Dark. indistinguishable bodies glide in the water beside Kate - enormous bodies, yet gentle and graceful, sliding away with a turn of a flipper.

KATE (VO)

I have heard the mermaids singing,
each to each.
I do not think they will sing to me.

The shapes mingle playfully, barrelroll against each other...

KATE (VO)

I have seen them riding seaward on
the waves.

...and nuzzle close to Kate, until...

KATE (VO)

Combing the white hair of the waves
blown back.
When the wind blows the water white
and black.

...the last of what we think are mermaids swims past and disappears into the depths.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - KATE'S HOUSE - KATE - DAWN

The next morning as Kate opens her eyes. Sunlight is streaming in through an open window. For the first time, we have a chance to see what the place really looks like.

VARIOUS ANGLES

as Kate looks around the room. discouraged, unimpressed. The walls are covered with ragged, peeling strips of wallpaper and large sections of the floorboards are missing. Most of the windows are gone; what little glass there is, is cracked and shattered. A few sparse pieces of simple furniture are strewn about the room.

Kate looks beside her, sees a battered patchwork doll left by Dessie, and looks around for the girl.

KITCHEN

Towards the back of the house. Kate enters and looks around.

The kitchen is in even more disarray than the front room, if this is at all possible. Garbage and debris are strewn everywhere; the rusted stove has been pulled away from the wall, as if someone has tried to move it. The walls are covered with dust, dirt, and cobwebs.

Kate moves to the window and looks out.

POV

The area behind the house is a sprawling, neglected orange grove.

EXT. ORANGE GROVE - KATE - LATER

Kate is walking between towering rows of majestic orange trees, their limbs bursting with buds. Although most of the trees appear healthy, there is a neglect to them -- here and there we see a dead tree or brown limbs fallen to the ground: knee-high weeds and grass grow everywhere, making it difficult to move through the grove.

THE HOUSE

as Kate approaches from the grove.

DESSIE

Best watch out for rattlesnakes
in there. They likes the orange
grove f'some reason.

KATE

I looked for you when I
woke up.

DESSIE

I's down t'river.

KATE

How long have you been staying
in the house?

DESSIE

'Bout six months. now. Ever
since Ezel died.

Kate sits down beside Dessie on the porch.

KATE

How did you get by? There's
nothing here.

DESSIE

Don't need much. I got the
river for water and fish.
Got me a roof.

KATE

Where's your family?

Dessie considers this for a moment, sadly.

DESSIE

No family. My Pa died of
'fluenza a ways back. Brothers
run up North to work in the
factories. (beat) Then Ezel
left.

Dessie smiles, but finds it difficult to keep the
tears from her eyes.

DESSIE

But he gived me this 'fore he
died. So's I wouldn't hafta
be alone. (beat) Said he
thought God was almin' to
make it a boy. With big brown
eyes and strong hands. (beat)
God gonna make him look just
like Ezel.

Kate isn't quite sure how to react. She touches
Dessie on the shoulder, first, then takes the
teary-eyed girl by the shoulders and hugs her.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

The house is somewhat cleaner than we saw it last
-- the walls have been stripped clean of the
peeling wallpaper and the floors swept of the dust
and dirt.

Kate is on her hands and knees, scrubbing a
section of the floorboards, when she hears a horse
and carriage approaching. She looks up.

PORCH

as Kate exits. She is covered from head to toe in
grime.

ANGLE ON ROAD

The carriage approaches the house and stops. The
man at the reins is ABNER MCGINTY, a dignified,
friendly-looking man in his late 60s. Abner is
adjutant in appearance, a tall, thin, mustached.

swarthy Briton. He steps down from his carriage, walks over to the house.

ABNER
(calling)
Greetings to the house! Good morning!

Kate is caught somewhat offguard by her appearance and the man's enthusiasm.

KATE
Thank you. May I invite you in for coffee or tea? I'm afraid I haven't got any ice, yet.

ABNER
No time. Thank you, just the same. I only stopped by to offer my welcome and an invitation. There's a gathering at the Dixon Dixon House this evening. We'd be pleased if you'd attend.

Kate isn't sure what to say.

ABNER
I do know it's short notice, but it would mean everything to us.

KATE
(smiling)
Tell them I accept.

ABNER
Splendid.

Abner climbs back up onto his carriage and tips his hat.

ABNER
We'll expect you at seven, then.

KATE
I'll be there.

ABNER
I'll consider it a date, then.

Miss Livingston...
 (he nods)
 ...a pleasure.

The Abner directs the horse back onto the path and towards the gravel road.

As he departs:

KATE
 Abner, how did you know my name?

ABNER
 (calling back)
 You live in a small town now. Miss Livingston. Sometimes I think it's a miracle of God the way word gets around.

He laughs. continues on his way.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE - MUSIC UNDER

- A. KATE'S HOUSE. Kate has her clothes strung about as she organizes her things.
- B. THE RIVER. She swims and bathes in the fading light. This is the river we saw earlier in the film.
- C. KATE'S BEDROOM. Sparse, but swept and scrubbed clean. As she puts on the finishing touches, Dessie dotes on Kate like a handmaid--brushing her hair, smoothing the wrinkles in her dress.

EXT. DIXON HOUSE - KATE - NIGHT

A quietly elegant southern mansion that's been transformed into a hotel. Tudor pillars, a white porch stretching around the house, an enormous oak tree filled with spanish moss.

Kate arrives outside the house and stares up at the sprawling white palace.

INT. DIXON HOUSE

Inside, the hotel is abuzz with people. Despite the fact that we're in a small, southern town, most of these people are dressed respectably, in quietly appropriate fashion. Kate slips unnoticed through the front door and begins touring the room, searching for one of the few faces she'll recognize.

Then, from behind her:

ABNER
Time at last for formal
introductions.

Kate turns around. It's Abner, looking even more dashing than he did this morning.

KATE
Hello, Abner.

Abner takes Kate's hand and, always the gentleman, kisses it.

ABNER
Shall we meet your neighbors?

He leads her OUT OF THE SHOT.

INT. DIXON HOUSE - ABNER AND KATE - SAME

Moving through the crowd, making introductions, idle conversation.

ABNER
Addie heard of your arrival.
She's eager to meet you.

KATE
Who is Addie?

They come upon a small group gathered on the veranda of the house. BESWICK, the town's mayor, engages a group of TOWNSPEOPLE in debate. Abner and Kate observe.

BESWICK

The president never claimed the solution would be that simple, gentlemen. Averting depression isn't something you want to take lightly.

TOWNSMAN

Taking any action at all wouldn't be too extreme, Beswick. Hoover hasn't done a damn thing.

Laughter. Then:

MRS. SIERS

Such an easy matter to laugh at gentlemen.

From behind the group, escorted by an Indian servant, is MRS. SIERS (ADDIE), 70 years old. She is blind, but manages to navigate the group diligently.

MRS. SIERS

A chicken in every pot has become a joke to some of the poor fools on the river. For God's sake, when the fishing is bad they turn to eating the tortoises.

The group is silenced, humbled.

MRS. SIERS (continued)

So laugh while you can. You might as well now.

ABNER

(to Kate)

Addie.

EXT. DIXON HOUSE - ABNER, ADDIE, KATE - NIGHT

Walking peacefully through the bouganvillea. the lilac. Soft lights backlight the scene.

MRS. SIERS

I wonder sometimes whether there are answers to the problems we create for ourselves. Human beings are never quite so imaginative as when we dig our own graves.

ABNER

(to Kate)

You'll have to forgive Addie. She isn't usually this cheerful.

Kate smiles.

ADDIE

I forget my manners sometimes. Kathryn. Forgive me. How long have you come to stay with us at the river?

KATE

I'm not sure. I have some family business to settle.

Addie nods.

ADDIE

I see.

EXT. KATE'S HOUSE - DAWN

The first light of dawn shines through the trees as Kate readies to leave the place. At the road she meets Booker, who is in the process of transporting her things from the rail station. She stops to greet him.

KATE

Good morning, Booker.

BOOKER
Morning, Ma'am.

KATE
You may leave these things
in the front room. Dessie
will show you where.

BOOKER
Thank you, Ma'am.

Kate continues on. Booker directs his mule to the house.

FRONT PORCH

where Dessie is now standing, watching as Booker pulls to a stop.

BOOKER
The Missus ast me t'put these
up th' house.

ANGLE ON DESSIE

who looks hopelessly in love. She twists and tugs at her hair like a little girl.

DESSIE
(faraway)
In here.

Booker grabs an enormous crate, hoists it from the carriage bed and heads for the front door.

INT. HOUSE

Booker enters, straining under the weight of the crate.

DESSIE
Name's Dessie. Who's you?

BOOKER
Name's Booker.

DESSIE
Ain't never seen ya around.

BOOKER
Keeps t'myself mostly. Lives
down on Miller Creek. Wheres
you want this?

DESSIE
(not moving her eyes from him)
There's fine.

Booker drops the crate and is out the front door.
Dessie is right behind him.

FRONT PORCH

DESSIE
Can I gets ya somethin' cool
t'drink? Some lemonade?

Booker stops, wipes the sweat from his brow,
turns.

BOOKER
(smiling)
That'd be fine.

In a flash Dessie is gone. The flimsy screen door
SLAMS behind her as she races to the kitchen.

EXT. MRS SIERS HOUSE - SAME

as Kate stops her carriage in the drive. The
place is magnificent--tudor columns, ivy-covered
walls, blossoming lilac. The house sits on a
small hill overlooking a gentle bend in the river;
not far upstream is the spring, the source of the
river.

A noisy CHORUS OF DOGS greet Kate. An indian
servant named KINJU, dressed in a spotless white
uniform, hurries from the house to chase the dogs
off.

EXT. HOUSE - LATER

Kate and the venerable Mrs. Siers follow a narrow, cobbled pathway to the river. The landscaped grounds around them are breathtaking--enormous bouganvilleas, towering oak trees. Spanish moss sifts from the branches overhead like sand through fingertips.

MRS. SIERS

His name is Kinju. Nine years ago he showed up at the platform looking for work. He had absolutely no qualifications to speak of.

KATE

Why did you hire him?

MRS. SIERS

(beat)

I asked him what it was that should want me to keep him on. Do you know what he said?

Kate shakes her head.

MRS. SIERS

He said he would teach me the one thing in life I hadn't learned. How to die.

The old woman smiles.

They continue along the path until they come to...

THE RIVER SPRING

A wide, whispering pool protected by a canopy of palm. This is the source of the river, the spring, where the water seeps up from hidden caverns, bubbling up into turquoise pools. A magic place. Everywhere you look there's color--purple and white hyacinths, blue waterlilies, moon vines, spiderlilies, wild asters. Butterflies are everywhere. There is a feeling of deep, rural repose here: solitude. reverie, peace, God. An inviting place.

Mrs. Siers is sitting at the edge of the spring,
while Kate swims in the pool.

MRS. SIERS

Mr. Hanson tells me you lived
on the river once before.

KATE

Once. It was a very long
time ago.

MRS. SIERS

Strange I don't remember you.
When James was still alive we
kept to ourselves mostly. He
didn't have much patience for
people. I'm afraid.

KATE

When did he die?

MRS. SIERS

(shaking her head)
A lifetime ago.

KATE

What happened?

The old woman shakes her head, unable to answer,
it seems. Then:

KATE

(suddenly embarrassed)
I'm sorry, I didn't --

MRS. SIERS

No, you don't understand.

Mrs. Siers pauses a moment, collects her memories.

MRS. SIERS

I don't know what happened to
him.

The old woman shrugs.

MRS. SIERS

James loved to fish. He had a small boat that he fashioned from trees growing along the riverbank. He was so proud of that boat. He would get into it here, at the spring, and just let the current carry him away. I would sit here and listen to him until he disappeared around the bend. And sometimes I would just sit here, waiting, until I heard him returning.

She smiles, and it's a long, sad, faraway smile.

MRS. SIERS

I suppose James drowned. Mr. Applegate said they found his boat trapped on a sandbar, where the river flows into the ocean. But James was gone.

KATE

(a whisper)

God, I'm sorry.

MRS. SIERS

His boat was just sitting there. As if it were waiting for him...

A long pause.

MRS. SIERS

Lord. I haven't thought about him in...

The thought fades.

MRS. SIERS

For years after that, I would wake in the middle of the night, and I could still feel him. As if he was right there. Beside me. I thought I might wake in the morning and hear him downstairs. Or out by the river.

She thinks a moment. Then:

MRS. SIERS
We expect so much.

MONTAGE - MUSIC UNDER

- A. ORANGE GROVE. Gnarled and overgrown with weeds.
- B. ORANGE GROVE. Kate, Dessie, Booker work the grove: pulling weeds, cutting limbs, uprooting dead trees.

BOOKER

Miz Livingston. You want this tree taken down?

It is an old tree. gnarled and dying.

KATE

Will it bear oranges?

BOOKER

(shaking his head. no)
Too old.

Kate eyes the old tree.

KATE

It's been here long enough.
It deserves to stay.

- C. HOUSE. Booker strips the peeling paint. Kate and Dessie apply a new coat.
- D. RIVER. Kate swims at dusk. Dessie watches from the shore.

KATE (V.O.)

Time is the strongest of nature's tools. It makes us forget. The days passed on the river, and New York became distant to me. Unreal. The river was my home now, because I could feel it when I swam in it. Because I could hear it at night.

- E. ORANGE GROVE. Where dead trees have been uprooted, rich, brown earth is filled in. New trees are planted.

F. RIVER. Rain.

G. ORANGE TREES. Blossoms.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOUSE - KATE - DAY

She looks up, sees Richard approaching on horseback.

EXT. HOUSE

Kate emerges and watches Richard as he arrives.

RICHARD
Good morning.

EXT. RIVER - RICHARD AND KATE - LATER

A grassy verge overlooking a bend in the river.

KATE
--so when Marie died...there
was no one else.
(correcting herself)
David, but...

She shakes her head. She'd rather not go on.

RICHARD
You have trouble talking about
her.

A slight nod, almost imperceptible.

RICHARD
If you loved her that's alright.
As long as you remember.

KATE
That's what I thought.

Richard nods.

RICHARD
What is this I hear about you
growing oranges?

KATE

Is it such a foolish idea?

RICHARD

Not foolish. But brave. Oranges have a history of failing this far north.

KATE

It's been done before. Besides, the grove is here. I see no harm.

Richard smiles, amused by Kate's daring.

RICHARD

Isn't there anything you won't try to change?

EXT. THE RIVER - RICHARD AND KATE - LATER

Swimming. A narrow bend in the river that forms a secluded cove. Willows and palm arch overhead.

KATE

Nothing feels as good as fresh water.

RICHARD

As long as you don't mind sharing it with alligators.

KATE

Alligators?

Richard laughs.

RICHARD

Don't worry. Attacks are rare in the winter.

KATE

(sarcastic)

Rare.

Richard submerges, swims toward Kate underwater. He rises directly in front of her. He holds her.

A moment. then:

KATE

Is this why you brought me here?

RICHARD

No. Consider this an afterthought.

He moves away, smiling.

KATE

(a whisper)

There were mermaids in this river when I was a child.

RICHARD

I know.

A questioning look on Kate's face.

RICHARD (continuing)

Addie Siers told me. That's why I brought you here today.

A curious look.

KATE

Why?

But before he can answer, Kate squeals, then gets pulled underwater. Richard laughs, then goes down after her.

UNDERWATER

A large, brown animal has wrapped its flippers around Kate and rolls with her.

ON THE SURFACE

Kate breaks the water in a panic, screaming. She rushes a few feet to the shore.

KATE

(terrified)

Was it an alligator?

Richard, still in the water, moves toward her. He is laughing.

RICHARD
No. Not an alligator.
(then)
Don't you recognize your mermaids?

KATE
Mermaids?

RICHARD
They were upriver when we got here.
They heard us swimming.

KATE
But...

RICHARD
Manatees. Columbus thought they
were mermaids, too. He wrote home
to say that reports of their beauty
were greatly exaggerated. I hope
they weren't offended.

KATE
Why do they come here?

RICHARD
The water is warmer here. We
only see them in the winter.

He extends his hand to Kate, inviting her back
into the water.

RICHARD
They might not be handsome, but
they don't bite. They only want
to play. And to say hello.

Wary at first, Kate takes Richard's hand and moves
back into the water.

HIGH ANGLE - RIVER - SAME

As Kate moves back into the water, we see the
large herd of 20 to 30 manatees that have come to

play. Most of them are large. 6 to 8 feet long, and look like fat, overstuffed sofas.

Kate wades slowly into the water, about knee deep, and is greeted by the curious muzzle of a manatee. She pets the animal's snout, and it slips away quietly into the water. She smiles. She has been accepted.

KATE
Sometimes our memories never
fail us.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - TOWN SQUARE CLOCK - DAY

HOLD for a beat as the clock chimes the hour. It is early morning.

EXT. BANK - KATE AND DESSIE - SAME

The business day is just beginning. Kate and Dessie approach in a noisy motorcar and stop just outside the bank.

INT. BANK

ON THE DOOR as Kate and Dessie enter, looking around. Kate spots who she came to see.

KATE'S POV

on CARSON WEXLER, a craggy old banker in his late 60s. He commands his business from a wheelchair. The old man looks up with an expression of ice when he sees the women enter.

ON KATE AND DESSIE

Both look overwhelmed and out of place.

KATE
(to Dessie)
Wait here.

Kate goes off to confront Wexler.

ANGLE ON WEXLER

as Kate approaches. The old man is smiling to himself.

KATE

I wasn't aware that you owned the bank, Mr. Wexler.

WEXLER

(with a shrug)

It didn't seem important to our conversation. Besides, my interest in your land was personal. It had nothing to do with the bank.

KATE

Well, my interests are personal, as well. That farm belonged to my parents.

WEXLER

So I've been told. Have you learned anything, yet?

KATE

No, but I've decided to stay. I'd like to apply for a loan, Mr. Wexler.

Wexler smiles, then glances over Kate's shoulder where he sees...

WEXLER'S POV

...Dessie standing nervously by the doorway of the bank.

ANGLE ON WEXLER

His attention is back to Kate.

WEXLER

You haven't done much business in Crystal River, have you, Miss Livingston?

KATE
Why do you ask?

WEXLER
Well...

He motions in Dessie's direction.

WEXLER (continued)
...we don't do business with
them. You'll have to ask your
nigra to wait outside.

A pause. Kate turns back, looks at Dessie,
standing alone.

KATE
Why is that, Mr. Wexler?

WEXLER
(condescending)
Tradition, I imagine. First
Crystal has been doing business
for over 50 years without serving
a single nigra in this town. I
see no reason to break with
precedent now, do you?

Wexler spins his wheelchair around and starts to
maneuver towards his desk.

KATE
(louder than before)
You're doing business with me.
Mr. Wexler. I asked her to join
me.

ON DESSIE

She understands what's happening.

BACK ON WEXLER

The old man stops, but doesn't turn around to face
Kate.

WEXLER

We're not doing business yet.
Miss Livingston.

(beat)

And I asked her to leave.

A long, uncomfortable moment of silence passes between the two. Everyone in the bank is nervously watching the confrontation, until...

KATE

Good day, Mr. Wexler.

WEXLER

Good day, Miss Livingston.

She turns and exits the bank.

EXT. BANK - SAME

Kate plows toward her auto like a mad elephant.
Dessie flits behind her like a little bird.

DESSIE

(out of breath)

Miss Livingston. Please! You
need that money for the house.
I can wait outside.

Dessie catches up with Kate and stops her.

CLOSE ON KATE

Two small tears well up in her eyes. She wipes them away with the sleeve of her coat.

DESSIE

Miss Livingston, you know you
need that money. I don't mind.
I kin wait out th' car. Really.
I don't mind.

KATE

(quiet)

Get in the car, Dessie.

DESSIE
It's happen before. I kin wait.

KATE
(a little louder)
Dessie, get in!

DESSIE
I don't mind. t'all. I waited
'fore. Lots o'times. Just the
way things is.

KATE
(suddenly loud)
Dessie, get in the car!

Silence. A moment, then:

DESSIE
(suddenly obedient, quiet)
Yes'm.

The two step into the automobile without another word and disappear down the road in a cloud of dust and blue exhaust.

ANGLE ON BANK WINDOW

where a beaming Carson Wexler watches them depart.

EXT. ROAD - BOOKER - EARLY DUSK

Booker is walking his mule along a gravel road that cuts through a field of red and orange asters. He's humming an old blues tune that we can't quite identify. When man and beast climb a low incline in the road, they find their path blocked. Waiting on horseback in the middle of the road are Walker and his MEN. Booker suddenly feels in his place.

BOOKER
Evenin' Mr. Walker. How's
you tonight, Suh?

WALKER
Drunk.

And so are his friends. The group is so drunk. in fact, they can barely sit up, let alone stay on their horses.

BOOKER

There be anything I do for you, Mr. Walker?

Walker considers this.

WALKER

As a matter of fact, nigra, there is. I hear tell you been acting a bit too neighborly lately. That so?

BOOKER

No suh. I just do as I be told. I don't do no more'n told to, suh.

Walker moves his horse closer.

WALKER

I'd sure hate to find out that weren't so, nigger.

(laughs)

Cause if I did...

Walker suddenly lashes out with his foot and kicks Booker squarely in the stomach. Booker drops to his knees, doubled over, groaning.

WALKER

...I'd have to do something about it. Now, wouldn't I?

BOOKER

(weakly)

Yes, suh.

WALKER

How's that, nigger?

Booker raises his head, but avoids Walker's eyes.

BOOKER

Yes suh.

Walker places the toe of his boot under Booker's chin and raises the black man's head. Booker's eyes are dark and cold. They cut through Walker.

WALKER

Don't look at me like that,
nigra. I don't like what I'm
seein' in your eyes.

Walker pumps another swift kick across Booker's face, sending the black man to the ground in pain.

Booker looks up from the ground as the drunken men leave.

EXT. GROVE - KATE - DAY

Kate moves along one of the rows, admiring the progress. She stops beneath a towering tree, full in blossom. She lays down beneath it. She stares up at the sky.

POV - KATE

A horizon of blue above the treetops. A perfect day.

Kate turns over in the grass and comes face-to-face with an enormous and agitated rattlesnake. The reptile's tail is erect and BUZZING: its head is drawn back, poised, ready to strike.

ANGLE ON KATE

Her face is taut with fear, but she knows better than to scream. Beads of perspiration mist her face.

Before she can react, there is a thundering EXPLOSION. The rattler is thrown from the grass. Kate yells.

ANGLE ON DESSIE

who is standing at the edge of the clearing, equally terrified. She drops her aim on the shotgun that she's holding.

DESSIE

My daddy always tell me that
if the serpent cain't have his
apple tree nearby, orange tree
suit him just fine.

Dessie reaches down and picks up the reptile's
limp body.

DESSIE

You ever eat rattler before?

They both laugh.

EXT. KATE'S PLACE - KATE - DAY

It is early morning as Kate is hanging out wash to
dry.

WIDER SHOT - THE ROAD - NANA MAE

An enormous black woman storms up the road like an
elephant gone mad, stirring up a storm of dust
behind her. The black woman turns up the path to
Kate's with a determined gait, then stops about
ten feet from the clothesline. Her name is NANA
MAE. She looks mean.

NANA

You Miz Livingston?

KATE

(wary)

And if I was?

NANA

Folks in town tells you gots
my lil' girl out wit you. That
so?

KATE

Do you mean Dessie?

NANA

That's the one. Fetch her!

KATE

May I ask what this is about?

NANA
None of you damn business is
what this 'bout. Fetch her!

DESSIE (O.S.)
I's here, Ma.

Dessie appears at the porch door. She pushes open
the screen and steps out.

Nana Mae eyes the girl up and down. It's obvious
she hasn't seen Dessie in some time.

NANA
(after a moment)
Still carrying that nigger's
bastard. I see.

DESSIE
(humble)
Yes'm.

NANA
Too late t'do anythin' 'bout
that now. Serve ya right. I
s'pose.
(beat)
How you gettin' by?

DESSIE
I manages.

NANA
Well, I needs you back at the
place. Git up you things an'
head back.

DESSIE
Yes'm.

Without a word to Kate, the black woman vanishes
in another cloud of dust, huffing and puffing her
way back down the path.

Kate is dumbfounded. She drops her laundry and
chases after Nana Mae.

KATE

Who are you? Did you think
you'd just storm onto some-
body's property and make
demands?

Nana Mae stops, glaring at Kate like a demon.

KATE

(less sure of herself)
Dessie is old enough to make
decisions for herself.

NANA

Not as long as I her Mama. she
ain't. People said enough of
her having that baby without
a husband to hep raise it. I
ain't lettin' people say she
gettin' charity from no white
woman with my back turned at
her.

Kate slaps Nana Mae across the face.

Nana Mae slaps Kate back, unbalancing the smaller
woman with the force of the blow. The black woman
turns on her heels and marches away smartly, head
high and chest out. She's accomplished her
mission.

INT. HOUSE - DESSIE - SAME

Dessie is shoving her things--a few ragged
dresses, some worn photographs--into a burlap
sack. Her eyes are red with tears, swollen. Kate
appears at the doorway to the room.

KATE

You told me your mother was
dead.

DESSIE

She is...mos' th' time.

KATE
(beat)

Doesn't she love you anymore?

Dessie shakes her head sadly.

DESSIE
Not so much.

KATE
Why?

Dessie smiles from behind her tears. It's the saddest smile in the world.

DESSIE
Oh...don't know, really. Me an' her never seen eye-t-eye a' things. Not since Pa die, anyway.

Kate reaches for Dessie, takes her by the shoulder.

DESSIE
Ain't fit for a baby to be born without its pa. Time's hard 'nough as is. I s'pose.

The silence that passes between these two is empty and sad. Dessie picks up her things, moves to the doorway...

DESSIE
I'll be back if I can.

...and leaves.

EXT. RIVERBANK - KATE AND MRS. SIERS - NIGHT

The river outside Mrs. Siers house. A magical place at night. A thin lace of crystal moonlight ripples across the black velvet water. The first drafts of a fog finger across the spring.

MRS. SIERS

There's a fog coming in, isn't there?

Kate nods.

KATE

Yes.

MRS. SIERS

I can feel it. I asked my father once what made the fog? He said it was the struggle between the cold air and the warm earth.

She smiles.

MRS. SIERS

He could make the simplest things seem so romantic. He was always good at that.

KATE

Was he a writer?

MRS. SIERS

No. But I think he always fancied himself one. He would have liked that.

KATE

Why wasn't he?

MRS. SIERS

Because writing wasn't an honest profession for a young man. Decent men sweated for their keep.

(beat)

So he did.

KATE

Something happened here twenty years ago, Addie. It tore my family apart.

She looks out over the water.

KATE (continued)
And it feels as if it doesn't
want to be found out.

MRS. SIERS
They say that when we are willing
and brave, Kathryn, the Gods join
in.

(beat)
Give them the chance, and they
will.

EXT. LUMBER MILL - KATE - DAY

She arrives at the mill amidst a flurry of
activity. MEN working the saws, enormous cypress
trees unloaded from wagons and fed into the lumber
chutes. Kate wanders through the scene observing
everything.

RICHARD (O.S.)
Here's a rare sight. Most women
make an effort to avoid this place.

Richard emerges from one of the buildings. covered
with sawdust and dirt.

KATE
The reputation of its proprietor,
no doubt.

RICHARD
Maybe.

KATE
I came looking for Booker.
Dessie's mother took her away
yesterday.

RICHARD
(his mood changes)
Don't get yourself too involved.
Kate. Rules are different for
them.

Kate stares at Richard for a silent moment.

KATE

That doesn't mean they should
be treated any differently.

EXT. ROAD - KATE - DAY

A narrow dirt pathway that bends and winds through
the overgrowth. Kate walks along this road
carrying a hefty basket in her arms, until...

EXT. NANA MAE'S HOUSE - SAME

she finds herself at Nana Mae's. The yard is wild
and unkempt, the house looks like a disaster about
to take place.

ANGLE ON PORCH

where Nana Mae is observing her visitor's
approach. A young (7 years) half-naked boy named
GEEZER peers from behind the woman's bulk.

NANA MAE

(defensive)

Dessie ain't here.

Kate stops a few feet from the porch.

KATE

I didn't come to see Dessie.

NANA MAE

What then?

Geezer pokes his head out from behind Nana Mae and
smiles at Kate with a big, toothy grin.

KATE

I want to strike a bargain with
you. I'd like to hire Dessie
to work for me. I can't pay
much. I'll give her two dollars
a week and I'll have two dollars
sent to you every week. She'll
stay with me.

Nana Mae ponders this for a moment.

NANA MAE
She big, ya know.

KATE
I know. When the time comes.
I'll take care of her. I'll
see to it that her baby is
fed and clothed.

NANA MAE
You still pay her?

KATE
If that's what you want.

Again, Nana Mae considers this.

NANA MAE
I'll have to think on this.
Come back in the morning.

Kate nods.

KATE
Here. These are for you.

Kate sets the basket of fruits and vegetables onto
the porch. Like a little monkey. Geezer is
instantly on the basket, investigating.

NANA MAE
Geezer! Get outta there!
Get yousef in the house.

With an apple in hand, Geezer darts into the
house.

Kate is already halfway across the yard. She
turns back and faces Nana Mae.

KATE
She's done nothing to hurt
you. Don't punish her for
being human.

Kate turns and leaves.

EXT. ROAD - KATE - SAME

The trip home. From somewhere behind her, far down the road, she hears a voice:

DESSIE
Miz Livingston! Miz Livingston!

Dessie, with her belongings in tow, is racing madly down the road after Kate. When the two finally meet, they embrace in an enormous hug. Inseparable.

MONTAGE - MUSIC UNDER

- A. EXT. HOUSE - DAY. Geezer approaches Kate with his hands cupped, trapping something within. He opens his hands for Kate, and we find a small toad resting on his palm.

GEEZER
Looke! I caught me a leel ol'
hoppytoad. Gots big ol' eyes
Jes like a leel baby.

- B. THE RIVER. Kate and Dessie teach Geezer to swim. But he isn't interested. Instead, the child climbs onto the back of a manatee for a ride.

- C. INT. HOUSE - KATE AND GEEZER - NIGHT. Night is beginning to fall, and Kate is reading to Geezer from a book. Dessie, just as attentive, listens from a nearby doorway. (NOTE: SHE IS READING AN EXCERPT FROM SAINT EXUPERY'S 'THE LITTLE PRINCE'.)

KATE
(reading to Geezer)
The night had fallen. I had let my
tools drop from my hands. Of what
moment now was my hammer, my bolt,
or thirst, or death? On one star,
one planet, my planet, the Earth.
there was a little prince to be
comforted. I took him in my
arms, and rocked him.

D. FIELD. A wide, endless field of the deepest red flowers. Kate walks with Geezer while Dessie reads from the same book. She has some trouble with the words, but she gets through it.

DESSIE

(continuing from above V.O.)

I said to him: "The flower that you love is not in danger. I will draw you a muzzle for your sheep. I will draw you a railing to put around your flower. I will--" I did not know what to say to him. I felt awkward and blundering.

E. EXT. HILL. High above the river. Dessie continues reading:

DESSIE (continued)

I did not know how I could reach him, where I could overtake him and go on hand and hand with him once more. It is such a secret place, the land of tears.

INT. KATE'S - GEEZER AND ABNER - EARLY MORNING

Geezer peeks from around the corner of a big, overstuffed chair in the corner of the sitting room. He's staring at Abner, who is sitting in the room, smoking a cigarette. The two never take their eyes from each other.

KATE (OS)

You're sure you don't mind watching Geezer, Abner?

ABNER

Not at all.

Kate descends the stairs, fixing her hair. She's wearing a quiet pastel dress.

KATE

And you're sure we're not keeping you from church.

Abner smiles.

ABNER

The Lord and I have come to
an agreement in recent years.
He'll understand.

Dessie emerges from the kitchen. She is dressed
in her Sunday best.

DESSIE

Geezer, now you mind Mr. Abner.
He gon' take care f'you till we
get back.

GEEZER

He look like a monster.

Abner smiles, turns to Kate.

ABNER

That's exactly what my former
wife said.

EXT. NEGRO BAPTIST CHURCH-DAY

A dilapidated, sullen-looking building that's
definitely seen its better days. Windows are
broken, paint and shingles are peeling, and the
sign posted out front can barely be read. The
place is small compared to the noise issuing from
it.

INT. CHURCH

A carnival of religious chaos. PEOPLE are
everywhere, craning their necks to see the MAN who
is preaching to them.

ANGLE ON MINISTER

who glows with the energy of his preaching. He
holds his congregation magnetized.

PREACHER

All this time we talk we talk
about the Lord in heaven...

(MORE)

PREACHER
(continued)

like some passerby admiring
the fish in a river. That
aint so, Brothers and Sisters!
That aint the way He sees things
his'self.

The congregation eats every word of this. They
cheer and encourage the preacher on.

ANGLE ON DESSIE

Quieter than the rest. She has her eyes on
someone else.

POV-DESSIE

Sitting on the other side of the room.
half-interested in the sermon and about three
quarters interested in Dessie, is Booker. He's
summoned the courage to attend the sermon, but not
to sit beside Dessie.

BACK ON DESSIE

She smiles.

EXT. METHODIST CHURCH-SAME

We're outside the town's white Methodist church
now. Much bigger than its Baptist counterpart.
much newer and cleaner.

INT. CHURCH

More ornate, shiny. And the people are quieter,
more subdued than the blacks, but just as
attentive.

When the choir finishes the last notes of a hymn.
Reverend Fletcher nods and takes over before his
congregation.

REVEREND FLETCHER

I think we must be fools sometimes,
the way we call on God and beg him
(MORE)

REVEREND FLETCHER

(continued)

to hear us out. We demand His attention...but sometimes I wonder if we

ever listen to Him. (beat) There's a story written by Mark Twain about a small town, much like ours. There was a war in progress somewhere in the world and the time came for this town to send its young men off to battle. So they gathered in the church, before God, on the eve of departure for these young men. And the people prayed. They prayed for all kinds of things, I imagine...but mostly they prayed for the obvious. They asked God to protect their sons. To let them do battle and to win. To let them live and to come home unhurt. Now, a stranger stood up... somehow the townspeople had never seen before. Someone from outside the town. He stood among them, and he asked the people who prayed: "Do you know what it is you ask for? Do you really know? Because, you see, by asking God to let your son live, you're asking Him to let someone else's son die."

Not a sound in the church. Like the Baptist preacher, Reverend Fletcher has his congregation by their ears.

REVEREND

We're all like that sometimes. the way we blindly go about our lives. We feed ourselves. We breathe. We close our eyes at night. And we come upon times in our lives when we can't seem to do things by ourselves. Then we turn to God. Sometimes I think God must need someone to listen, too.

INT. BAPTIST CHURCH

REVEREND

God is here, Brothers and Sisters!
God is in here with us right now!
God is with the widow Amison.

The Reverend points to an old, tired woman sitting in the congregation.

REVEREND

God is here with Joe an' Nell
Jessup.

He points to a newlywed couple sitting towards the front of the group.

REVEREND

By God, He's even in that little
bottle tucked in Floyd Drusser's
back pocket.

The congregation hoots and hollers at this.

FLOYD DRUSSER

Damn! I sure it were empty.

More laughter.

REVEREND

(suddenly subdued, serious)
And the Lord God is here, Brothers
and Sisters...

The Reverend reaches down to a woman in the congregation, takes a small baby from her, and cradles the infant in his arms.

REVEREND

He is right here, my friends.
This is His future. While we
been lookin' up to Heaven and
worrying about today, He's been
down here with us all the time.
We just didn't know.

The reverend looks to his choir and nods. The choir stands and begins a rousing, spirited chorus of "Shall We Gather At The River."

INT. METHODIST CHURCH - SAME

The Methodist choir is singing a more subdued version of the same song, but as we cut between the two churches, the voices of blacks and whites blend together effortlessly.

EXT. METHODIST CHURCH-LATER

The service has ended and people are politely streaming from the church, exchanging greetings and idle conversation. Kate breaks from the group and moves toward her auto. She finds Richard waiting there. Kate isn't surprised.

KATE

I must admit, Mr. Hanson, that I've never felt completely comfortable believing in God, but seeing you in church this morning was something akin to a miracle.

RICHARD

(amused)

I don't strike you as the church-going type, Miss Livingston?

KATE

Let's just say I'm surprised that the building hasn't burned to the ground.

Kate moves to step up into the auto but Richard blocks her entry with an arm. The two are in a half-embrace.

RICHARD

I'm going downriver this afternoon to look at some new cypress territory. Could I interest you in joining me?

Kate considers this. Richard leans closer.

KATE
(nervous)
I have things to do.

RICHARD
What things?

KATE
Just...things. Around the house.

RICHARD
(in control)
They can wait. Can't they?

But before Kate can respond, an old, noisy motorcar RUMBLES up beside them and a middle-aged MAN and his WIFE say hello.

MAN
Morning Miss Livingston. (nods)
Richard...surprised to see you in church this morning. Been a few years, hasn't it?

Richard shrugs sheepishly and nods. Kate spots her chance escape and climbs into her auto.

RICHARD
Well, you know how it is. Certainly can't harm a man like me.

MAN
Not at all. Think I could have that order of lumber ready by noon tomorrow? We'll be setting in the new foundation in the morning and I'd like to get building soon's possible.

RICHARD
Have it for you by noon.

MAN
Good. Pleasant day to you, Miss Livingston. (nods) Richard.

By now, Kate has her auto fired up and ready to go.

RICHARD

(smiling)

You are a very fortunate and
lucky woman, Miss Livingston.
This isn't how this encounter
was intended to end.

KATE

God works in wondrous ways.
Mr. Hanson. Doesn't He?

RICHARD

I guess He does. Shall I
pick you up around 2 o'clock?

One last smile from Kate, a hesitating moment
before she departs.

KATE

2 o'clock would be fine.
Mr. Hanson.

And she's gone.

EXT. BAPTIST CHURCH-SAME

Blacks are gathered around the church's lawn in
small groups, overlooking the river. To one side,
a long white sheet has been draped between two
trees. A group of unseen women have decorated
their toes with ribbons and bows and are poking
their feet out from beneath the sheet. The single
black men-young and old- are bidding on the pairs
of feet. Floyd Drusser, the man with the bottle
in his back pocket, is at the front of the group.

FLOYD

I gots two dollar says that
there's m'wife. Aint no ribbon
been made can cover up her
ugly feets.

The crowd howls with laughter.

ANOTHER ANGLE

In a different part of the gathering, tables are
covered with colorfully decorated boxes containing

food. Again, the men are bidding. A withered old coot named JIZZUM is acting as auctioneer.

JIZZUM
Got forty cent for this here
box. But I'm lookin' for 50.
Who give me 50 cent for this
box.

From somewhere in the crowd, a man makes an offer:

MAN
50 Cents!

JIZZUM
50 cents he say! Who give me
55?

Booker, obviously caught up in the excitement,
takes a bite.

BOOKER
55!

JIZZUM
55 cent! Can we go for 60?

The man from the crowd jumps on it.

MAN
60 cents!

And before Jizzum can respond...

BOOKER
75 cents!

JIZZUM
75 cents! Do we gots a higher
bid?

No response.

JIZZUM
75 cent going once, twice, sold
to the young man for 75 cent.

ANGLE ON RIVER - BOOKER AND DESSIE - LATER

Booker and Dessie settle down on a grassy verge overlooking the river. The decorated box that Booker won in the auction is on the ground between them.

BOOKER

Prob'ly nothin in here but rocks.
Hear they do that sometime.

DESSIE

(smiling)

Uh huh.

BOOKER

You come t' these much?

DESSIE

Naw. No one t' go with. Not
since Ezel die.

Booker nods. He knows how much Dessie misses Ezel.

BOOKER

I met him once. Didn't know
him much. But he seemed like
a good man.

DESSIE

Best one I ever knew. I just
sorry he never got to see his
baby.

A silent moment.

BOOKER

Maybe he will someday.

Dessie looks up at Booker, nods, smiles.

BOOKER

Hey, what say we eats what's
in this box. No matter if it
rocks or not. I could eat
anything!

Dessie can barely contain her laughter. She covers her mouth with a big hand.

DESSIE
It's not rocks.

BOOKER
How you know that?

More laughter.

DESSIE
Cuz I made it.

And Booker laughs, too.

EXT. KATE'S HOUSE - KATE - DAY

She returns from church in her motorcar.

INT. HOUSE - SAME

She steps into the house and stops, smiling.

ANGLE ON ABNER AND GEEZER

Asleep in the stuffed chair. Geezer on Abner's lap. An open storybook nearby.

EXT. RIVER - BOAT - RICHARD AND KATE - DAY

A part of the river we haven't seen yet. Wider and more majestic. Enormous cypress stand guard in the water at the river's edge, where white heron and egrets preen themselves and take flight like enormous prehistoric birds. Islands of hydrilla and hyacinth tossle in the current. An alligator basking on the shore is startled and glides effortlessly into the water. We're away from the town here, away from the people, and all we can hear is silence.

RICHARD
This is what religion is about.

KATE
So you do believe in God?

RICHARD
 (matter-of-factly)
 Of course I do. I just don't
 have any use for the condensed
 version they practice in town.

He looks around the river, surveys the scene.

RICHARD (continued)
 That isn't what God meant. I
 don't think.

Silence. RIVER SOUNDS. ANIMALS O.S. Then:

RICHARD (continued)
 Did you know that the Bible
 was edited?

Kathryn shakes her head, no.

RICHARD (continued)
 (nodding)
 By a group of men who decided
 it was their task to censor the
 word of God. Because they thought
 that's what He'd have wanted.

He laughs, shaking his head, quiet disbelief.

RICHARD (continued)
 That's why I don't believe in
 their religion. It's too easy.

Kate thinks about this for a moment.

KATE
 I'm not sure what I believe in
 anymore. When I was a little
 girl my stepparents taught me
 everything they wanted me to know.
 How to tie my shoes...how to be
 polite.

(long beat)
 They told me how things would
 be when I grew up.

RICHARD
 Things change, though, don't they?

Kate nods.

KATE
Always, I think.

RICHARD
That's what it's all about, I
suppose. Change. And what we
learn from it.

KATE
Maybe what we don't.

RICHARD
That isn't the only reason you
came back, is it? To find your
parents?

She considers this, not sure what the answer is.
perhaps.

KATE
I don't know why I came back.

A moment of thought. They stare at each other.
Then Richard leans forward, quietly, not a word,
and kisses Kate. She doesn't move. He kisses her
again, and this time, she accepts him.

And as the boat floats along:

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KATE'S HOUSE - RIVER - BOOKER - DAY

He emerges from the oranges, sweaty, covered with dirt, and heads toward the river to wash. He finds Dessie here, alone, washing her clothes. She is sobbing quietly.

BOOKER
What you crying for?

She looks up, surprised, tries to cover her tears.

DESSIE
Ain't crying. Trying to finish
the wash.
(the actress)
Seems to grow all by itself when
you leave it set.

Booker nods, kneels beside the river, splashes his face in the water. He sees right through Dessie.

BOOKER
Uh huh.

A moment, then:

BOOKER
Feelin' sorry for yourself?

Dessie looks up, annoyed.

DESSIE
(angry, near tears again)
Now why you say that? What I
got make me feel sorrier than
anyone else?

No response.

DESSIE (continued)
Huh? Tell me!

BOOKER
(a pathetic smile)
Keep saying it long enough,
maybe you believe it, too.

Booker rises and walks off. Dessie throws her laundry onto the ground and chases after him.

EXT. HOUSE

Dessie wheels in front of Booker and blocks his path. The big man just keeps walking.

DESSIE
You sayin' I vain? Huh? Is
you?

BOOKER
I sayin' you got more important
things to be worrying about right
now. No time to be cryin' in the
river.

DESSIE
You sayin' I vain. I ain't got
no respect for anyone but myself.
Is that it? Is it?

Booker stops. He holds the small black woman with his harsh, cold eyes. She doesn't move.

A long, silent pause.

BOOKER
Ain't nothing a person can't do
if they sets their mind to it.
You hear me? Nothing.

Dessie looks terrified standing under this enormous man.

BOOKER (continued)
When you offs by youself in the
woods and you comes across a
panther, whats you do?

DESSIE
(barely a whisper)
Shoots it.

BOOKER
You shoots it. And if you ain't
got a gun?

Dessie doesn't know. She shakes her head, almost imperceptibly.

BOOKER

If you ain't got a gun, only thing you can do is stares it down. Be at it a long time, maybe, but sooner or later, ones of you gots to give down.

(beat)

If it ain't you, at least you tried.

He steps around the small, black woman and leaves. She doesn't watch him go.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Early morning along the dirt road leading to Nana Mae's. Dessie and Geezer are walking hand in hand. Dessie is teaching Geezer a song.

EXT. NANA MAE'S

The two approach. Everything about the house suddenly seems too dark and quiet. We can tell by Dessie's face that she knows something is wrong.

DESSIE

Geezer, y'all go play.

GEEZER

But I wanna see Nana.

DESSIE

You see Nana later. Go on.
Git!

A scrawny mongrel crawls out from beneath the porch, flapping its tail, and bounds up to Geezer.

GEEZER

C'mon hound.

The boy and his dog run off into the trees as Dessie walks to the porch.

INT. HOUSE

Dark and silent inside, as well.

DESSIE
(hushed)

Mama?

No answer. She presses on.

BEDROOM

Dessie slowly pushes open the door and peers into the gloomy room. The thin light from a bedside candle plays with the shadows on Dessie's face as she enters.

ANGLE ON ROCKING CHAIR

where Nana Mae sits. Her eyes are open, but the old woman is motionless, staring. She is holding a rifle.

DESSIE
Mama?

NANA
What you want?

DESSIE
Mama, you alright?

Nana Mae's eyes are cold, penetrating.

NANA
Thought I tell you never come
round here's no more.

Dessie realizes that Nana Mae is delirious with fever.

DESSIE
You never say that, Mama.

NANA

Your Daddy been huntin' up
an' down the creek lookin'
fo' you. Whatsa matter?
Don't you pay him no mind
no more?

DESSIE

Mama...

NANA

I tol' him you run off with
that no good nigger again.
Gettin' youself a baby. I
s'pose.

DESSIE

Mama...you're not feeling good.

NANA

I tell him you never listen to
what you told.

DESSIE

Mama...

NANA

(screaming)

Don't call me your Mama!

Nana Mae raises the rifle in the air and BLASTS a
hole in the ceiling above her.

EXT. HOUSE - SAME

Geezer stops dead in his tracks when he hears the
blast.

BACK TO HOUSE

CLOSE ON NANA MAE

A constellation of sweat beads across her face.

NANA

Now who the hell are you?
An where's Pa?

Dessie walks over to her mother and takes the rifle easily from her hands. She sets the rifle on the floor, kneels beside Nana Mae, and hugs her mother by the waist.

DESSIE (quietly)
 My name Dessie, Mama. And I
 am your little girl.
 (pause)
 And Daddy is dead, Mama. Been
 gone a long time. now. Too long.

Nana Mae seems to remember. She takes Dessie by the head, gently hugs her to her breast, strokes her hair.

ANGLE ON SCREEN DOOR

where Geezer, hands and face pressed against the screen, is watching everything.

EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY

A very small, very old building along the city's main street. The place could use both a good paint job and a new roof.

INT. TOWN HALL

as Kate enters. There are several PEOPLE inside being helped by the CLERKS. Kate walks up to the only available window.

KATE
 Good afternoon. I'd like some
 information.

MONTAGE - KATE - MUSIC UNDER

- A. TOWN HALL OFFICE. Searching through stacks of paper, old photographs, title deeds. We can tell by her expression that she's not finding what she wants. A clerk brings in another stack of material.
- B. TOWN NEWSPAPER OFFICE. More photographs, stacks of old, yellow newspapers. More photographs.

C. LAWYERS OFFICE. More papers, but nothing seems to supply Kate with what she's looking for.

EXT. CHURCHYARD - DAY

A small, but neatly kept cemetery to one side of the church. A clean, white picket fence runs the perimeter of the place and a garden of azalea and wild aster spreads across the grounds.

Kate wanders between the rows, moving from headstone to headstone. She's looking for something, but isn't finding it.

INT. CHURCH - LATER

The place is empty and Kate sits alone in one of the polished, hardwood pews. Everything is much as we saw it before, but without all of congregation, the place seems less bright. more somber.

Reverend Fletcher moves down the center aisle and slides in beside Kate. They both stare forward without looking at each other. After a moment of comfortable silence:

REVEREND

I just realized something this morning. I've been preaching to this town for ten years. Ten years this Sunday.

The thought seems to amaze him. The Reverend looks up, inspecting the walls, the ceiling, the stained glass. He shakes his head with a half smile.

REVEREND

Funny... how we forget things.
(a long beat)

I remember...a young boy died here. The first week that I ministered to these people. Couldn't have been more than 22. 23 years old. He had only been
(MORE)

REVEREND (continued)
 in town for a few weeks. Nobody
 knew where he came from or if he
 had any family. Nobody knew his
 name. He was just one of those
 people who settles down somewhere
 without making too much noise.

Another long moment as a couple of tears well up
 in the Reverend's eyes.

REVEREND
 I had to bury that boy without
 knowing who he was. And the
 tragedy was that there was no
 one to watch me do it. You
 can't imagine how that feels.

Kate looks at Reverend Fletcher.

REVEREND
 (a pause)
 I spent time that year trying
 to find out who that boy was.
 Where he came from. I wrote
 everywhere. The Bishop, other
 priests.

(beat)
 But I never found out. And a
 day never passes when I don't
 stop to ask myself if it isn't
 too late to keep looking.

He looks up.

REVEREND
 Ten years is a very long time.

EXT. THE RIVER SPRING - MRS. SIERS - DAY

She sits at the edge of the spring while Richard
 puts the finishing touches on a small dock. The
 sun is bright, warm. A light breeze. The
 manatees nuzzle curiously at the edge of the dock.

MRS. SIERS
 Did you know that mermaids mated
 for life?

RICHARD

No. I didn't.

MRS. SIERS

They spend most of their lives apart. Along the rivers. Or in the ocean. But I suspect they must grow lonely, don't you think? Remembering what it was like to be in love. And near someone who loved them back.

RICHARD

They're lucky that way.

Addie nods.

EXT. MRS. SIERS' HOME - DAY

Kate and Mrs. Siers are beneath the shade of a broad and towering weeping willow, overlooking a shallow bend in the river. The branchtips of the tree sway in the breeze and sweep across the water, casting designs in the current. Enormous brown shadows - the manatees - glide and barrelroll in the water below.

MRS. SIERS

I'm sorry you didn't find your parents.

KATE

Why does everything tragic seem to need company? If we don't get rain soon, I'll lose the grove.

MRS. SIERS

Well...maybe they left. People do that sometimes. Like boats, I suppose. When they lose their anchors they float away.

(beat)

If I had no choice but to give up my children, maybe...maybe I would move away. Start over somewhere else.

KATE

I don't understand how somedays
I can feel them inside, and it
just seems like I can't remember
them. And other days it's just
the opposite. It doesn't seem
right.

Mrs. Siers nods. She understands.

MRS. SIERS

James used to tell me that once
you left your home, or part of
your life, you could never go back.
But I think he was wrong. As long
you keep those doors unlocked behind
you, and as long as you can withstand
the pain, there's no reason you can't
go back. Sometimes we need to. You
understand.

KATE

I think so.

With a smile, the old woman wraps an arm around
Kate and pulls her close in a warm hug. Together,
they look out on the river as a manatee flips its
tail and breaks the water.

MRS. SIERS

The old indians who used to live
here had a legend. They said the
mermaids were born without souls,
so one returns here every winter,
looking for God.

The manatees gently break the surface of the water
for air.

MRS. SIERS (continued)

She asks for legs, so she can walk
on the land with us, and she asks
for her soul, so she can be with
God one day. But in the end, she
gets neither.

The wind whispers through the treetops overhead.
Everything here feels like a dream.

MRS. SIERS

The mermaids are getting restless.
They feel the sun across the water
again.

(beat)

I suppose they'll be leaving us
soon.

EXT. THE RIVER - BOOKER AND KATE - DAY

Booker toils with an old, rusting watering sluice.
The contraption is badly in disrepair. It's
obvious that their intentions won't fix it.

KATE

(standing)

Leave it, Booker. If God
wants to take these oranges,
He'll just find another way.

She walks away.

EXT. TOWN - BOOKER - NIGHT

Not too many people around, a few outside the
saloon, a few shop owners closing for the night.
Booker takes his horse from the town stable and
moves on. SEVERAL MEN from the town eye him
suspiciously as he leaves. Booker notices this
with concern.

EXT. TOWN - BOOKER - LATER

Alone, he rides his horse from town, humming a
slow tune. He stops, looks over his shoulder,
when he HEARS the sound of a horse somewhere
behind him.

But he sees nothing there. He continues on, wary.

EXT. GRASSY PASTURE - BOOKER - LATER

A wide open grazing field, nowhere to hide.
Booker senses the danger of this place and urges
his horse on. He HEARS another horse behind him,

running this time, and he kicks his horse into a gallop. Suddenly, the SOUNDS of horses are all around him. No escape.

Booker pulls his animal to a stop as a dozen men dressed in white appear from the trees, the darkness.

DESSIE

Oh my God!

KLANSMAN #1

Git down from your horse, nigra!

Booker is frozen to his saddle.

KLANSMAN #1

(angrier)

I said git down!

Slowly, like a man who knows what's about to happen, Booker slides from the horse.

DESSIE

Please don't do this.

One of the Klansmen turns to her.

KLANSMAN #2

Shutup negress! You keep out of this or we'll deal with you next.

KLANSMAN #3

(with a laugh)

Mebbe we will anyway.

The Klansmen laugh.

BOOKER

Git outta here, Dess. This don't concern you any.

DESSIE

What do you mean --

BOOKER

(screaming)

Git outta here!

She moves her horse away, not far. She hears what happens O.S., but she can't bear to watch it. The sounds the Klansmen make as they beat Booker within an inch of his life. All Dess can do is cry.

EXT. ROAD TO KATE'S - BOOKER AND DESS - LATER

Dessie leads Booker's horse as fast as she can along the darkened road. The black man, once tall and strong, is slumped against the horse like a scarecrow, empty and lifeless. His face is bloody and swollen.

EXT. KATE'S HOUSE - SAME

Dessie leads the horses to the porch of the house. She pulls Booker from his horse as if he were a sack of potatoes. He barely has the energy to stand.

DESSIE

You be all right, now. We
get you cleaned up an' I'll
put you to bed.

BOOKER

It's no use, Dess. Won't be
long. That bunch be back to
finish it off.

DESSIE

(desperate)

They 'fraid, now, Booker. They
ain't gon' make no more trouble.
They 'fraid now cause I know who
they is.

Booker smiles, and the expression his swollen face makes is nightmarish.

BOOKER

They ain't 'fraid nothin', Dess.
Not you or me, 'specially.

DESSIE

Wait here. I'll get something
for your cuts.

She turns and rushes into the house.

INT. HOUSE - SAME

Dessie races along a hallway and throws open a closet door. She grabs a package of bandages and first aid supplies.

EXT. HOUSE - SAME

She emerges from the house. Booker is gone. A moment of panic, then she sees the doorway to the barn is open.

THE BARN

Booker is in the barns saddling up a horse when Dessie steps in from the dark. She is surprised, confused to see him here doing this.

DESSIE

What'cha doin'? Where's ya
goin', Booker?

Booker is in a hurry. He doesn't even bother to look at her.

BOOKER

None your business, woman. Git
back in the house.

DESSIE

That be's Miz Livingston's horse.
You can't be takin' that, Booker.

BOOKER

(embarrassed)
I'm jus' borrowin' it.

Dessie steps into the light of the barn.

DESSIE

They'll come lookin' for you.
Booker. She'll send them after
if you gos takin' what's hers.

BOOKER

Then I'll pay her for it. Only
needs it for a short time, anyway.

Booker finishes bridling the horse and leads it to
the doorway of the barn. He starts stows the
bridlebags with gear.

DESSIE

(getting desperate)
What about your job? Miz
Livingston needs you here. And
besides, work's hard to come by
these days.

BOOKER

Finds me a job somewhere else.
Done it before.

DESSIE

What 'bout Miz Livingston? She
needs you here to help out. You
can't walk out on her now.

BOOKER

She'll find someones else. Lots
of folks looking for work.

Booker mounts the horse, walks it out of the barn,
and slips into the shadows outside. Dessie
follows in vain. Then, in desperation:

DESSIE

(tearful)
What about me?

Booker stops the horse, but is too embarrassed to
face Dessie.

DESSIE

How can you just leave me? I
need you.

BOOKER

Gots no choice. They ain't after
you. But they kill me if I stay.

Dessie collapses to the ground in tears.

DESSIE

(angry)

And you were the one said I gotta
face up to my own problems. You
said I had to meet 'em head on,
didn't you?

Booker has no answer.

DESSIE

(screams)

Didn't you?

BOOKER

It's different. You's a woman.

DESSIE

(screams)

It's not different! Being a
woman or a man got nothing to
do with it. You don't know!
You just don't know cause you're
a stupid, selfish nigger who
ain't worth the spit God used
to put you together.

Booker doesn't answer. He still can't face
Dessie, so he keeps his eyes rivetted to the
ground.

DESSIE

Go on! Get on out of here you
stupid nigger! Take your selfish,
worthless life and get on out of
here!

Dessie picks up handfuls of stones and dirt and
hurls them at Booker. Booker lets the debris hit
him at first, but then he shakes the horse's reins
and disappears into the shadows along the road.

LONG DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ADDIE'S HOUSE - ADDIE - NIGHT

She is sitting alone. The night blows into the room, stirs the curtains, her hair. Far off, a faint FLASH OF LIGHTENING, the quiet RUMBLE OF THUNDER.

EXT. EXT. VERANDA - NIGHT

Addie comes out, stands as if she were looking out over the lawn. The breeze that rushes before the storm plays with her hair. Again, far off, the shimmer of LIGHTNING. QUIET THUNDER. The storm is moving closer. Behind her, Kinju approaches out of the darkness. The two stand in silence for a beat.

MRS. SIERS

Sometimes I think time has been kind to us. Kinju. But only because I cannot see.

(pause)

We have grown old, my friend.

KINJU

There is no other way. This is I think how it was always intended for us.

Addie considers this, then nods.

MRS. SIERS

Yes. Yes. It was.

A moment of silence.

KINJU

I think the rains can come to us now, Mum.

EXT. CYPRESS MILL - NIGHT

Still no storm yet, but THUNDER AND LIGHTENING ravage the night. A single bolt of lightening strikes the tallest level of the mill, and a small fire erupts.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - KATE - NIGHT

Distracted by a distant NOISE -- the sound of a faraway crowd -- she approaches a window, looks out. In the distance, an eerie orange glow illuminates the night. She stares for a moment, then runs for the door.

EXT. CYPRESS MILL - KATE - NIGHT - LATER

She arrives at the mill. The fire engulfs the entire structure. A crowd of volunteer firefighters -- people from the town, perhaps -- do what they can to contain it. But their efforts are hopeless, it seems. To one side of the crowd, covered with grime and soot, is Richard. Kate walks to him.

ON RICHARD

He looks vacant, detached. He's given up hope this night. Kate walks up beside him, gazes, but he won't return the look. They remain silent.

Suddenly, it begins to rain. A torrential downpour blankets the spectators, scatters them. Richard looks up into the sky.

RICHARD

His timing's off a little.
tonight.

He turns and leaves.

EXT. TOWN - KATE - NIGHT

Alone, she moves along the storefronts. She stops near the bank when Mr. Wexler emerges.

WEXLER

Good evening, Miss Livingston.

KATE

(nodding)

Mr. Wexler.

WEXLER

You haven't changed your mind
about your property? I might
still be interested.

KATE

I'm not, Mr. Wexler.

Kate moves off. Wexler watches her go.

WEXLER

Have you learned about your
parents yet?

Kate stops, turns around.

WEXLER

You haven't asked everyone
about them, you know.

KATE

What are you saying?

Wexler says nothing. Kate moves toward him,
angry.

KATE

What is it you know?

WEXLER

(enjoying this)

I seem to recall something about
an affair.

(beat)

Yes. Your mother, I think. She
had an affair with one of the men
in town.

KATE

Who?

Wexler smiles.

WEXLER

Maybe you should have asked
Richard that.

Silence.

WEXLER (continued)
It was his father.

Wexler turns away, wheels into the bank, shuts the door. The lights inside are extinguished. Kate stands in the darkness, stunned.

EXT. ROAD - RICHARD - NIGHT

On horseback, he is riding alone along a long, desolate strip. Kate approaches from the opposite direction in her motorcar. She stops, climbs from the automobile.

KATE
(angry)
Why didn't you tell me?

Richard realizes what she is talking about. He casts his eyes downward, avoiding Kate's.

RICHARD
It wasn't the sort of thing
I thought you'd want to find
out.

KATE
How can you say that? I spent
all my life wondering what
happened here.

Richard nods, embarrassed, understanding.

RICHARD
Who told you?

KATE
Wexler.

RICHARD
I didn't think anyone else knew.

KATE
You knew. That's all that
matters.

She turns, moves to her car.

RICHARD
We weren't meant to know every-
thing, Kate. Some things are
better when they're left unknown.

KATE
Not this.

RICHARD
If God had wanted us to think
with our hearts, He wouldn't
have given us brains. It's
as simple as that.

Kate storms back to confront him.

KATE
(angry)
It's so easy for you because
it was your father.

RICHARD
(defensive)
And your mother.

KATE
Don't defend a dead man!

RICHARD
I am not my father!
(beat)
And if it means anything, he left
my mother, too.

Kate looks as if she's been struck.

RICHARD (continued)
It didn't mean anything to me
then. I was too young to under-
stand.
(beat)
I'm not sure I ever did.

EXT. RIVER - TWILIGHT

Looking much older than before, sadder, Dessie wanders down to the river's edge and settles herself on the stump of a tree.

CLOSE ON DESSIE

Her eyes full of pain, the smile gone from her face, she doesn't come close to resembling the child we knew before.

ANOTHER ANGLE

as Dessie looks out onto the river and up into the night sky. The waters reflect the fragments of moonlight that pass through the treetops. The sky is filled with a thousand winking stars. Dessie starts to hum a sad, faraway tune.

ANGLE ON RIVER

A manatee's tail breaks the surface of the water with a gentle SPLASH. A whiskered snout reaches up for air.

ANGLE ON DESSIE

DESSIE

What you doin' way down here?

Dessie walks to the edge of the river and stops beside the baby manatee. She reaches down and rubs the infant's back, bobbing just below the surface.

DESSIE

Where your Mama at? Bet
she don't know you runnin'
off on her. Go on, now.
Git. 'Fore she come lookin'
for ya.

Dessie nudges at the manatee, encouraging it to leave. With a flick of its tail, the baby is gone.

Dessie stands and looks up. The branches of the trees shiver in the cold night wind.

EXT. MRS. SIERS - SAME

The wind outside the dark house seems harsher here, colder, more persistent.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME

Mrs. Siers stirs restlessly in her sleep. Bad dreams. She wakes with a start.

AT THE WINDOW

With her cane in hand, Mrs. Siers blindly peers out into the cold night.

POV

Swaying trees, cold moonlight, frosted windows.

ON MRS. SIERS

She touches the windowpane, but quickly withdraws her hand with a quiet whimper. Cold. She accidentally sends an old, glass-framed photograph crashing to the floor.

EXT. KATE'S HOUSE

Dessie struggles slowly through the undergrowth towards the house. She stops suddenly and drops to her knees with an agonized scream. She clutches her abdomen, but manages to get herself back on her feet.

EXT. HOUSE

Dessie supports herself against one of the porch's pillars, catches her breath, then looks back towards the river.

POV - DESSIE

Like a silver eye, the moon hovers beyond the river, watching through the treetops.

ON DESSIE

She turns back and enters the dark house.

INT. HOUSE

Dessie just manages to get inside the door before she collapses to the floor. She looks up just as Kate appears from another room.

ANGLE ON DESSIE

Her face is a map of pain and fear. She doesn't know what's happening to her, and she's terrified.

DESSIE
(weak)

Help me.

EXT. MRS. SIERS HOUSE

The old woman, now wrapped in a heavy coat and slippers, blindly feels her way to the river. She stumbles, she runs into saplings and bushes, but she presses on.

ANGLE ON HOUSE

where, from a small, upstairs window, Kinju watches from a candlelit window. He seems strangely unconcerned by what is happening here.

THE RIVER

Mrs. Siers is kneeling beside the river, listening for the manatees. She looks frail and weak out here by herself.

CLOSE ON HER HAND

She reaches to the water and touches it. The small snout of a manatee breaks the water and nudges her.

MRS. SIERS
Little one. Where is your mother?

The baby manatee slips beneath the water. Mrs. Siers walks to the end of the narrow, wooden dock and kneels. She feels for the water until...

ANGLE ON WATER

...she touches the body of a manatee, floating beside the dock. Mrs. Siers whimpers and quickly withdraws her hand.

Mrs. Siers reaches for the animal again, but this time the manatee rolls to its side, dead.

Mrs. Siers screams and we cut to:

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - SAME

where Dessie is laying in bed, screaming in pain. Her thin bedclothes are drenched with sweat and her face is a mask of agony. Kate is at her side when BOOKER rushes into the room.

BOOKER

What's happenin'?

KATE

I don't know. I think she's having her baby.

BOOKER

I thought she weren't s'posed to be havin' her baby for a month?

KATE

She's not. I don't know. Something's happened.

Dessie arches her back, throws back her head, and screams in agony. She looks like a woman being tortured.

KATE

You'll have to go into town for the doctor.

But Booker realizes it's too late for that now. He pulls off his jacket, grabs the lantern from the table, then kneels beside Dessie.

BOOKER

(to Kate)

Fetch some water an' some clean blankets. An' if you got any ice, fetch that, too.

But Kate isn't so sure.

KATE

What are you going to do?

BOOKER

Gon' deliver a baby.

KATE

Have you ever done this before?

BOOKER

No ma'am. But I watched my Mama do this a hunret times back up in the scrub. I used to take her out in the cart when she get called out at night.

Kate stands, moves to the doorway, then stops there. She seems hesitant.

KATE

Booker...I don't know. I think we need to get the doctor.

Booker stops in mid-action, stares down at the delirious Dessie, then quietly, patiently looks up to Kate. He shakes his head.

BOOKER

She'd be dead by the time he got here. We gonna have to do this one ourselves.

A moment. Kate considers this.

BOOKER (continued)

You gon' hafta trust me on this.

Something in Booker's eyes tells her that this is the way it has to be.

KATE
I'll get the things.

And she hurries from the room.

INT. MRS. SIERS BEDROOM - SAME

The room is dark and ominous, the only light coming from the moon-wet sill and a single candle at the bedside. Mrs. Siers is sitting in a deep, motionless rocking chair near the window. Her head rests against her chest.

ANGLE ON DOOR

The door is ajar. Kinju opens it, enters the room, and approaches Mrs. Siers. He walks around to face the old woman.

ANGLE ON MRS. SIERS

Her eyes are open, unfocused. Her mouth hangs half-opened. Mrs. Siers is dead.

Kinju looks to the floor at the shattered glass and the photograph. He picks the picture up.

ANGLE ON PHOTOGRAPH

A very old photograph of a woman in a full-length dress. She is standing in a garden, surrounded by cascades of flowers and greenery. A man stands beside her, handsome, well-dressed...

BACK ON KINJU

KINJU
(a whisper)
This one has been waiting for
you, Mrs.

He brushes the broken glass from the photo and places the picture in Mrs. Siers' hands.

KINJU
(a whisper)
Go to him now.

Kinju cups his hand around the candle's flame and extinguishes it.

EXT. DESSIE' ROOM - LATER

The wind outside the place is mild now, but persistent. It HOWLS through the trees like an icy current in a river, grabs onto the branches and shakes them. For now, all we can hear is the wind...

...until a baby's cries break through the storm.

INT. DESSIE' ROOM - SAME

Dessie holds the baby, now swaddled in white linen, in her arms. She is sound asleep, but the baby nurses from his mother, anyway.

KATE
What made you decide to come back?

Booker shakes his head, there's no answer to this question. Then he looks up.

BOOKER
I headed home. Two days from here, back to the Ocali scrub. Left there when I was a little boy.

Quiet. Kate watches him, his face, his expression.

BOOKER
Got all that way and you know what I found?

Kate shakes her head no.

BOOKER

(quiet)

Nothin'. Not a soul. House
gone, family gone.

(beat)

Nothin'.

Booker hunches back down beside Dessie. His gaze
holds her.

BOOKER

All that way.

Silence.

He looks at Kate for the first time since she
asked the question.

BOOKER

Don't matter what happen to
me now. This's all I got.

EXT. KATE'S HOUSE-DAY

Early morning beside the river, where Kate is sitting alone, listening to the tranquility of the water. From behind her:

RICHARD

Hello Kathryn.

Kate turns around and finds Richard standing there. Her heart skips a beat, but she stays where she's at and doesn't say a word.

RICHARD

How are you?

KATE

I'm alright. How are you?

RICHARD

I'm fine. Thank you.

KATE

I thought you were gone.

RICHARD

I was. I got back yesterday.

KATE (nodding)

Oh.

RICHARD

(making conversation)

I had some business to settle in Tampa.

Kate nods. The conversation is awkward and hollow. Something is wrong, and Kate feels it. After a moment:

KATE

What is it, Richard? Why did you come here?

Uneasiness. This is awkward.

RICHARD

It's Addie. She died last night.

ANGLE ON KATE

Her mouth moves, but the words won't come.

RICHARD

It was a heart attack. She
was outside.

KATE

(weak)

Oh.

She stands, walks to the edge of the river, but
doesn't face Richard.

KATE

Who found her?

RICHARD

Kinju.

Kate nods. Richard tries to move closer to her,
but it seems as if a wall has been built there
between them.

KATE

Tess had her baby last night.

RICHARD

I heard. How is she?

KATE

Alright.

Kate's eyes are filled with tears. She looks to
the west, where the river flows. A wall of dark,
ominous clouds are there, moving towards us.

KATE

There's another storm coming.

EXT. HILLSIDE - FUNERAL - MORNING

A small Hillside overlooking a bend in the river.
The grass and flowers grown wild. An open grave.
forty or so townspeople, a few blacks at a
distance.

A minister says the last blessing, closes his bible. Abner steps to the grave. He looks pale, gaunt.

ABNER

We have lingered in the chambers
of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed
red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we
drown.

Abner looks at Kathryn. His eyes are silent, solemn. His gaze holds her.

As they disperse, Kathryn passes Kinju, stops. Kinju stares ahead, his emotions settled.

KATE

Is she with God now?

Kinju looks out to the river.

KINJU

She will follow the river first.
She has never seen where it meets
the ocean.

Kinju looks back at Kate.

KINJU

Then she will be with God.

Kate nods, moves on.

EXT. MRS. SIERS HOUSE - ABNER - DUSK

Warm, velvet dusk ripples across the spring, where Abner is sitting, looking out on the river. He is holding a cigarette, but seems to have forgotten it; all that is left is a long, smouldering ash.

Kate walks up from behind, quietly sits with him, says nothing. They share the silence. The peacefulness.

KATE

She loved you, too, Abner.

Abner nods.

ABNER

But she belonged only to herself.
Addie belonged to no one else.

Kate nods, rests her head against Abner's shoulder.

ABNER

We lost another friend during the night.

Abner points to the baby manatee swimming alone in the spring, away from the others.

ABNER

The river carried her body back to the ocean. The little one tried to follow her...

(beat)

...but the others wouldn't let him go.

Silence. Then:

KATE

Another orphan.

Abner nods.

ABNER

It seems mermaids don't live forever, either.

MONTAGE - MUSIC UNDER

- A. KATE'S HOUSE. Lonely. Quiet. She is reading, looks up, out the empty window.
- B. THE RIVER. She swims at dusk by herself.
- C. THE ORANGE GROVE. Along one of the long rows of orange trees. She inspects the trees.

EXT. HOUSE - KATE - DAY

Returning home from a walk by herself. She finds
Dessie waiting for her on the porch.

DESSIE

(awkward)

You probably been wondering
where I's been.

KATE

Are you alright?

DESSIE

I's okay. I been staying over
with Booker at his place.

(a look of concern)

You ain't mad?

KATE

You make your own decisions.

DESSIE

He be wantin' to get married.
But I don't know...

A long pause. Then:

KATE

Don't be unfair to him, Dessie.
He isn't Ezel. You can't expect
that from him.

A moment. A heavy sigh.

DESSIE

(sadly)

I know.

Another moment. A few quiet tears. Nothing more.

DESSIE

I know.

KATE

He's a good man. And he loves you.

(pause)

That's all you can hope for.

DESSIE

Will Ezel understand?

KATE

He already does.

EXT. LUMBER MILL - NIGHT

The old mill sits like a charred skeleton. Ominous. Dark. White moonlight spills across the ruins. Kate's car pulls to a stop nearby. She walks through the blackened rubble, stops.

Then, a voice from behind her:

RICHARD (O.S.)

Did you think you'd try to change all this?

Kate turns around. She isn't surprised to find Richard here.

KATE

I might have. Once.

She looks small standing here, overpowered.

KATE

I'm not sure anything can be changed anymore.

RICHARD

You don't think you're getting pessimistic, do you?

KATE

I think I must have always been.

Richard wanders through the ruins, kicks at the rubble. Maybe he's been drinking.

RICHARD

It's hard investing part of yourself into something. Once you've got it, it only gets taken away.

KATE

The best things do. Not everything.

(silence)

Is that what makes you so afraid?

He's silent. She stares at him.

KATE (continuing)

Abner says there'll be another depression in a few years. Maybe it's better this way.

RICHARD

Maybe.

KATE

What will you do now?

RICHARD

I haven't decided. Go north. maybe. They have factories there.

KATE

You wouldn't be happy.

Silence. Then:

RICHARD

No.

KATE

(a note of hope)

Richard, you could grow oranges with me. It's a small crop, but it's healthy. We could buy more land.

RICHARD

And wait for the first frost?
Then what?

KATE

Maybe it won't.

RICHARD

It will. Something always comes.
If it isn't frost, it'll be blight.
If it isn't blight, it'll be a
surplus. If it isn't a surplus...
(shakes his head, silence)
Something always comes.

KATE

Why is everything so simple
in your world?

RICHARD

That's just the way I found it.

KATE

I've learned something you haven't.
Richard. When you want something
bad enough, you have to search for
it.

She holds his gaze.

KATE (continuing)

Fortune never finds you.

Silence.

RICHARD

Then why does it seem we spend
our lives looking for it?

KATE

Because we do.

She moves away, disappears into the night.



EXT. NANA MAE'S - DAWN

Booker and Dessie arrives at Nana Mae's. She is carrying her baby, swathed in a white blanket. She looks unsure.

EXT. NANA MAE'S - THE RIVER - SAME

Behind the house, where they find Nana Mae. The old woman is washing clothes in the river. She looks up when she hears the two approach.

Silence. Then:

DESSIE

Hello, Mama.

NANA MAE

That your baby?

Dessie nods.

NANA MAE

It a boy?

Dessie nods again.

DESSIE

Like Ezel said.

NANA MAE

Good. Boy's hands be more help to ya'.

Booker looks nervous. Out of place. He'd rather be somewhere else.

NANA MAE

(nodding at Booker)

Who this?

DESSIE

This here Booker, Ma. We gonna be married.

NANA MAE

Be the right thing to do.

With his courage gathered, Booker steps forward.

BOOKER
(the son-in-law)
Good morning. How are today
Mrs... Mrs...

He suddenly realizes he doesn't know Dessie's last name.

DESSIE
Simpson.

BOOKER
Simpson.

They all stare at each other for a moment, then begin laughing.

NANA MAE
Hey there, Booker. How are you?

Nana Mae reaches for the baby, takes it into her arms like an experienced mother. She smiles, admiring her new grandson.

NANA MAE
Oh my. Such a small one.

DESSIE
Gon' be handsome young man, Ma.

NANA MAE
Yes he is.

She hugs the small baby close to her, kisses it.

NANA MAE
Gonna be a hard life for you,
little one. Gonna be a struggle
waitin' on you.

The baby eyes his grandmother with a smile.

NANA MAE

Time's always been hard for black folks in small places. Test your faith in God sometimes, but you don't give up. You hear me? You just don't give up.

She holds the baby even closer.

EXT. REVEREND HOUSE - REVEREND FLETCHER - MORNING

The mailman arrives toting a heavy load of letters and parcels on his shoulder. He stops, wipes his brow, and pores through his bag. The Reverend appears at his door.

MAILMAN

Morning, Reverend.

REVEREND

(polite as ever)

Good morning, Ralph.

Ralph carries his load up to the porch and rummages through his bag until he finds a handful of letters. He passes the mail to the Reverend, but hangs onto one of the letters and eyes it curiously.

RALPH

Now that's funny...

REVEREND

(eyeing his mail)

What's that, Ralph?

ANGLE ON LETTER

The address and postage are nearly blotted out by a flurry of reroutes and forwarding addresses. The letter's been in the mail for a very long time.

RALPH

Hope you wasn't holding your breath on this one. Looks like it's been in the mail for a spell.

The Reverend takes the letter from Ralph, puts his eyeglasses on, and inspects the envelope closer.

EXT. KATE'S HOUSE - LATER

When Kate arrives, Dessie runs from the house with a piece of paper in her hand. She gives it to Kate.

DESSIE

Booker brung this from town.

Kate reads the note and looks up, concerned.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - LATER

The small, but busy train station at the end of town. A collection of autos and carriages are gathered outside the building, and a few PASSENGERS are streaming in and out of the building.

INT. TRAIN STATION

A busy CROWD pushes between the ticket windows, the waiting areas, and the platform doorways. Kate cuts through the crowd and makes her way to the outdoor platform, where she finds Abner and Kinju. The Indian is standing alone to one side of the deck with a small, single piece of baggage resting at his feet. Abner is beside the platform, smoking. He stares along the length of locomotive tracks that disappear into the distance.

KATE

Were you going to leave without saying anything?

Abner turns when he hears Kate's voice.

ABNER

It always seems easier that way.

KATE

Is that what she believed?

ABNER
She believed many things.

Kate looks down the platform and sees Kinju standing there. Abner follows her gaze. He smiles.

ABNER
He says he can teach me something I've never learned.

Abner laughs uneasily.

ABNER
I suppose I should be concerned.

KATE
Even the weariest river,
Winds safely to the sea.

ABNER
What's that?

KATE
Nothing. Just something I heard once.

Abner nods.

KATE
Where will you go, Abner?

ABNER
I don't know. There's nothing for me here, anymore.
(pause)
Maybe someplace else.

Kate moves to Abner, embraces him.

ABNER
And what about you? What will you do?

KATE
I don't know. David said he would wait until Spring. Maybe it isn't too late.

Abner nods.

ABNER

Hmm.

KATE

It does feel like it's time
to go home, doesn't it?

ABNER

I think it's the weather. It
makes the blood warm. Like
the mermaid's. They always
leave for home in the spring.

KATE

Do you think they got their
souls this year?

Abner considers this. He looks towards the river
as if an answer might be flowing there.

ABNER

No. I don't believe they did.

(beat)

But who knows? If they come back
next year, maybe God will see to
them.

The locomotive BELLOWS a cloud of steam and BLOWS
its whistle. The CONDUCTOR'S VOICE calls out from
O.S.

CONDUCTOR

All aboard! Last call! All
aboard!

Kate hugs Abner for the last time, looks up at
him.

ABNER

No. Don't say anything.

Abner picks up his luggage and moves to the train.
He stops before boarding, turns back.

ABNER

What was it she used to say?
When we are willing and eager...

KATE

...the Gods join in.

Abner considers this, nods. Then he disappears onto the train. Nearby, Kinju waits to say goodbye. Kate approaches him.

KATE

Has she found the ocean.
Kinju?

KINJU

She has found the ocean. Mum.
She has found James there. She
is happy now.

Kate nods sadly.

KATE

Take care of him, Kinju Singh.

Kinju nods.

KINJU

God will take care. Mum.

Kinju picks up his bag and moves to the train. As he goes, STEAM FILLS THE FRAME.

ON KATE

Lightening. Thunder O.S. Drops of rain begin to fall, slowly at first...and slowly, sadly, she looks up. Another chapter ends.

EXT. CHURCH - KATE - LATER

On her way back home. She looks up at the church, sees something, and stops her car.

EXT. CHURCH GROUNDS - KATE - SAME

She works her way through the church cemetery and stops at a solitary grave where the Reverend is at work. He doesn't look at her when she approaches.

ON TOMBSTONE

Once blank, the stone now bears an inscription:

David Michael Johannesen
Died June 27. 1916

REVEREND

A letter came in the mail. From a pastor in Augusta. He said the boy had no family. They don't know what brought him here. One day he was just...gone.

A few quiet tears in the Reverend's eyes.

KATE

Why did it take so long for the pastor to write?

REVEREND

That's the curious part. The letter was mailed nearly ten years ago.

(a nervous laugh)
Ten years...

EXT. KATE'S HOUSE - DUSK

The beginnings of another storm whip through the trees and tear at the house as Kate drives back from town. She hurries into the house.

INT. HOUSE - THAT NIGHT

Alone in bed, Kate lays awake. listening to the STORM.

KATE (V.O.)

And this, and so much more?--
It is impossible to say just what I
mean!
But as if a magic lantern threw the
nerves in patterns on a screen:

EXT. RICHARD'S HOUSE - THE RIVER - NIGHT

Richard, alone, stares out at the river. The
torrential rain.

KATE (V.O.)

Would it have been worth while
If one, settling a pillow or throwing
off a shawl,
And turning toward the window, should
say:
'That is not it at all.
That is not what I meant, at all.'

EXT. HOUSE - NEXT MORNING

The tempest passes. The next morning is calm, the
skies soft blue. Kate emerges from the quiet
house and inspects the damage. Once again, trees
are strewn about the yard and debris is flung
everywhere. The place is a mess and looks much
like it did at first.

Kate wanders to the center of it all, not far from
the river, and her attention is attracted by
something new. She looks down.

KATE'S POV - ANGLE ON GROUND

An uprooted tree has been tossed aside and the
weeds and bushes at its base are pulled away.
Planted side by side in the ground, once hidden by
the undergrowth, are two small, very old
tombstones.

Kate takes a few steps, her eyes fixed on the
stones as she is beginning to realize what it is
she sees.

Without much surprise, she kneels beside the stones, pulls away the weeds, brushes aside the moss and dirt.

ANGLE ON TOMBSTONES

The inscriptions are slowly revealed: Rebecca Livingston, Mother, 1871 - 1903; John Livingston, Father, 1869 - 1902.

She rubs her hands over her mother's stone.

KATE

(a whisper)

So here you are. You did come back.

(pause)

My God, you were strong.

EXT. THE HOUSE - KATHRYN - DAY

Saying goodbye.

- A. The orange grove. The boughs are thick with fruit, ready for picking.
- B. Outside Mrs. Siers' House. The doors are boarded up. The windows are shuttered. The house looks dead.
- C. The river spring. Everything is quiet here, too. Besides the soft, bubbling water that churns at the center of the spring, there is no sound, no movement. The manatees have left.
- D. The river. Quietly flowing along it in a canoe. Alone.
Kate looks up after a while and sees something spectacular: The mouth of the river empties out into the ocean. The orange sun is setting. DURING THE ABOVE WE HEAR:

KATE (V.O.)

And would it have been worth it,
after all,
After the cups, the marmalade, the

(MORE)

KATE (V.O.)

(continued)

tea,
 Among the porcelain, among some talk
 of you and me,
 Would it have been worth while.
 To have bitten off the matter with a
 smile,
 To have squeezed the universe into a
 ball
 To roll it towards some overwhelming
 question,
 To say: 'I am Lazarus, come from the
 dead,
 Come back to tell you all, I shall
 tell you all'--
 If one, settling a pillow by her
 head,
 Should say: 'That is not what I
 meant at all.
 That is not it, at all.'

INT. DIXON HOUSE - DAY

Last instructions.

KATE

--my things sent by rail on
 Monday next. Any financial
 matters can be directed to
 Mr. Rogerth in New York.

DESK CLERK

Yes, Ma'am.

Kate nods, exits.

EXT. STATION

Kate moves to the gate. Booker and Dessie are
 with her. Dessie carries her baby.

KATE

The oranges are nearly ready
 for picking. It will support
 you if you care for it. When
 you can, plant the rest of the
 property along the river.

BOOKER

Yes Ma'am.

KATE

(a moment)

And take care of yourself,
Booker. And Dessie.

BOOKER

I'll do that.

Booker takes Kate's luggage and moves off toward the train.

Kate shifts her gaze to Dessie, standing quietly there. The small black woman's eyes look ready to cry. We see now how much these two women have meant to each other.

DESSIE

Maybe you was a haunt, after
all. You sure come and goes
like one.

KATE

I'm beginning to feel like one.

Dessie has tried to keep her emotion inside, but the tears finally start to flow.

DESSIE

You helped me answer everything.
(beat)
But what am I gon' do now?

They hug, and it's an embrace that no one could break.

KATE

You'll be surprised, Dessie.

Kate steps back, stares Dessie in the eyes.

KATE (continued)

You'll be awfully surprised.

And she moves OUT OF THE SHOT to the train platform.

INSIDE

Bracing herself against the wall. She is alone here, and she breaks down. This is the first time we've seen her cry so openly. Then:

TRAIN PLATFORM

As she moves along toward the train, someone steps onto the platform behind her. She stops, doesn't turn around. She knows who this is.

RICHARD

Did you find what you came looking for?

KATE

Everything I needed...

A moment, then:

KATE

...or thought I did.

RICHARD

Everything else wasn't necessary?

KATE

No. Just the things we're not meant to understand.

Richard nods, steps closer.

RICHARD

They're talking of war in Europe, now. Things are happening over there.

(beat)

I don't think we'll ever know what it means to be satisfied.

KATE

That isn't always such a bad thing.

(beat)

Have you decided what you'll do?

RICHARD

I got a good price for the land.
Not a fortune, but enough to try
again. Somewhere else, maybe.

Kate nods. She moves to Richard, embraces him.

KATE

I'm frightened, Richard.

RICHARD

I know. We all are.

He steps back, admires Kathryn for one last
moment...

RICHARD

That's what makes it easier.

...and then he leaves.

ON KATHRYN

as she watches Richard disappear down the
platform. Then we:

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TRAIN - WINDOW - KATE - DAY

She is watching the Florida landscape pass by
outside the train. She looks down at a river,
flowing parallel to the tracks, when the train
begins to slow.

EXT. TRAIN ENGINE

The engineer and his second men hop from the
engine as the train GRINDS to a halt. Just ahead
of them on the tracks, a herd of very slow cattle
saunters across.

People emerge from the passenger cars to stretch
their legs and investigate the delay.

ANGLE ON KATE

who is more interested in the river than in the train. Something in the water catches her eye, and we...

ANGLE ON RIVER

where a large, lazy group of dark bodies curl and glide beneath the blue water. At the rear of the herd is a small shape, a baby manatee, escorted on both sides by protective adults.

BACK ON KATE

A faint smile. She looks content.

Kate gazes down the length of the tracks, where the first glimpse of the ocean sits on the horizon. The sun slips behind it and the orange light seems to make Kate glow. She looks beautiful.

KATE (V.O.)

There is a legend that the oldest of the river people tell, about a mermaid who wished for two things: She wished for a soul, so that she could be with God...and she wished for legs, so that she could be with man. She swam until she came upon a river... a crystal river, where it was said the waters flowed from heaven. And this she believed.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

THE RIVER

and the manatees swimming there, returning home.
and we:

FADE TO BLACK

CHAPTER VI

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Chapters I-IV of this thesis establish the emergence of low-concept filmmaking. These films are characterized by complex plots, strong thematic content, complicated characters, minimal special effects, and lower budgets. Screenwriters attempting to capitalize on the new cycle approach their projects with newfound concern for the subtleties of their craft of writing for the screen. The screenplay for "The Crystal River" executes various attempts to fulfill what this author sees as the requirements of low-concept, including characterization, theme, and texture. The following is an analysis.

The Low-Concept Character

The most obvious quality of low-concept in "The Crystal River" is the screenplay's execution of character. All characters are, essentially, extensions of the stories they inhabit. Though pure drama is a portrayal of action and not character, it is the action of the drama's characters that distills the story's theme. Characters act, react, and are acted upon, and as a result of it all, the story and its theme evolve. The main characters of every successful screenplay must be written with this notion in mind.

"The Crystal River" uses one main character, Katherine, to help define its theme. As an "orphan," Katherine travels back to her childhood home to unravel unanswered questions, the solutions to which seem to exist there. The theme, which will be discussed in detail later, is represented in Katherine's character. Katherine's actions, her search for an identity, underlie the screenplay's basic notion of belonging, and the need felt by many people to have someone to belong to.

Secondary characters include Addie, Abner, and Kinju, Addie's manservant. Both individually and inter-relatedly, these characters reiterate and develop the main theme that plays throughout the story. Traditionally, low-concept films feature a breadth of complex story characters whose interactions deeply affect each other. Often, as in films such as Ragtime and A Passage to India, numerous characters can populate a script when it seems they have no relationship to one another, or even serve any obvious purpose in the film. Other motion pictures, such as Out of Africa, feature seemingly minor, supporting characters who "shine" for only one or two brief scenes. Farah, in the aforementioned film, is an African house servant who serves as an "anchor" for the film's main character. While helping Meryl Streep's character comprehend her new life in Africa, Farah offers another point of view to the story, a background observer who often questions the changes in his developing homeland.

In Network, Beatrice Straight, wife to William Holden's network executive, remains idly silent throughout most of the story. Then, when she learns of her husband's affairs with a female network executive, she erupts; she screams at him about faith and honesty. In

all, Straight had only one speaking scene in the entire film. Yet, the strength of that scene, thematic importance and Straight's acting, won the actress an academy award.

Theme

Though the notion of theme can be defined in almost any film's story, low-concept motion pictures emphasize it. Theme is "...the idea that unifies the structure of the story, and is represented by the actions of the characters as a whole dramatic piece."¹

In "The Crystal River," a variety of different themes can be extracted, but that intended by the author is the idea of "belonging." To whom does each of us belong and what are our obligations? The notion seems to fit Katherine's sense of "abandonment," with her sister's loss, her parent's mysterious departure, and her problems with David and Richard. Additionally, the theme is embodied in the relationships between Addie and Abner, Addie and Kinju, and finally, Abner and Kinju. The theme is echoed in Reverend Fletcher's obsession with identifying the young boy who died ten years before, and in the subplot with the manatees, the animals that legend claims are searching for their souls. In traditional low-concept form, "The Crystal River" uses one main story to establish its theme, and a number of smaller subplots to develop it. The result, hopefully, is not a heavy-handed morality play, but a much subtler, quieter presentation.

Texture

Rather than dress low-concept production with expensive special effects, filmmakers of this genre emphasize texture. A difficult notion to define, texture is a combination of cumulative elements in motion pictures, such as the "look" of the film, its voice and style, music, the uses of color (as opposed to black and white) film, and narrative. Together, these elements combine and interact to create a feeling that is sensed by viewers. Unlike the cold reactions that many audiences sometimes get from high-concept productions, low-concept films tend to instill a warmer feeling in movie-goers.

The use of Katherine's monologues in the script serve as breaks in the story between acts and important plot points.² The establishing monologue sets the tone for the entire film, giving it a feeling of memory and recollection, almost as if Katherine were looking back on her life.

Music and the use of montages throughout the screenplay help to establish pace and momentum. By breaking up the script in important places, especially after moments of critical decisions and discoveries, montages help underscore the significance of the scenes, and give viewers an opportunity to breathe, to realize the weight of the moment. Additionally, montages offer filmmakers the opportunity to utilize the sort of beauty in photography often displayed in these sequences.

Music has traditionally been considered an important element in the making of motion pictures. The use of music, especially instrumental, is a given inclusion in every contemporary film

produced, but seems to be vital to the establishment of style in low-concept motion pictures. Because low-concept films generally involve people-oriented plots, the use of music often displaces high speed action and special effects to maintain pace and mood. With the obvious exception of musical films, screenplays have historically avoided suggesting which of their scenes or sequences required music; these decisions were left to directors. With the emergence of low-concept films, however, more and more writers seem to be making this type of creative determination, using the opportunity to help suggest a film's texture and mood. Conventional screenplay exposition can convey these qualities to a director, but the inclusion of musical directions in a script can help assure the writer's intent will reach audiences.

In many ways, high-concept films involved an abdication of the craft of screenwriting in their overreliance on effects, simplistic plots, one dimensional characters, and higher budgets. Low-concept films seem to mark a return to an abandoned style of motion picture production. By incorporating subtle, low-concept filmmaking elements such as characterization, narration, music, and strong thematic content into a screenplay, contemporary screenwriters can make conscious attempts to execute the low-concept formula into their work. Today's filmmakers can look at motion picture history to comprehend cycles in film production, and can capitalize on their knowledge by writing for either current or predicted trends in the cinema. By doing so, screenwriters can tap into the pulse of the American film-going public and, hopefully, guarantee any future efforts in the industry.

CHAPTER IV--ENDNOTES

¹Irwin R. Blacker, The Elements of Screenwriting: A Guide for Film and Television Writing, New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1986, p. 5

²Plot points, as defined by Syd Field, a recognized teacher of screenwriting, are strategically placed moments in a script's action that propel the story in important, new directions.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A
ANNUAL TOP MONEY MAKING FILMS

1930/31

Animal Crackers
Check and Double Check
Cimarron
City Lights
A Connecticut Yankee
Daddy Long Legs
Hell's Angels
Little Caesar
The Man Who Came Back
Min and Bill
Morocco
Politics
Reducing
Strangers May Kiss
Trader Horn

1932

Arrowsmith
Bring 'Em Back Alive
Business and Pleasure
Delicious
Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
Emma
Frankenstein
Grand Hotel
Hell Divers
The Man Who Played God
Mata Hari
One Hour with You
Shanghai Express
Shopworn
Tarzan the Ape Man

1933

Animal Kingdom
Be Mine Tonight
Cavalcade
42nd Street
Gold Diggers of 1933
I'm No Angel
The Kid from Spain
Little Women
Rasputin and the Empress
State Fair
Tugboat Annie

1934

The Barretts of Wimpole Street
Belle of the Nineties
Chained
It Happened One Night
Judge Priest
Kentucky Kernels
The Lost Patrol
One Night of Love
Queen Christina
Riptide
Roman Scandals
She Loves Me Not
Sons of Kong
Sons of the Desert
Wonder Bar

1935

China Seas
David Copperfield
Forsaking All Others
Goin' to Town
Les Misérables
Lives of a Bengal Lancer
A Midsummer Night's Dream
Mutiny on the Bounty
Roberta
She Married Her Boss
Steamboat 'Round the Bend
Top Hat

1935/36

Anna Karenina
The Bride Comes Home
Broadway Melody of 1936
Bullets or Ballots
Captain Blood
The Country Doctor
The Crusades
Follow the Fleet
The Great Ziegfeld
Green Pastures
In Old Kentucky
The King Steps Out
The Littlest Rebel
Magnificent Obsession
Modern Times
Mr. Deeds Goes to Town
A Night at the Opera

Rhythm on the Range
Rose Marie
San Francisco
Show Boat
The Story of Louis Pasteur
A Tale of Two Cities
Thanks a Million
These Three

1936/37

After the Thin Man
Anthony Adverse
Artists and Models
The Big Broadcast of 1937
Born to Dance
Captains Courageous
The Charge of the Light Brigade
College Holiday
Come and Get It
Dodsworth
The Good Earth
The Gorgeous Hussy
Green Light
I Met Him in Paris
The Last of Mrs. Cheyney
Libeled Lady
Lloyds of London
Lost Horizon
Love Is News
Maytime
Mountain Music
My Man Godfrey
One in a Million
On the Avenue
Pigskin Parade
The Plainsman
Rainbow on the River
The Road Back
Romeo and Juliet
Shall We Dance
Slave Ship
A Star Is Born
Swing High, Swing Low
Swing Time
Wake Up and Live
Wee Willie Winkie
You Can't Have Everything

1937/38

The Adventures of Robin Hood

APPENDIX A (continued)

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer
Alexander's Ragtime Band
The Buccaneer
The Firefly
The Girl of the Golden West
The Goldwyn Follies
Happy Landing
Holiday
The Hurricane
In Old Chicago
Rosalie
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
Test Pilot
Wells Fargo

1938/39

Angels with Dirty Faces
Boys Town
Dodge City
Goodbye Mr. Chips
Gunga Din
The Hardys Ride High
Jesse James
Juárez
Out West with the Hardys
Pygmalion
Stagecoach
Sweethearts
That Certain Age
Three Smart Girls Grow Up
Union Pacific
You Can't Take It With You

1939/40

All This and Heaven Too
Another Thin Man
Babes in Arms
Destry Rides Again
Drums Along the Mohawk
The Fighting 69th
Gone With the Wind
The Grapes of Wrath
Gulliver's Travels
Hollywood Cavalcade
The Hunchback of Notre Dame
Lillian Russell
Mr. Smith Goes to Washington
My Favorite Wife
Ninotchka

Northwest Passage
The Old Maid
The Rains Came
Rebecca
Road to Singapore
The Women

1940/41

Aloma of the South Seas
Blood and Sand
Boom Town
The Bride Came C.O.D.
Caught in the Draft
Charley's Aunt
Dive Bomber
The Great Dictator
Hold That Ghost
I Wanted Wings
The Lady Eve
Life Begins for Andy Hardy
Meet John Doe
North West Mounted Police
The Philadelphia Story
Road to Zanzibar
The Sea Wolf
Strawberry Blonde
That Hamilton Woman
This Thing Called Love
The Ziegfeld Girl

1941/42

Ball of Fire
Captains of the Clouds
Eagle Squadron
Holiday Inn
Honky Tonk
How Green Was My Valley
In This Our Life
Kings Row
Louisiana Purchase
The Man Who Came to Dinner
Mrs. Miniver
My Favorite Blond
My Gal Sal
Pride of the Yankees
Reap the Wild Wind
Sergeant York
Somewhere I'll Find You
This Above All
To the Shores of Tripoli
Woman of the Year
Yankee Doodle Dandy

1942/43

Air Force
Behind the Rising Sun
Casablanca
Claudia
Commandos Strike at Dawn
Coney Island
Dixie
Heaven Can Wait
Hello, Frisco, Hello
Hers to Hold
Hitler's Children
Immortal Sergeant
In Which We Serve
Keeper of the Flame
Lucky Jordan
The More the Merrier
Now, Voyager
Random Harvest
Road to Morocco
So Proudly We Hail
Stage Door Canteen
Star Spangled Rhythm
This Is the Army

1943/44

Arsenic and Old Lace
Cover Girl
Destination Tokyo
Dragon Seed
For Whom the Bell Tolls
The Gang's All Here
Girl Crazy
Going My Way
Guadalcanal Diary
A Guy Named Joe
Lady in the Dark
Let's Face It
Madame Curie
The Miracle of Morgan's Creek
Mr. Skeffington
The North Star
See Here, Private Hargrove
Since You Went Away
The Song of Bernadette
The Story of Dr. Wassell
Sweet Rosie O'Grady
Thank Your Lucky Stars
As Thousands Cheer
White Cliffs of Dover
Wilson

APPENDIX A (continued)

1944/45

The Affairs of Susan
Along Came Jones
Anchors Aweigh
And Now Tomorrow
Casanova Brown
Christmas in Connecticut
Diamond Horseshoe
Frenchman's Creek
God Is My Co-Pilot
Here Comes the Waves
Hollywood Canteen
I'll Be Seeing You
Incendiary Blonde
Irish Eyes Are Smiling
The Keys of the Kingdom
Meet Me in St. Louis
Mrs. Parkington
Music for Millions
National Velvet
Nob Hill
The Princess and the Pirate
Rhapsody in Blue
Salty O'Rourke
A Song to Remember
Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo
Thrill of Romance
Thunderhead
Son of Flicka
To Have and Have Not
A Tree Grows in Brooklyn
The Valley of Decision
Winged Victory
Without Love
Wonder Man

1945/46

Adventure
Anna and the King of Siam
Bandit of Sherwood Forest
The Bells of St. Mary's
Caesar and Cleopatra
Canyon Passage
The Dolly Sisters
Dragonwyck
Duffy's Tavern
Easy to Wed
Gilda
The Green Years
The Harvey Girls
The House on 92nd Street

Kid from Brooklyn
Kitty
Leave Her to Heaven
The Lost Weekend
Love Letters
Mildred Pierce
Miss Susie Slagle's
Monsieur Beaucaire
My Reputation
Night and Day
Notorious
Road to Utopia
San Antonio
Saratoga Trunk
The Spanish Main
Spellbound
The Stork Club
They Were Expendable
Tomorrow Is Forever
Two Sisters from Boston
Weekend at the Waldorf
Ziegfeld Follies of 1946

1946/47

The Bachelor and the Bobbysoxer
The Best Years of Our Lives
Blue Skies
California
Dear Ruth
Duel in the Sun
The Farmer's Daughter
The Hucksters
Humoresque
I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now
It's a Wonderful Life
The Jolson Story
Life with Father
Margie
My Favorite Brunette
No Leave, No Love
Nora Prentiss
The Perils of Pauline
Possessed
The Razor's Edge
Till the Clouds Roll By
The Time, the Place and the Girl
Two Years Before the Mast
Variety Girl
Welcome Stranger
The Yearling

1947

1. *The Best Years of Our Lives* \$11,500,000
2. *Duel in the Sun* 10,750,000
3. *The Jolson Story* 8,000,000
Forever Amber 8,000,000
5. *Unconquered* 7,500,000
6. *Life with Father* 6,250,000
7. *Welcome Stranger* 6,100,000
8. *The Egg and I* 5,750,000
9. *The Yearling* 5,250,000
10. *Green Dolphin Street* 5,000,000
The Razor's Edge 5,000,000
12. *The Hucksters* 4,700,000
13. *The Bachelor and the Bobbysoxer* 4,500,000
Till the Clouds Roll By 4,500,000
15. *Mother Wore Tights* 4,150,000
16. *California* 3,900,000
17. *Dear Ruth* 3,800,000
The Perils of Pauline 3,800,000
19. *The Sea of Grass* 3,650,000
This Time for Keeps 3,650,000

1948

1. *The Road to Rio* \$4,500,000
2. *Easter Parade* 4,200,000
3. *Red River* 4,150,000
4. *The Three Musketeers* 4,100,000

APPENDIX A (continued)

	<i>Johnny Belinda</i>		13.	<i>Take Me Out to the Ballgame</i>	3,350,000
	4,100,000		14.	<i>Great Lover</i>	3,300,000
6.	<i>Cass Timberlane</i>		15.	<i>The Barkleys of Broadway</i>	3,200,000
	4,050,000		16.	<i>Adam's Rib</i>	3,000,000
7.	<i>The Emperor Waltz</i>			<i>Come to the Stable</i>	3,000,000
	4,000,000			<i>Command Decision</i>	3,000,000
8.	<i>Gentleman's Agreement</i>	3,900,000		<i>Connecticut Yankee</i>	3,000,000
9.	<i>Date with Judy</i>	3,700,000	20.	<i>Whispering Smith</i>	2,850,000
10.	<i>Captain from Castile</i>	3,650,000			
	<i>Homecoming</i>	3,650,000			
12.	<i>Sitting Pretty</i>	3,550,000			
13.	<i>Paleface</i>	3,500,000			
	<i>The State of the Union</i>	3,500,000			
15.	<i>My Wild Irish Rose</i>	3,400,000			
	<i>When My Baby Smiles at Me</i>	3,400,000			
17.	<i>Hamlet</i>	3,250,000			
	<i>Key Largo</i>	3,250,000			
19.	<i>On an Island with You</i>	3,150,000			
20.	<i>The Fuller Brush Man</i>	3,100,000			

1949

1.	<i>Jolson Sings Again</i>	\$5,500,000	1.	<i>Samson and Delilah</i>	\$11,000,000
2.	<i>Pinky</i>	4,200,000	2.	<i>Battleground</i>	4,550,400
3.	<i>I Was A Male War Bride</i>	4,100,000	3.	<i>King Solomon's Mines</i>	4,400,000
	<i>The Snake Pit</i>	4,100,000	4.	<i>Cheaper by the Dozen</i>	4,325,000
	<i>Joan of Arc</i>	4,100,000	5.	<i>Annie Get Your Gun</i>	4,200,000
6.	<i>The Stratton Story</i>	3,700,000	6.	<i>Cinderella</i>	4,150,000
7.	<i>Mr. Belevedere Goes to College</i>	3,650,000		<i>Father of the Bride</i>	4,150,000
8.	<i>Little Women</i>	3,600,000	8.	<i>Sands of Iwo Jima</i>	3,900,000
9.	<i>Words and Music</i>	3,500,000	9.	<i>Broken Arrow</i>	3,550,000
10.	<i>Neptune's Daughter</i>	3,450,000	10.	<i>Twelve O'Clock High</i>	3,225,000
11.	<i>Good Old Summertime</i>	3,400,000	11.	<i>All About Eve</i>	2,900,000
	<i>Sorrowful Jones</i>	3,400,000		<i>The Flame and the Arrow</i>	2,900,000
				<i>Francis</i>	2,900,000
				<i>On the Town</i>	2,900,000
			15.	<i>Adam's Rib</i>	2,750,000
			16.	<i>Three Little Words</i>	2,700,000
			17.	<i>Black Rose</i>	2,650,000
			18.	<i>The Great Lover</i>	2,625,000
			19.	<i>The Duchess of Idaho</i>	2,600,000
				<i>Fancy Pants</i>	2,600,000

1951

1.	<i>David and Bathsheba</i>	\$7,000,000	1.	<i>David and Bathsheba</i>	\$7,000,000
2.	<i>Showboat</i>	5,200,000	2.	<i>Showboat</i>	5,200,000
3.	<i>An American in Paris</i>	4,500,000	3.	<i>An American in Paris</i>	4,500,000
	<i>The Great Caruso</i>	4,500,000		<i>The Great Caruso</i>	4,500,000
5.	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>	4,250,000	5.	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>	4,250,000
6.	<i>Born Yesterday</i>	4,150,000	6.	<i>Born Yesterday</i>	4,150,000
7.	<i>That's My Boy</i>	3,800,000	7.	<i>That's My Boy</i>	3,800,000
8.	<i>A Place in the Sun</i>	3,500,000	8.	<i>A Place in the Sun</i>	3,500,000
9.	<i>At War with the Army</i>	3,350,000	9.	<i>At War with the Army</i>	3,350,000
10.	<i>Father's Little Dividend</i>	3,100,000	10.	<i>Father's Little Dividend</i>	3,100,000
11.	<i>Detective Story</i>	2,800,000	11.	<i>Detective Story</i>	2,800,000
	<i>Kim</i>	2,800,000		<i>Kim</i>	2,800,000
13.	<i>Across the Wide Missouri</i>	2,750,000	13.	<i>Across the Wide Missouri</i>	2,750,000
	<i>Captain Horatio Hornblower</i>	2,750,000		<i>Captain Horatio Hornblower</i>	2,750,000
15.	<i>Halls of Montezuma</i>	2,650,000	15.	<i>Halls of Montezuma</i>	2,650,000
16.	<i>Flying Leathernecks</i>	2,600,000	16.	<i>Flying Leathernecks</i>	2,600,000
	<i>Harvey</i>	2,600,000		<i>Harvey</i>	2,600,000
	<i>Royal Wedding</i>	2,600,000		<i>Royal Wedding</i>	2,600,000
19.	<i>Here Comes the Groom</i>	2,550,000	19.	<i>Here Comes the Groom</i>	2,550,000
20.	<i>Go For Broke</i>	2,500,000	20.	<i>Go For Broke</i>	2,500,000
	<i>On Moonlight Bay</i>	2,500,000		<i>On Moonlight Bay</i>	2,500,000
	<i>On the Riviera</i>	2,500,000		<i>On the Riviera</i>	2,500,000

1952

1.	<i>The Greatest Show on Earth</i>	\$12,000,000
2.	<i>Quo Vadis</i>	10,500,000
3.	<i>Ivanhoe</i>	7,000,000

APPENDIX A (continued)

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| 4. <i>The Snows of Kilimanjaro</i> | 6,500,000 | 11. <i>Salome</i> | 4,750,000 | 19. <i>River of No Return</i> | 3,800,000 |
| 5. <i>Sailor Beware</i> | 4,300,000 | 12. <i>Charge at Feather River</i> | 3,650,000 | <i>Broken Lance</i> | 3,800,000 |
| 6. <i>The African Queen</i> | 4,000,000 | 13. <i>Caddy Come Back, Little Sheba</i> | 3,500,000 | | |
| <i>Jumping Jacks</i> | 4,000,000 | <i>The Moon Is Blue</i> | 3,500,000 | | |
| 8. <i>High Noon</i> | 3,400,000 | <i>Scared Stiff</i> | 3,500,000 | | |
| <i>Son of Paleface</i> | 3,400,000 | <i>Stooge</i> | 3,500,000 | | |
| 10. <i>Singin' in the Rain</i> | 3,300,000 | 18. <i>Stalag 17</i> | 3,300,000 | | |
| 11. <i>With a Song In My Heart</i> | 3,250,000 | 19. <i>Little Boy Lost</i> | 3,000,000 | | |
| 12. <i>The Quiet Man</i> | 3,200,000 | <i>Mississippi Gambler</i> | 3,000,000 | | |
| 13. <i>The Bend of the River</i> | 3,000,000 | <i>The Road to Bali</i> | 3,000,000 | | |
| <i>Plymouth Adventure</i> | 3,000,000 | <i>Roman Holiday</i> | 3,000,000 | | |
| <i>Stars and Stripes Forever</i> | 3,000,000 | | | | |
| <i>World in His Arms</i> | 3,000,000 | | | | |
| 17. <i>I'll See You in My Dreams</i> | 2,900,000 | | | | |
| <i>The Iron Mistress</i> | 2,900,000 | | | | |
| <i>Just for You</i> | 2,900,000 | | | | |
| 20. <i>Distant Drums</i> | 2,850,000 | | | | |

1953

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|--------------------------------------|-----------------|---|--------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. <i>The Robe</i> | \$20-30,000,000 | 1. <i>White Christmas</i> | \$12,000,000 | 1. <i>Cinerama Holiday</i> | \$10,000,000 |
| 2. <i>From Here to Eternity</i> | 12,500,000 | 2. <i>The Caine Mutiny</i> | 8,700,000 | 2. <i>Mister Roberts</i> | 8,500,000 |
| 3. <i>Shane</i> | 8,000,000 | 3. <i>The Glenn Miller Story</i> | 7,000,000 | 3. <i>Battle Cry</i> | 8,000,000 |
| 4. <i>How to Marry a Millionaire</i> | 7,500,000 | 4. <i>The Egyptian</i> | 6,000,000 | <i>20,000 Leagues Under the Sea</i> | 8,000,000 |
| 5. <i>Peter Pan</i> | 7,000,000 | 5. <i>Rear Window</i> | 5,300,000 | 5. <i>Not as a Stranger</i> | 7,100,000 |
| 6. <i>Hans Christian Andersen</i> | 6,000,000 | 6. <i>The High and the Mighty</i> | 5,200,000 | 6. <i>The Country Girl</i> | 6,900,000 |
| 7. <i>House of Wax</i> | 5,500,000 | 7. <i>Magnificent Obsession</i> | 5,000,000 | 7. <i>The Lady and the Tramp</i> | 6,500,000 |
| 8. <i>Mogambo</i> | 5,200,000 | <i>Three Coins in the Fountain</i> | 5,000,000 | <i>Strategic Air Command</i> | 6,500,000 |
| 9. <i>Gentlemen Prefer Blondes</i> | 5,100,000 | 9. <i>Seven Brides for Seven Brothers</i> | 4,750,000 | 9. <i>To Hell and Back</i> | 6,000,000 |
| 10. <i>Moulin Rouge</i> | 5,000,000 | 10. <i>Desiree</i> | 4,500,000 | <i>Sea Chase</i> | 6,000,000 |
| | | 11. <i>Knights of the Round Table</i> | 4,400,000 | <i>A Star Is Born</i> | 6,000,000 |
| | | 12. <i>Dragnet</i> | 4,300,000 | 12. <i>The Blackboard Jungle</i> | 5,200,000 |
| | | 13. <i>Demetrius and the Gladiators</i> | 4,250,000 | 13. <i>East of Eden</i> | 5,000,000 |
| | | <i>Living It Up</i> | 4,250,000 | <i>Pete Kelly's Blues</i> | 5,000,000 |
| | | 15. <i>On the Waterfront</i> | 4,200,000 | <i>The Seven-Year Itch</i> | 5,000,000 |
| | | 16. <i>Hondo</i> | 4,100,000 | 16. <i>The Bridges at Toko-Ri</i> | 4,700,000 |
| | | 17. <i>The Long, Long Trailer</i> | 4,000,000 | 17. <i>A Man Called Peter</i> | 4,500,000 |
| | | <i>Sabrina</i> | 4,000,000 | <i>No Business Like Show Business</i> | 4,500,000 |
| | | | | <i>To Catch a Thief</i> | 4,500,000 |
| | | | | <i>Vera Cruz</i> | 4,500,000 |

1955

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. <i>Cinerama Holiday</i> | \$10,000,000 |
| 2. <i>Mister Roberts</i> | 8,500,000 |
| 3. <i>Battle Cry</i> | 8,000,000 |
| 5. <i>Not as a Stranger</i> | 7,100,000 |
| 6. <i>The Country Girl</i> | 6,900,000 |
| 7. <i>The Lady and the Tramp</i> | 6,500,000 |
| 9. <i>To Hell and Back</i> | 6,000,000 |
| <i>Sea Chase</i> | 6,000,000 |
| <i>A Star Is Born</i> | 6,000,000 |
| 12. <i>The Blackboard Jungle</i> | 5,200,000 |
| 13. <i>East of Eden</i> | 5,000,000 |
| <i>Pete Kelly's Blues</i> | 5,000,000 |
| <i>The Seven-Year Itch</i> | 5,000,000 |
| 16. <i>The Bridges at Toko-Ri</i> | 4,700,000 |
| 17. <i>A Man Called Peter</i> | 4,500,000 |
| <i>No Business Like Show Business</i> | 4,500,000 |
| <i>To Catch a Thief</i> | 4,500,000 |
| <i>Vera Cruz</i> | 4,500,000 |

1956

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| 1. <i>Guys and Dolls</i> | \$9,000,000 |
| 2. <i>The King and I</i> | 8,500,000 |
| 3. <i>Trapeze</i> | 7,500,000 |

APPENDIX A (continued)

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| 4. <i>High Society</i> | 6,500,000 | 11. <i>Written on the Wind</i> | 4,400,000 |
| <i>I'll Cry Tomorrow</i> | 6,500,000 | 12. <i>Gunfight at the O.K. Corral</i> | 4,300,000 |
| 6. <i>Picnic</i> | 6,300,000 | 13. <i>Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison</i> | 4,200,000 |
| 7. <i>War and Peace</i> | 6,250,000 | 14. <i>April Love Jailhouse Rock</i> | 4,000,000 |
| 8. <i>The Eddy Duchin Story</i> | 5,300,000 | 16. <i>Battle Hymn</i> | 3,900,000 |
| 9. <i>Moby Dick</i> | 5,200,000 | 17. <i>An Affair to Remember</i> | 3,850,000 |
| 10. <i>The Searchers</i> | 4,800,000 | 18. <i>Bernadine Loving You</i> | 3,700,000 |
| 11. <i>Conqueror Rebel Without a Cause</i> | 4,500,000 | 20. <i>The Sun Also Rises</i> | 3,500,000 |
| 13. <i>The Man with the Golden Arm</i> | 4,350,000 | | |
| <i>The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit</i> | 4,350,000 | | |
| 15. <i>Bus Stop</i> | 4,250,000 | | |
| 16. <i>The Rose Tattoo</i> | 4,200,000 | | |
| 17. <i>The Bad Seed</i> | 4,100,000 | | |
| <i>The Man Who Knew Too Much</i> | 4,100,000 | | |
| 19. <i>Friendly Persuasion</i> | 4,000,000 | | |
| 20. <i>The Proud and the Profane</i> | 3,900,000 | | |

1957

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|---|--------------|--|-----------|
| 1. <i>The Ten Commandments</i> | \$18,500,000 | 10. <i>Old Yeller</i> | 5,900,000 |
| 2. <i>Around the World in 80 Days</i> | 16,200,000 | 11. <i>The Big Country</i> | 5,000,000 |
| 3. <i>Giant</i> | 12,000,000 | <i>A Farewell to Arms</i> | 5,000,000 |
| 4. <i>Pal Joey</i> | 6,700,000 | <i>The Young Lions</i> | 5,000,000 |
| 5. <i>Seven Wonders of the World</i> | 6,500,000 | 14. <i>Don't Go Near the Water</i> | 4,500,000 |
| 6. <i>The Teahouse of the August Moon</i> | 5,600,000 | 15. <i>Witness for the Prosecution</i> | 3,750,000 |
| 7. <i>The Pride and the Passion</i> | 5,500,000 | 16. <i>Indiscreet</i> | 3,600,000 |
| 8. <i>Anastasia Island in the Sun</i> | 5,000,000 | 17. <i>God's Little Acre</i> | 3,500,000 |
| 10. <i>Love Me Tender</i> | 4,500,000 | <i>Houseboat</i> | 3,500,000 |
| | | <i>The Long Hot Summer</i> | 3,500,000 |
| | | <i>The Sad Sack</i> | 3,500,000 |

1959

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|-------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. <i>Auntie Mame</i> | \$8,800,000 | 10. <i>Some Came Running</i> | 4,200,000 |
| 2. <i>Shaggy Dog</i> | 7,800,000 | 11. <i>Hole in the Head</i> | 4,000,000 |
| 3. <i>Some Like It Hot</i> | 7,000,000 | <i>Hercules</i> | 4,000,000 |
| 4. <i>Imitation of Life</i> | 6,200,000 | 13. <i>Inn of the Sixth Happiness</i> | 3,600,000 |
| 5. <i>The Nun's Story</i> | 6,000,000 | 14. <i>The Horse Soldiers</i> | 3,300,000 |
| 6. <i>Anatomy of a Murder</i> | 5,250,000 | 15. <i>Don't Give Up the Ship</i> | 3,200,000 |
| <i>North by Northwest</i> | 5,250,000 | 16. <i>7 Voyages of Sinbad</i> | 3,100,000 |
| 8. <i>Rio Bravo</i> | 5,200,000 | 17. <i>The Buccaneer</i> | 3,000,000 |
| 9. <i>Sleeping Beauty</i> | 4,300,000 | <i>The Geisha Boy</i> | 3,000,000 |
| | | <i>I Want to Live!</i> | 3,000,000 |
| | | 20. <i>Separate Tables</i> | 2,700,000 |
| | | <i>Big Circus</i> | 2,700,000 |

1960

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. <i>Ben-Hur</i> | \$17,300,000 |
| 2. <i>Psycho</i> | 8,500,000 |
| 3. <i>Operation Petticoat</i> | 6,800,000 |
| 4. <i>Suddenly, Last Summer</i> | 5,500,000 |
| 5. <i>On the Beach</i> | 5,300,000 |

APPENDIX A (continued)

6.	<i>Solomon and Sheba</i>	5,250,000			<i>North to Alaska</i>	4,500,000
7.	<i>The Apartment</i>	5,100,000			<i>Fanny</i>	4,500,000
8.	<i>From the Terrace</i>	5,000,000	14.	<i>Pepe</i>	4,300,000	
	<i>Please Don't Eat the</i>			<i>One-Eyed Jacks</i>	4,300,000	
	<i>Daisies</i>	5,000,000	16.	<i>Parrish</i>	4,200,000	
10.	<i>Oceans 11</i>	4,900,000	17.	<i>The Misfits</i>	3,900,000	
11.	<i>Journey to the Center</i>		18.	<i>The Sundowners</i>	3,800,000	
	<i>of the Earth</i>	4,700,000			3,800,000	
12.	<i>The Bellboy</i>	3,550,000	19.	<i>Midnight Lace</i>	3,500,000	
13.	<i>Elmer Gantry</i>	3,500,000	20.	<i>Never on Sunday</i>	3,300,000	
14.	<i>The Rat Race</i>	3,400,000		<i>Where the Boys Are</i>	3,300,000	
15.	<i>Portrait In Black</i>	3,200,000		<i>The Wackiest Ship in</i>		
16.	<i>Li'l Abner</i>	3,200,000		<i>the Army</i>	3,300,000	
17.	<i>Visit to a Small Planet</i>	3,200,000				
18.	<i>Home from the Hill</i>	3,150,000				
19.	<i>Who Was that Lady?</i>	3,000,000				
	<i>Toby Tyler</i>	3,000,000				
	<i>The Big Fisherman</i>	3,000,000				
	<i>Can-Can</i>	3,000,000				

1961

1.	<i>The Guns of Navarone</i>	\$8,600,000	1.	<i>Spartacus</i>	\$13,500,000
2.	<i>The Absent-Minded</i>		2.	<i>West Side Story</i>	11,000,000
	<i>Professor</i>	8,200,000	3.	<i>Lover Come Back</i>	8,500,000
3.	<i>The Parent Trap</i>	8,000,000		<i>That Touch of Mink</i>	8,500,000
4.	<i>Swiss Family Robinson</i>	7,500,000	5.	<i>El Cid</i>	8,000,000
5.	<i>Exodus</i>	7,350,000		<i>The Music Man</i>	8,000,000
6.	<i>The World of Suzie</i>		7.	<i>King of Kings</i>	7,500,000
	<i>Wong</i>	7,300,000	8.	<i>Hatari</i>	6,000,000
7.	<i>Alamo</i>	7,250,000	9.	<i>The Flower Drum Song</i>	5,000,000
8.	<i>Gone With the Wind</i>			<i>The Interns</i>	5,000,000
	<i>(reissue)</i>	6,000,000	11.	<i>Blue Hawaii</i>	4,700,000
9.	<i>101 Dalmatians</i>	5,800,000	12.	<i>Lolita</i>	4,500,000
10.	<i>Splendor in the Grass</i>	5,100,000	13.	<i>Babes in Toyland</i>	4,400,000
11.	<i>Come September</i>	4,500,000	14.	<i>Bon Voyage</i>	4,100,000
			15.	<i>What Ever Happened to</i>	
				<i>Baby Jane?</i>	4,000,000
			16.	<i>Sergeants 3</i>	3,955,000
			17.	<i>The Man Who Shot</i>	
				<i>Liberty Valance</i>	3,900,000
			18.	<i>Judgment at</i>	
				<i>Nuremberg</i>	3,800,000
			19.	<i>Moon Pilot</i>	3,500,000
				<i>Splendor in the Grass</i>	3,500,000

1963

1.	<i>Cleopatra</i>	\$15,700,000
2.	<i>The Longest Day</i>	12,750,000
3.	<i>Irma La Douce</i>	9,250,000
4.	<i>Lawrence of Arabia</i>	9,000,000
5.	<i>How the West Was</i>	
	<i>Won</i>	8,000,000
6.	<i>Mutiny on the Bounty</i>	7,700,000
7.	<i>Son of Flubber</i>	6,900,000
8.	<i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	6,700,000
9.	<i>Bye Bye Birdie</i>	5,600,000
10.	<i>Come Blow Your Horn</i>	5,450,000
11.	<i>Gypsy</i>	5,400,000
12.	<i>The Castaways</i>	4,700,000
13.	<i>The Birds</i>	4,600,000
	<i>The Great Escape</i>	4,600,000
15.	<i>The Brothers Grimm</i>	4,500,000
16.	<i>Diamond Head</i>	4,300,000
17.	<i>The Thrill of It All</i>	4,150,000
18.	<i>Spencer's Mountain</i>	4,000,000
19.	<i>55 Days at Peking</i>	3,900,000
	<i>Hud</i>	3,900,000

1964

1.	<i>The Carpetbaggers</i>	\$13,000,000
2.	<i>It's a Mad, Mad, Mad,</i>	
	<i>Mad World</i>	10,000,000
3.	<i>The Unsinkable Molly</i>	
	<i>Brown</i>	7,500,000
4.	<i>Charade</i>	6,150,000
5.	<i>The Cardinal</i>	5,275,000
6.	<i>Move Over Darling</i>	5,100,000

APPENDIX A (continued)

APPENDIX A (continued)

5. *The Odd Couple* 18,500,000
6. *Planet of the Apes* 15,000,000
7. *Rosemary's Baby* 12,300,000
8. *The Jungle Book* 11,500,000
9. *Yours, Mine and Ours* 11,000,000
10. *The Green Berets* 8,700,000
11. *2001: A Space Odyssey* 8,500,000
12. *The Fox* 8,300,000
13. *Wait Until Dark* 7,350,000
14. *Camelot* 6,600,000
15. *The Detective* 6,500,000
16. *The Thomas Crown Affair* 6,000,000
17. *In Cold Blood* 5,600,000
18. *Bandolero* 5,500,000
19. *For the Love of Ivy* 5,075,000
20. *Hang 'Em High* 5,000,000
- The Happiest Millionaire* 5,000,000

1969

1. *The Love Bug* \$17,000,000
2. *Funny Girl* 16,500,000
3. *Bullitt* 16,400,000
4. *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* 15,000,000
5. *Romeo and Juliet* 14,500,000
6. *True Grit* 11,500,000
7. *Midnight Cowboy* 11,000,000
8. *Oliver!* 10,500,000
- Goodbye Columbus* 10,500,000
10. *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* 7,500,000
11. *Easy Rider* 7,200,000

12. *I Am Curious (Yellow)* 6,600,000
13. *Where Eagles Dare* 6,560,000
14. *The Lion in Winter* 6,400,000
- Swiss Family Robinson* (reissue) 6,400,000
16. *Winning* 6,200,000
17. *The Impossible Years* 5,800,000
18. *Three in the Attic* 5,200,000
19. *Finian's Rainbow* 5,100,000
20. *Support Your Local Sheriff* 5,000,000

1970

1. *Airport* \$37,650,796
2. *M*A*S*H* 22,000,000
3. *Patton* 21,000,000
4. *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* 13,900,000
5. *Woodstock* 13,500,000
6. *Hello, Dolly!* 13,000,000
7. *Cactus Flower* 11,300,000
8. *Catch-22* 9,250,000
9. *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* 9,000,000
10. *The Reivers* 8,000,000
11. *The Adventurers* 7,750,000
12. *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* 7,250,000
- The Out-of-Towners* 7,250,000
14. *Z* 6,750,000
15. *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* 6,500,000
16. *Anne of the 1,000 Days* 6,134,264
17. *A Boy Named Charlie Brown* 6,000,000
- 101 Dalmatians* (reissue) 6,000,000
- Chisum* 6,000,000
- A Man Called Horse* 6,000,000

1971

1. *Love Story* \$50,000,000
2. *Little Big Man* 15,000,000
3. *Summer of '42* 14,000,000
4. *Ryan's Daughter* 13,400,000
5. *The Owl and the Pussycat* 11,500,000
6. *The Aristocats* 10,100,000
7. *Carnal Knowledge* 9,347,000
8. *Willard* 8,200,000
9. *The Andromeda Strain* 7,500,000
- Big Jake* 7,500,000
11. *The Stewardesses* 6,418,170
12. *Shaft* 6,100,000
- The French Connection* 6,100,000
14. *Klute* 6,000,000
15. *Cold Turkey* 5,500,000
- Le Mans* 5,500,000
- The Anderson Tapes* 5,000,000
- A New Leaf* 5,000,000
19. *The \$1,000,000 Duck* 4,700,000
20. *There's a Girl in My Soup* 4,500,000

1972

1. *The Godfather* \$81,500,000
2. *Fiddler on the Roof* 25,100,000
3. *Diamonds are Forever* 21,000,000
4. *What's Up, Doc?* 17,000,000
5. *Dirty Harry* 16,000,000
6. *The Last Picture Show* 12,750,000
7. *A Clockwork Orange* 2,000,000

APPENDIX A (continued)

8. *Cabaret* 10,885,000
9. *The Hospital* 9,000,000
10. *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex* 8,500,000
11. *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* 8,250,000
12. *The Cowboys* 7,000,000
13. *Nicholas and Alexandra* 6,750,000
14. *Frenzy* 6,300,000
15. *Skyjacked* 6,001,000
16. *Song of the South* (reissue) 5,900,000
17. *Escape from the Planet of the Apes* 5,500,000
- Butterflies Are Free* 5,500,000
- The New Centurions* 5,500,000
20. *2001: A Space Odyssey* (reissue) 5,395,000

1973

1. *The Poseidon Adventure* 40,000,000
2. *Deliverance* 18,000,000
3. *The Getaway* 17,500,000
4. *Live and Let Die* 15,500,000
5. *Paper Moon* 13,000,000
6. *Last Tango in Paris* 12,625,000
7. *The Sound of Music* (reissue) 11,000,000
8. *Jesus Christ Superstar* 10,800,000
9. *The World's Greatest Athlete* 10,600,000
10. *American Graffiti* 10,300,000
11. *The Way We Were* 10,000,000
12. *Lady Sings the Blues* 9,050,000

13. *Mary Poppins* (reissue) 9,000,000
- Souder* 9,000,000
15. *Pete 'n' Tillie* 8,700,000
16. *The Day of the Jackal* 8,525,000
17. *Walking Tall* 8,500,000
18. *Jeremiah Johnson* 8,350,000
19. *Billy Jack* (reissue) 8,275,000
20. *High Plains Drifter* 7,125,000

1974

1. *The Sting* \$68,450,000
2. *The Exorcist* 66,300,000
3. *Papillon* 19,750,000
4. *Magnum Force* 18,300,000
5. *Herbie Rides Again* 17,500,000
6. *Blazing Saddles* 16,500,000
7. *Trial of Billy Jack* 15,000,000
8. *The Great Gatsby* 14,200,000
9. *Serpico* 14,100,600
10. *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (reissue) 13,820,000
11. *Billy Jack* (reissue) 13,000,000
12. *Airport 1975* 12,310,000
13. *Dirty Mary and Crazy Larry* 12,068,000
14. *That's Entertainment* 10,800,000
15. *The Three Musketeers* 10,115,000
16. *The Longest Yard* 10,100,000
17. *Jeremiah Johnson* (reissue) 10,000,000
18. *Robin Hood* (reissue) 9,600,000
19. *For Pete's Sake* 9,500,000

20. *Thunderbolt and Lightfoot* 8,500,000

1975

1. *Jaws* \$102,650,000
2. *The Towering Inferno* 55,000,000
3. *Benji* 30,800,000
4. *Young Frankenstein* 30,000,000
5. *The Godfather Part II* 28,900,000
6. *Shampoo* 22,000,000
7. *Funny Lady* 19,000,000
8. *Murder on the Orient Express* 17,800,000
9. *Return of the Pink Panther* 17,000,000
10. *Tommy* 16,000,000
11. *The Apple Dumpling Gang* 13,500,000
12. *Freebie and the Bean* 12,500,000
13. *Lenny* 11,100,000
14. *Island at the Top of the World* 10,000,000
15. *The Man with the Golden Arm* 9,500,000
16. *The Great Waldo Pepper* 9,400,000
17. *Three Days of the Condor* 8,950,000
18. *Mandingo* 8,600,000
19. *Escape to Witch Mountain* 8,500,000
20. *The Other Side of the Mountain* 8,200,000

1976

1. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* \$56,500,000
2. *All the President's Men* 29,000,000
3. *The Omen* 27,851,000
4. *The Bad News Bears* 22,266,517
5. *Silent Movie* 20,311,000

APPENDIX A (continued)

6. <i>Midway</i>	20,300,000	11. <i>The Spy Who Loved Me</i>	22,000,000	16. <i>Pete's Dragon</i>	16,100,000
7. <i>Dog Day Afternoon</i>	19,800,000	12. <i>Oh, God</i>	21,200,000	17. <i>Turning Point</i>	15,045,000
8. <i>Murder by Death</i>	18,800,000	13. <i>A Bridge Too Far</i>	21,000,000	18. <i>House Calls</i>	14,859,000
9. <i>Jaws</i> (reissue)	16,077,000	14. <i>The Pink Panther Strikes Again</i>	19,500,000	19. <i>Coma</i>	14,400,000
10. <i>Blazing Saddles</i> (reissue)	13,850,000	15. <i>The Other Side of Midnight</i>	17,000,000	20. <i>Omen II: Damien</i>	12,050,000
11. <i>Lucky Lady</i>	12,107,000				
12. <i>Taxi Driver</i>	11,600,000				
13. <i>Outlaw Josey Wales</i>	10,600,000				
14. <i>No Deposit, No Return</i>	10,500,000				
15. <i>Ode to Billy Joe</i>	10,400,000				
16. <i>The Exorcist</i> (reissue)	10,300,000				
17. <i>Hustle</i>	9,958,738				
18. <i>Barry Lyndon</i>	9,100,000				
19. <i>Gus</i>	9,000,000				
20. <i>Marathon Man</i>	8,886,753				

1977

1. <i>Star Wars</i>	\$127,000,000
2. <i>Rocky</i>	54,000,000
3. <i>Smokey and the Bandit</i>	39,744,000
4. <i>A Star Is Born</i>	37,100,000
5. <i>King Kong</i>	35,851,283
6. <i>The Deep</i>	31,000,000
7. <i>Silver Streak</i>	27,100,000
8. <i>The Enforcer</i>	24,000,000
9. <i>Close Encounters of the Third Kind</i>	23,000,000
<i>In Search of Noah's Ark</i>	23,000,000

1978

1. <i>Grease</i>	\$83,091,000
2. <i>Close Encounters of the Third Kind</i>	54,000,000
3. <i>National Lampoon's Animal House</i>	32,368,000
4. <i>Jaws 2</i>	49,299,000
5. <i>Heaven Can Wait</i>	42,517,000
6. <i>The Goodbye Girl</i>	41,000,000
7. <i>Star Wars</i> (reissue)	38,375,000
8. <i>Hooper</i>	31,500,000
9. <i>Foul Play</i>	25,065,000
10. <i>Revenge of Pink Panther</i>	25,000,000
11. <i>Up In Smoke</i>	21,271,000
12. <i>The End</i>	20,000,000
13. <i>Cheap Detective</i>	19,500,000
14. <i>The Gauntlet</i>	17,500,000
15. <i>High Anxiety</i>	17,040,000

1979

1. <i>Superman</i>	\$81,000,000
2. <i>Every Which Way But Loose</i>	48,000,000
3. <i>Rocky II</i>	43,049,274
4. <i>Alien</i>	40,086,573
5. <i>The Amityville Horror</i>	35,000,000
<i>Star Trek</i>	35,000,000
7. <i>Moonraker</i>	33,934,074
8. <i>The Muppet Movie</i>	32,000,000
9. <i>California Suite</i>	29,200,000
10. <i>The Deer Hunter</i>	26,927,000
11. <i>The Main Event</i>	26,000,000
12. <i>The China Syndrome</i>	25,425,000
13. <i>10</i>	25,000,000
14. <i>Apocalypse Now</i>	22,855,657
15. <i>Escape From Alcatraz</i>	21,014,000
16. <i>Meatballs</i>	19,674,000
17. <i>Love At First Bite</i>	18,100,000
18. <i>The In-Laws</i>	18,000,000
19. <i>Manhattan</i>	16,908,439
20. <i>Starting Over</i>	15,201,000

APPENDIX A (continued)

1980

<u>The Empire Strikes Back</u>	\$120,000,000
<u>Kramer Vs.. Kramer</u>	60,528,000
<u>The Jerk</u>	43,000,000
<u>Airplane</u>	38,000,000
<u>Smokey and the Bandit II</u>	37,600,000
<u>Coal Miner's Daughter</u>	36,000,000
<u>Private Benjamin</u>	33,500,000
<u>Blues Brothers</u>	31,000,000
<u>The Electric Horseman</u>	30,917,000
<u>The Shining</u>	30,200,000
<u>The Blue Lagoon</u>	28,456,000
<u>Black Hole</u>	25,000,000
<u>1941</u>	23,400,000
<u>Urban Cowboy</u>	22,700,000
<u>Cheech & Chong's Next Movie</u>	21,000,000
<u>All That Jazz</u>	20,000,000
<u>Caddyshack</u>	20,000,000
<u>Brubaker</u>	19,000,000
<u>Little Darlings</u>	16,700,000
<u>Friday the 13th</u>	16,500,000

1981

<u>Raiders of the Lost Ark</u>	\$90,434,000
<u>Superman II</u>	64,000,000
<u>Stir Cracy</u>	58,408,000
<u>9 to 5</u>	57,850,000
<u>Stripes</u>	39,514,000
<u>Any Which Way You Can</u>	39,500,000
<u>Arthur</u>	37,000,000
<u>The Cannonball Run</u>	35,378,000
<u>Four Seasons</u>	26,800,000
<u>For Your Eyes Only</u>	25,439,479
<u>Seems Like Old Times</u>	22,068,000
<u>The Fox and the Hound</u>	18,000,000
<u>Cheech and Chong's Nice Dreams</u>	17,636,000
<u>Excalibur</u>	17,000,000
<u>Flash Gordon</u>	16,100,000
<u>Time Bandits</u>	16,000,000
<u>The Great Muppet Caper</u>	16,000,000
<u>Tarzan, The Ape Man</u>	15,642,396
<u>Clash of the Titans</u>	15,632,341
<u>Bustin' Loose</u>	15 300 000

APPENDIX A (continued)

	1982	1983
<u>E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial</u>	\$187,000,000	\$163,500,000
<u>Rocky III</u>	63,450,045	94,571,613
<u>On Golden Pond</u>	63,000,000	40,600,000
<u>Porky's</u>	53,500,000	36,595,975
<u>An Officer and a Gentleman</u>	52,000,000	36,400,000
<u>The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas</u>	48,000,000	36,180,000
<u>Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan</u>	40,000,000	33,650,00
<u>Poltergeist</u>	36,175,949	33,203,999
<u>Annie</u>	35,180,855	31,500,000
<u>Chariots of Fire</u>	27,600,000	30,328,000
<u>Firefox</u>	24,000,000	29,500,000
<u>First Blood</u>	24,000,000	28,500,000
<u>Conan The Barbarian</u>	23,000,000	26,650,000
<u>Raiders of the Lost Ark</u>	21,566,000	26,439,000
<u>Taps</u>	20,500,000	25,000,000
<u>Absence of Malice</u>	19,703,810	25,000,000
<u>Sharky's Machine</u>	18,300,000	24,512,935
<u>Richard Pryor Live on Sunset Strip</u>	18,274,345	24,364,472
<u>Time Bandits</u>	17,950,000	23,375,000
<u>Neighbors</u>	17,079,429	23,000,000
<u>Return of the Jedi</u>		
<u>Tootsie</u>		
<u>Trading Places</u>		
<u>WarGames</u>		
<u>Superman III</u>		
<u>Flashdance</u>		
<u>Staying Alive</u>		
<u>Octopussy</u>		
<u>Mr. Mom</u>		
<u>48 Hrs.</u>		
<u>National Lampoon's Vacation</u>		
<u>Risky Business</u>		
<u>The Verdict</u>		
<u>Jaws 3-D</u>		
<u>Never Say Never Again</u>		
<u>Terms of Endearment</u>		
<u>The Toy</u>		
<u>Gandhi</u>		
<u>Dark Crystal</u>		
<u>Sudden Impact</u>		

APPENDIX A (continued)

1984

<u>Ghostbusters</u>	\$127,000,000
<u>Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom</u>	109,000,000
<u>Gremlins</u>	78,500,000
<u>Beverly Hills Cop</u>	58,000,000
<u>Terms of Endearment</u>	50,250,000
<u>The Karate Kid</u>	41,700,000
<u>Star Trek III: The Search for Spock</u>	39,000,000
<u>Police Academy</u>	38,500,000
<u>Romancing The Stone</u>	36,000,000
<u>Sudden Impact</u>	34,600,000
<u>Footloose</u>	34,000,000
<u>Splash</u>	34,000,000
<u>Purpose Rain</u>	32,000,000
<u>The Natural</u>	25,000,000
<u>Scarifgee</u>	23,077,933
<u>Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan</u>	23,000,000
<u>Tightrope</u>	22,500,000
<u>2010</u>	20,000,000
<u>Yenti</u>	19,630,000
<u>Revenge of the Nerds</u>	19,500,000

1985

<u>Back to the Future</u>	\$ 94,000,000
<u>Rambo: First Blood Part II</u>	80,000,000
<u>Rocky IV</u>	65,000,000
<u>Beverly Hills Cop</u>	50,000,000
<u>Cocoon</u>	40,000,000
<u>The Goonies</u>	29,900,000
<u>Witness</u>	28,000,000
<u>Police Academy 2</u>	27,200,000
<u>National Lampoon's European Vacation</u>	25,600,000
<u>A View to a Kill</u>	25,200,000
<u>Fletch</u>	23,923,119
<u>Spies Like Us</u>	23,000,000
<u>Pale Rider</u>	20,800,000
<u>The Jewel of the Nile</u>	20,000,000
<u>Mask</u>	19,869,872
<u>Brewster's Million's</u>	19,383,925
<u>Pee-wee's Big Adventure</u>	18,100,000
<u>E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial</u>	17,983,815
<u>Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome</u>	17,900,000
<u>Jagged Edge</u>	17,500,000

APPENDIX A (continued)

1986

1987

<u>Top Gun</u>	\$ 82,000,000	<u>Beverly Hills Cop II</u>	\$ 80,857,776
<u>The Karate Kid Part II</u>	56,936,762	<u>Platoon</u>	66,700,000
<u>Crocodile Dundee</u>	51,000,000	<u>Fatal Attraction</u>	60,000,000
<u>Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home</u>	46,000,000	<u>Three Men and A Baby</u>	45,000,000
<u>Aliens</u>	42,600,000	<u>The Untouchables</u>	36,866,530
<u>The Color Purple</u>	41,900,000	<u>The Witches of Eastwick</u>	31,800,000
<u>Back to School</u>	41,748,000	<u>Predator</u>	31,000,000
<u>The Golden Child</u>	33,000,000	<u>Dragnet</u>	30,138,699
<u>Ruthless People</u>	31,000,000	<u>The Secret of My Success</u>	29,542,081
<u>Out of Africa</u>	30,061,817	<u>Lethal Weapon</u>	29,500,000
<u>Ferris Bueller's Day Off</u>	28,600,000	<u>Stakeout</u>	28,400,000
<u>Down and Out in Beverly Hills</u>	28,000,000	<u>The Living Daylights</u>	26,600,000
<u>Cobra</u>	27,900,000	<u>Dirty Dancing</u>	25,009,305
<u>Legal Eagles</u>	26,500,131	<u>Robocop</u>	23,571,784
<u>An American Tail</u>	22,000,000	<u>Full Metal Jacket</u>	22,700,000
<u>Heartbreak Ridge</u>	21,000,000	<u>La Bamba</u>	22,700,000
<u>Stand By Me</u>	21,000,000	<u>Throw Mama From the Train</u>	22,647,000
<u>The Color of Money</u>	20,800,000	<u>Outrageous Fortune</u>	22,000,000
<u>Policy Academy 3: Back in Training</u>	20,700,000	<u>Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs</u>	21,350,000
<u>Poltergeist II</u>	20,375,000	<u>A Nightmare on Elm Street</u>	21,345,000

APPENDIX B

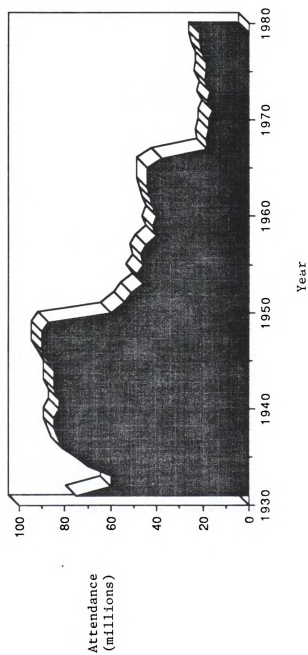
APPENDIX B

AVERAGE WEEKLY U.S. MOTION PICTURE THEATRE ATTENDANCE

Year	Average Weekly Attendance	Year	Average Weekly Attendance
1926	50,000,000	1953	46,000,000
1927	57,000,000		
1928	65,000,000	1954	49,000,000
1929	95,000,000	1955	46,000,000
		1956	47,000,000
1930	90,000,000	1957	45,000,000
1931	75,000,000	1958	40,000,000
1932	60,000,000	1959	42,000,000
1933	60,000,000	1960	40,000,000
1934	70,000,000	1961	42,000,000
1935	75,000,000	1962	43,000,000
1936	88,000,000	1963	44,000,000
1937	85,000,000	1964	(Not reliably reported)
1938	85,000,000		
1939	85,000,000	1965	44,000,000
		1966	38,000,000
1940	80,000,000	1967	17,800,000
1941	85,000,000	1968	18,800,000
1942	85,000,000	1969	17,500,000
1943	85,000,000		
1944	85,000,000	1970	17,700,000
		1971	15,800,000
1945	90,000,000	1972	18,000,000
1946	90,000,000	1973	16,600,000
1947	90,000,000	1974	19,400,000
1948	90,000,000		
1949	87,500,000	1975	19,900,000
		1976	18,400,000
1950	60,000,000	1977	20,400,000
1951	54,000,000	1978	21,800,000
1952	51,000,000	1979	21,600,000

Source: Steinberg, Cobbett. Film Facts. New York: Facts on File, 1980.

APPENDIX B (continued)





APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

ALL-TIME TOP 50 GROSSING FILMS

Total Rentals		Total Rentals		Total Rentals	
Title		Title		Title	
1. E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial; 1982	\$228,379,346	19. Part II; 1985 . . .	\$80,000,000	36. Rocky; 1976	\$55,925,000
2. Star Wars; 1977 . .	193,500,000	20. The Sound of Music; 1965 . . .	79,748,000	37. American Graffiti; 1973	55,692,940
3. Return of the Jedi; 1983	168,002,414	21. Gremlins; 1984 . .	79,500,000	38. An Officer and a Gentleman; 1982	55,223,000
4. The Empire Strikes Back; 1980 . . .	141,600,000	22. The Sting; 1973 . .	78,198,608	39. Porky's; 1982 . . .	54,000,000
5. Jaws; 1975	129,961,081	23. Gone with the Wind; 1939	76,700,000	40. Jaws II; 1978 . . .	52,442,396
6. Ghostbusters; 1984	128,264,005	24. Rocky IV; 1985 . .	75,782,000	41. The Towering Inferno; 1975 . .	52,000,000
7. Raiders of the Lost Ark; 1981	115,598,000	25. Saturday Night Fever; 1977 . . .	74,100,000	42. Every Which Way But Loose; 1978	51,900,000
8. Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom; 1984 . . .	109,000,000	26. National Lampoon's Animal House; 1978	70,778,176	43. Crocodile Dundee; 1986	51,000,000
9. Beverly Hills Cop; 1984	108,000,000	27. Rocky III; 1982 . . .	65,715,000	44. Terms of Endearment; 1983	50,000,000
10. Back to the Future; 1985	101,955,795	28. Superman II; 1981 .	65,100,000	45. Love Story; 1970 . .	49,400,000
11. Grease; 1978 . . .	96,300,000	29. On Golden Pond; 1981	63,990,088	46. Heaven Can Wait; 1978	47,900,000
12. Toolsie; 1982 . . .	95,268,806	30. Kramer Vs. Kramer; 1979	59,986,335	47. The Color Purple; 1985	47,800,000
13. The Exorcist; 1973	89,000,000 .	31. Smokey and the Bandit; 1977 . . .	59,859,515	48. Blazing Saddles; 1974	47,800,000
14. The Godfather; 1972	86,275,000	32. One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest; 1975	59,220,000	49. The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas; 1982 . . .	47,548,136
15. Superman; 1978 . .	82,800,000	33. Nine To Five; 1980	58,364,420	50. Doctor Zhivago; 1965	47,073,000
16. Close Encounters of the Third Kind; 1977/1980	82,750,000	34. Stir Crazy; 1980 . .			
17. Top Gun; 1986 . . .	82,000,000	35. The Karate Kid Part II; 1986	56,938,752		
18. Rambo: First Blood		36. Star Trek; 1979 . .	56,000,000		

Source: Variety, January 1987.

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D

MOTION PICTURE PRODUCTION COSTS

<u>Year</u>	<u>Cost</u>
1941	\$ 400,000
1942	1,000,000
1972	1,890,000
1974	2,500,000
1978	4,000,000
1980	8,500,000
1981	10,000,000
1982	11,300,000
1983	11,800,000
1984	12,000,000
1985	12,000,000

Source: MPAA

APPENDIX E



APPENDIX E
DOMESTIC FILM PRODUCTIONS

<u>Year</u>	<u>U.S. Produced</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>U.S. Produced</u>
1917	687	1951	391
1918	841	1952	324
1919	646	1953	344
1920	796	1954	253
1921	854	1956	254
1922	748	1957	300
1923	576	1958	241
1924	579	1959	187
1925	579	1960	154
1926	740	1961	131
1927	678	1962	147
1928	641	1963	121
1929	562	1964	141
1930	509	1965	153
1931	501	1966	156
1932	489	1967	178
1933	507	1968	180
1934	480	1969	232
1935	525	1970	186
1936	522	1971	233
1937	538	1972	229
1939	483	1973	295
1940	477	1974	280
1941	492	1975	362
1942	488	1976	353
1943	397	1977	311
1944	401	1978	217
1945	350	1979	189
1946	378	1980	192
1947	369	1981	173
1948	366	1982	170
1949	356	1983	164
1950	383	1984	169
		1985	178
		1986	161
		1987	155

Source: Steinberg, Cobbett, Film Facts. New York: Facts on File, 1980.

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