

MILESTONE
PRESENTS A
FILM BY

**SHIRLEY
CLARKE**

STARRING WARREN FINNERTY CARL LEE
GARRY GOODROW THE FREDDIE REDD QUARTET
WITH JACKIE MCLEAN



THE
CONNECTION

A MILESTONE FILM RELEASE • A FILM BY SHIRLEY CLARKE • BASED ON THE FILM BY JACK GELBER • PRODUCED BY LEWIS ALLEN AND SHIRLEY CLARKE
CINEMATOGRAPHY BY ARTHUR J. LUNNIZ • ART DIRECTION BY ALBERT BREINER • STARRING WARREN FINNERTY • FREDDIE REDD • JACKIE MCLEAN • UTRONE RAPHIEL
GARRY GOODROW • JAMES ANDERSON • CARL LEE • BARBARA WINCHESTER • ROSCIE LEE BROWNE • WILLIAM HOFFFIELD • LARRY BUTCH • AND MICHAEL MATTOX
MUSIC COMPOSED BY FREDDIE REDD • PRESENTATION FINNED BY FILM FOUNDATION • RECEIVED BY UCLA FILM & TELEVISION ARCHIVE • PRESERVATION BY PROSS LIPMAN
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UCLA  MILESTONE
film & video

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The Connection

Crew

Production Designer Richard Sylbert
Associate Editor and Script Clerk..... Patricia Jaffe
Art Director..... Albert Brenner
Associate Producer James Di Gangi
Director of Photography Arthur J. Ornitz
Produced by Lewis Allen and Shirley Clarke
Written by Jack Gelber
Directed and Edited by Shirley Clarke

An Allen-Hodgdon Production

Cast

Warren Finnerty Leach
Jerome Raphael..... Solly
Garry Goodrow Ernie
James Anderson Sam
Carl Lee..... Cowboy
Barbara Winchester Sister Salvation
Henry Proach Harry
Roscoe Browne J.J. Burden
William Redfield Jim Dunn

Musicians

Freddie Redd Piano
Jackie McLean Saxophone
Larry Ritchie Drums
Michael Mattos..... Bass

Music composed by Freddie Redd Recorded by The Recording Studio

©1961 The Connection Company. USA. 103 minutes.

New York Film Premiere: October 3, 1962. Closed: October 3, 1962.

Based on Jack Gelber's play "The Connection," originally produced at The Living Theater.

The Connection was preserved by the UCLA Film & Television Archive with funding by the Film Foundation. It was restored from the original 35mm acetate picture and soundtrack negatives and a 35mm composite master positive. Laboratory services were provided by FotoKem Film and Video. Sound services were provided by Audio Mechanics, DJ Audio Inc, and YCM Laboratories. The original negative for *The Connection* was generously donated to the Archive by the late Lewis Allen with the British Film Institute providing a fine grain master positive. The preservationist was Ross Lipman of UCLA. New 35mm Internegative by FotoKem donated by Milestone Film & Video. Special thanks are given to the British Film institute, Wendy Clarke, Simon Daniel, Sharon Fallon, Lewis Allen Productions, Peter Orecktino, John Polito and Walt Rose. The 2K digital preservation was performed at Modern VideoFilm in Glendale, California from the restoration 35mm fine grain. Thanks there to Vincent Pirozzi, Tal Fiala and Narbeh Tatoussian.

***The Connection* is the first release of PROJECT SHIRLEY, a four-year mission by Milestone to explore the life and work of Shirley Clarke by partnering with archives around the world to bring out the best versions of her films. Milestone has already acquired four of her features, more than a dozen of her short films and has gained access to her home movies, letters and files.**

Synopsis

"Is Cowboy back?"

Eight drug addicts are gathered in a Greenwich Village loft apartment belonging to Leach. They have accepted a fee from Jim Dunn, a self-righteous young documentarian, and his cameraman J.J. Burden to film them. They are waiting for their drug connection to arrive with the heroin. While the four musicians play jazz, Dunn asks the others to relate anecdotes about themselves and their backgrounds. Even as he is ordering them around the apartment, Dunn encourages the men to act *normally*; to do whatever they would be doing any other day.

Finally the connection — Cowboy, a black man dressed all in white and wearing dark sunglasses — arrives. Much to the junkies' consternation, he has brought with him an elderly woman dressed in a pseudo-Salvation Army uniform. Cowboy explains to them privately that he invited "Sister Salvation" upstairs for a cup of tea to throw off the cops who were following him.

As Cowboy leads the addicts one by one into the bathroom for a fix, the bewildered Sister Salvation comes to the conclusion that they are drinking and that she is in a den of sin. Cowboy calms her down and asks that Leach make her the cup of tea he had promised her. After she leaves, the addicts start to needle the staid and nervous Dunn to try some heroin for himself — so he can have a deeper understanding of his subject. Meanwhile, Leach complains to Cowboy that his fix isn't working and he was cheated.

Dunn decides to try the heroin and after shooting up, he vomits. Before nodding off, he tells Burden to take over the filming. While Dunn is out, Cowboy hands Leach another fix. Leach shoots up and overdoses. Cowboy and the others have to work to bring him back. Dunn awakes and tells Burden to keep the film footage they have shot.

Preservation History

UCLA Film & Television Archive preserved *The Connection* with funding by the Film Foundation. The picture was restored from the original 35mm acetate picture and soundtrack negatives and a 35mm composite master positive. Primary source was the original 35mm black-and-white picture negative, donated by Lewis Allen Productions. Due to scratching near the end of the film, an alternate source was a 35mm fine grain master positive loaned by the British Film Institute. Reels nine and ten of the fine grain (corresponding to the 2000'-reel five of the edited negative) were copied to dupe negative, and the dupe negative was then assembled into the 2000'-reel configuration. The resulting reel was used as a B-roll, to allow insertion of the dupe material at the appropriate sections without damaging the original negative. A preservation credit sequence was also built into a B-roll to be used in conjunction with reel 1 of the original negative. The original negative reels 1-5 and the B-roll negative of reels 1 and 5 were used to strike viewing print. They were also used to strike preservation fine grain master positive. The sound source for the preservation was the original track negative, donated by Lewis Allen Productions. This was printed to an up-and-down track positive. This was then transferred, unprocessed, to 8mm DAT. After digital processing, the resulting cleaned up version was output to 8mm DAT. This was used to make a 35mm fullcoat magnetic track, which was then used to make the 35mm re-recorded optical track negative. This was then used for the soundtrack of 35mm print.

Laboratory services were provided by FotoKem Film and Video. Sound services were provided by Audio Mechanics, DJ Audio Inc. and YCM Laboratories. The original negative for *The Connection* was donated to the Archive by Lewis Allen while the British Film Institute provided a fine grain master positive that was used to preserve the last few minutes of the film as the negative had been previously damaged. In 2012, Milestone contributed the money to create a new preservation 35mm negative. The preservationist was Ross Lipman of UCLA. Special thanks are given to the British Film institute, Wendy Clarke, Simon Daniel, Sharon Fallon, Lewis Allen Productions, Peter Orecktino, John Polito and Walt Rose. The 2K digital preservation was produced by Milestone and UCLA at Modern VideoFilm in Glendale, California, from the restoration 35mm fine grain. Thanks there to Vincent Pirozzi, Tal Fiala and Narbeh Tatoussian.

The Making of The Connection



Shirley Clarke on the set of *The Connection*

Shirley Clarke was at the crossroads of her career. Her short experimental films had won her worldwide acclaim, but she wanted to take on longer and more political challenges. In 1958 a group of young film artists including Clarke, Willard van Dyke, Richard Leacock, D.A. Pennebaker and Albert Maysles had formed Filmmakers, Inc., a cooperative designed to share offices, equipment and post-production facilities. It was there that these experimental filmmakers honed the concept of *cinéma vérité*. For Leacock the purpose of *cinéma vérité* was “to find some important aspect of our society by watching our society, by watching how things really happen as opposed to the social image that people hold about the way things are supposed to happen.” (James Blue’s “One Man’s Truth—An Interview with Richard Leacock,” *Film Comment*, Spring 1965.) In many ways, *cinéma vérité* was a rejection of the Flaherty-style documentary that, many young filmmakers believed, dishonestly presented a planned and scripted film as objective reality.

[This rejection lasted until the early part of this century when a revival of interest in Milestone’s re-releases of *Killer of Sheep*, *The Exiles* and *On the Bowery* influenced filmmakers like Matt Porterfield to adopt this hybrid form. A.O Scott called it “American Neo Realism” in an influential article in *The New York Times* that became a debate about the genre with *New Yorker Magazine*’s Richard Brody in his [response](#).]

Filmmakers, Inc. became a vital center of the New American Cinema where the original founders were later joined by Fred Wiseman, Charlotte Zwerin, Joyce Chopra and John Cassavetes. In fact, Clarke lent Cassavetes her camera equipment to shoot his first film, *Shadows*.

Clarke, however, contested the idea that *cinéma vérité* was a reliable replacement for traditional documentary filmmaking. She questioned the possibility of clinical objectivity when subjects are interacting with the camera and the filmmaker is shaping the final product through editing. Like her favorite film character, Felix the Cat, Clarke was too playful and too rebellious to accept *any* dogma.



Actor Harry Proach (the man with the record player) of the Living Theatre in Washington Square Park on July 19, 1959

When Jack Gelber's play "The Connection" opened in New York, Clarke discovered the perfect vehicle to explore her ideas. The Living Theatre produced Gelber's play in 1959 to audiences and critics who were at first bewildered and/or upset by it. Sticking it out, the play slowly gained critical acclaim and larger audiences, but it remained highly controversial. Set in a squalid Greenwich Village apartment, a group of drug addicts are waiting for their connection to bring their fixes. Many of them are jazz musicians between gigs and they perform during the play — the score written by and performed by Freddie Redd. With the collection of junkies are two men in suits.

"Hello there, I'm Jim Dunn and I'm producing 'The Connection.' This is Jaybird, the author. Hardly a day goes by without the daily papers having some item involving narcotics. Any number of recent movies, plays and books have been concerned with the peculiar problems of this anti-social habit. Unfortunately few of these have anything to do with narcotics. Sometimes it is treated as exotica and often as erotica. Jaybird has spent some months living among drug addicts. With the help of [name of director] we have selected to improvise on Jaybird's themes. I can assure you that this play does not have a housewife who will call the police and say, 'Would you please come quickly to the [name of theatre]. My husband is a junkie.' Please turn the house lights down."

And thus begins a play within a play within a jazz concert — a drug-addled crossing of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "Waiting for Godot." At each performance around the country (and ever since) this introduction included the actual names of the director and theater. And at every performance in-season, there would be a question on a local baseball game and that day's score would be real as well. The director and author are said to be there in the apartment to guide the junkies in a series of improvisational themes to reveal their lives and inner thoughts. "The Connection" went on to win the 1960 Village Voice Obie Awards for Best Play, Best Production (Julian Beck & Judith Malina) and Best Actor (Warren Finnerty). The play was a blessing for jazz saxophonist Jackie McLean as his drug arrest in 1957 had cost him his cabaret license, barring him from performing in clubs. The play gave him two years work on stage and he went on to perform in Clarke's film version as well.

"At first, the actors had no idea how to act in that particular situation. They didn't have to act like musicians, they had to act like junkies, and I guess many of them had never been around or seen junkies. But the majority of the musicians, even the ones who don't use, can mimic a junkie, and we had to show the actors how to portray them. I lost all perspective as far as the message of that play is concerned. I was in it too long." — Jackie McLean in Black Music by A.B. Spellman.

It couldn't have passed Clarke's notice that in Dunn's introduction to the story, author Jaybird has just spent months among the addicts. Clarke's friend and fellow New American Cinema pioneer Lionel Rogosin had just recently gained fame getting to know the Skid Row bums he filmed for his award-winning *On the Bowery*. (It should be noted that living with one's subjects had been adopted by documentarians since the silent cinema, including Edward S. Curtis in 1914 with *In the Land of the Headhunters* and the films of Robert Flaherty.)

A film adaptation of "The Connection" would be the vehicle for Clarke's interrogation of the authoritative presence behind the camera in cinéma vérité films. It was a play about social outsiders and it broke through the proscenium — audience members were confronted by the junkies not only from the stage but in the lobby during intermission, when an actor would beg for money and heckle the theatregoers about their own "respectable" addictions to alcohol, religion and to "the next dollar, the next new coat." During the second act, an audience member would stand up and interrupt the performance. In the original production, the audience member, in his first professional role, was a young Martin Sheen who reportedly also doubled as the Living Theatre's janitor. Clarke wanted to do the same kind of proscenium-breaking with her film.



Shirley Clarke with Jack Gelber

Clarke's producer would be Lewis Allen, a gentlemanly, brilliant man who was working in theater. Allen later went on to acclaim as the film producer of *Lord of the Flies*, *The Balcony*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Queen*, *Never Cry Wolf*, *Swimming to Cambodia* and others. Allen would borrow a practice from the theater world by raising money through offering backers a profit-sharing limited partnership. This was the first time this form of financing appeared in the indie film world and it would become a staple of fundraising for years to come. (It has evolved with the Internet age into crowdfunding sites like Kickstarter and Indiegogo.) Altogether, the film was budgeted at \$167,000 with some of the main costs listed here:

Producer and Staff.....	\$5,000.00
Story Rights and Scenario	\$7,500.00
Director	\$10,000.00
Main Cast.....	\$18,570.00
(10 weeks at \$375 per week, plus 1 week rehearsal)	
(3 weeks at \$375 per week, plus 1 week rehearsal)	
(2 weeks at \$375 per week, plus 1 week rehearsal)	
Cowboy & Sister Salvation.....	\$2,250.00
Harry	\$750.00
Production Manager.....	\$5,000.00
Cinematographer	\$3,750.00

Camera Equipment	\$3,250.00	
Sound Equipment	\$1,500.00	
Art Director	\$3,000.00	
Sets.....	\$4,050.00	(Chief Carpenter, Grip, Electrician, Scenic artist, Painters)
Lumber & Materials	\$1,250.00	
Set Rental	\$2,250.00	
Wardrobe purchases.....	\$150.00	
Raw Stock and Lab	\$11,515.00	
Title Design	\$1,000.00	
Opticals & Special Effects	\$1,000.00	
Film Editor.....	\$3,500.00	
Composer	\$3,000.00	
Sound royalties	\$300.00	
Studio Rental	\$7,400.00	



Clarke and Allen decided the film shoot would be a Union operation, even though it increased the budget considerably — and they planned on filming on a *very* tight budget. It was even noted in the budget estimates that any script changes would have to be considered as to their effect on estimated costs. The budget included a contingency, but a much smaller one than normal for a picture this size. (One thing they could not foresee was Jackie McLean’s continuous need for money. According to Garry Goodrow, McLean would daily ask associate producer James Di Gangi for cash. Finally, Di Gangi refused him. The next day, Jackie McLean came to the set without his saxophone and handed Di Gangi a pawn ticket. Needless to say, there was a rush to get his instrument back.) At the same time, the advantages of an experienced Union staff meant that Clarke could focus on the direction, as technical details would be handled professionally. As in the play, Freddie Redd wrote the music and most of the band and the actors were the same.

At first, Clarke had planned to create a real *cinéma vérité* feel to the film by shooting on the streets and in a real apartment. But because she had never shot a fiction film, she worried about getting good sound quality. So instead, they built a set that was designed to look realistic. Jack Gelber was hired to adapt his script for the film. Clarke also enlisted cinematographer Arthur J. Ornitz, which proved to be an excellent choice. Ornitz’s first feature was Joris Ivens’ *The Power and the Land* in 1940 and he became known for gritty New York-style camerawork, best seen in films such as *Requiem for a Heavyweight*, *Minnie and Moskowitz* and *Serpico*.



To go with the idea of a film within a film, Clarke and Ornitz decided to employ hand-held as well as studio cameras (see above). Black-and-white film stock and a rundown naturalistic set added to the impression of documentary realism. Ornitz also worked to make it appear that the film was shot with natural lighting. Production designer Albert Brenner noted there were moments of difficulty between Ornitz and Clarke on the set. And Ornitz's widow, Dr. Hilda Wane Ornitz wrote: "the stories about how demanding he could be are still repeated by those who knew him. He was very independent and one of a kind." But however contentious, the collaboration between the neophyte feature director and the experienced DP proved fruitful — the coordination between camerawork, choreography and lighting are dazzling.

In adapting his play into a film, Gelber decided to have a film director and cinematographer as the main instigators of the action so that they could break through the film proscenium. To further the illusion of reality, the filmmakers intentionally left in artifacts of filmmaking — film rolls suddenly end in black leader; sound sync beeps are heard; and light flairs, dust, scratches and out-of-focus moments are preserved. This roughness led many critics to assume that the film was improvised. However, like the camera movement and the choreography of the actors, Clarke carefully planned *everything* in ***The Connection***.

When the film was completed, getting it released proved a long and arduous road. After much pleading and hard work by its main champion, *Variety's* Gene Moscovitz, the Cannes Film Festival agreed to show the film. Clarke traveled to France with some of the heroes of the Beats, including Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso and Peter Orlovsky. They took over Cannes and the festival became a sort of a celebration of their ethos — and the film's reputation grew even more closely entwined with its hipster associations. ***The Connection*** went on to garner great excitement and won the International Critics Award. Still, Clarke kept fine-tuning the film after Cannes. The original running time there was 110 minutes. She did tighten the film by seven minutes before the American release — some of the audience in Cannes complained of too many camera swish pans — but there was no alteration to the controversial elements. There is evidence that she understood the storm ahead, but it was not her style to back down to any challenge.

"All the critics were invited to come to dinner and meet me and he [Cannes festival head Robert Fauve Le Bret] said, "Any film you ever do, Madame, from now on is invited to play at Cannes." I mean I was insane. I was out of my mind. I couldn't figure out what was happening at all. And then we came back to the United States of America and guess what? Censorship!"

Banned!

Shit! That word now is repeated so many times in almost every Hollywood film that it's possibly a requirement. Back in 1960, however, its use in ***The Connection*** in reference to heroin disgusted many of the critics — and worse, it offended the New York Board of Regents.

It took a brave (and perhaps foolhardy) director with her first feature film and her reputation on the line to take on the Board of Regents and to try to abolish the authority of a long-standing government organization. But Clarke did have the of advantage a liberal-thinking producer with a long list of backers — none too heavily invested to worry about the long delay in releasing the film while they fought it out in the courts.

The Connection had long been ready to release when the producers held a May 4, 1962 preview screening, attended by an incredible list of cultural icons, including James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Jules Feiffer, Brendon Gill, Nat Hentoff, Langston Hughes, Alfred Kazin, Norman Mailer, Norman Podhoretz, William Styron, Gore Vidal, George Plimpton, Lorraine Hansberry, Allen Ginsberg, Clay Felker, Jean Sheppard, Marlene Dietrich and Jonas Mekas.

But the months passed and still ***The Connection*** did not open. Along with the aforementioned word, the Board of Rejects objected to brief shots of suggestive photos in pornographic magazines glimpsed in the film. Clarke remained steadfast in her refusal to bend to the censors. Associate editor Pat Jaffe reported that she and Clarke *did* create a separate audio track on the sound master that included all the dialogue lines with objectionable words, just in case they did lose their court fight. They called it the “shit track.” But to actually give in to the censors? Only if there was *no* other alternative...

A November 3, 1962 letter to the investors outlined the course of events:

Last August, our distributor, Films Around the World, signed a contract with the newly-completed D.W. Griffith Theatre. The manager of the theatre, Henry Rosenberg, although well aware of the controversy involved, agreed not only to open his theatre with ***The Connection***, but to pay an advance of \$20,000 to our distributor. However, it took until September 27th for the City to grant the theatre an operating license; whereupon the opening was set for Wednesday, October 3rd. Both our legal position and our publicity policy made it necessary to open the film quickly ... On Wednesday afternoon, after two showings of the film, a temporary injunction was issued by the State Supreme Court Judge MacAffer which resulted in the closing of the theatre.

It was more dramatic than the letter suggested. Although the theater had an operating license, the film did *not* have permission from the Regents Board to screen. In a *direct* challenge to the ban and to state censorship of films, on October 3, 1962, Shirley Clarke's debut feature, ***The Connection*** opened — and closed — at the D.W. Griffith in New York City. After just two matinees, the screenings were halted, the theater closed and the projectionist arrested. The letter continues:

Friday morning, our attorney, Ephraim London, went before Judge MacAffer in Kingston, New York to plead our case. The injunction was upheld and we were forbidden to resume showings pending the Board of Regents appeal in New York Court of Appeals.

Unable to get it shown in theaters in New York, they tried to have it shown on October 19 at the Judson Memorial Church, an institution dedicated to progressive change as well as to promoting counterculture dance and music. In 1960, the church had started the first drug treatment center in Greenwich Village. Since a church showing of the film was not in a theatrical setting, it should not have fallen under the jurisdiction of the Board of Regents. However, the authorities also stopped this screening.

The filmmakers' fight against censorship was audacious, but it came at a severe price. By the time the New York State Supreme Court ruled in favor of the film on October 23rd and it reopened at the D.W. Griffith on November 7th, the mainstream critics had already weighed in — and against — ***The Connection's*** bold language and storyline. Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* wrote that the film offered “*a forthright and repulsive observation of a sleazy, snarling group of narcotic addicts.*” The following week, Jonas Mekas in the *Village Voice* raged that his fellow critics were “deaf, blind and dumb.” But by then it was too late. Audience interest had waned and the film never recovered from that initial onslaught. Although popular in Europe, ***The Connection*** never found success in America. Fifty years later, the film has yet to break even.

Shirley Clarke (October 2, 1919 – September 23, 1997)



“A Poor Farmer went over to see his neighbor the Rich Farmer, to ask his advice. His farm was doing very badly. How could he save it from ruin, he wanted to know. The Rich Farmer gave him a sealed silver box. ‘Take this box,’ he said. ‘It is a magic box. Do not open it. But three times a day, for three months walk around your farm holding it, and at the end of the three months come to see me again.’

At the end of the three months the Poor Farmer went back to Rich Farmer, who asked him how his farm was doing. ‘Better,’ said the Poor Farmer. ‘Much better. Now what shall I do?’ ‘Take the magic box with you again,’ instructed the Rich Farmer, ‘and again walk around your farm with it three times a day for three months and at the end of that time come back to see me.’

Again at the end of three months the Poor Farmer came back as he had pledged. ‘And how is your farm doing now?’ asked the Rich Farmer. ‘It is doing wonderfully!’ cried the Poor Farmer excitedly, shaking his head in amazement. ‘This magic box you gave me is truly remarkable. What is in it?’ he asked eagerly.

‘Nothing is in it,’ replied the Rich Farmer. And then he added, ‘Always remember, in farming or in business, or in anything you do in life, you must work but you must always carry your magic box.’

This is the story that Shirley Clarke’s beloved maternal grandfather liked to tell his workers and his family, according to her sister Elaine. Little could he have known that his granddaughter would take the story of the magic box to heart and later carry one around to world acclaim.

Shirley Brimberg was born in 1919 New York to a very well-to-do family. The first child, she was soon followed by two sisters, Elaine and Betty. Her father Samuel Nathan Brimberg was a Polish-Jewish immigrant who made his fortune in clothing manufacturing. Her mother, Florence, came from wealth as well. Florence’s father, an immigrant from Latvia with a genius for metal work, had made his own fortune as the industrial inventor of the Parker Kalon tap screw for metal. (Much of his story and the three sisters’ early childhood can be discovered in Elaine Brimberg Dundy’s excellent autobiography, *Life Itself!*)

Shirley was an indifferent student with learning disabilities — most likely dyslexia. She only learned to read in fifth Grade and to write in seventh. *“My parents spent a fortune on tutors in order to get me promoted from one grade to the next.”*

After her father lost his fortune in the stock market crash of 1929, he quickly (according to Elaine, that night) became angry and violent, taking out his frustrations on his three daughters. Elaine wrote: *“Shirley argued with Daddy, pitted herself against him, knowing full well the denunciations and derisive mockeries she was subjecting herself to. It made dinner a living hell. But she stood her ground. Nevertheless, I know his constant disapproval took its toll on her. She was wounded by him in a way that would last for the rest of her life... During her film career this same spirit of rebellion made her dig in...”* (From *Life Itself!*, page 40.)

Three years later, Brimberg left the clothing business to head Universal Steel Equipment. He regained much of his fortune and the family moved to an apartment at 1185 Fifth Avenue. But the beatings and the family’s deep unhappiness continued.



Early home movies show a young Shirley deeply tanned and prancing and somersaulting with her sisters on the front lawn of their summer home (see above). There is a joy in her movement. In high school at the prestigious Lincoln School, she discovered herself.

In a later interview, she related: *“To be popular in your class at Lincoln, you didn’t have to be rich or good looking or have famous parents — though there were a lot of students who had all three — but you had to do something you would be known for. We had a class poet, a class chess player, a class actor, a class chemical engineer, and so on. But there was one thing we didn’t have.”*

And that ... was a dancer.

Dance was to be Clarke’s salvation through her difficult teenage years. She attended a number of colleges including Stephens College, Bennington College, the University of North Carolina and Johns Hopkins University. After she had taken all the school’s dance courses, she would move on to another. Deciding that she was ready for professional instruction, she left college and returned to New York to study dance with some of the major figures in the field including Martha Graham, Hanya Holm and Doris Humphrey. Clarke also took on several administrative roles in the dance community. The year 1942 was momentous as she staged her first choreography at the 92nd Street YMHA and, to escape her family (she later said), she married lithographer Bert Clarke. He was described as a charming man, a gourmet cook and a talented book designer with his own printing press. He was fifteen years her senior. Their daughter Wendy was born two years later.



A previously unpublished photo of a young Shirley Clarke dancing at the University of North Carolina (Courtesy of Wendy Clarke.)

However, by the early 1950s, with a young daughter and an aging body, Clarke decided to try filmmaking. The Brimberg family had always had a motion picture camera — there are home movies dating back to the early 1920s — and Shirley had received a 16mm camera as a wedding present.

“Most of the dance films I’d seen were awful and I figured I could do better. Essentially, film’s a choreographic medium.” — Los Angeles Times interview, 1976

Shirley Clarke started out with what she knew best — dance and movement — and she quickly became an esteemed filmmaker at a time when only a handful of women worked in the field. (There were Mary Ellen Bute, Maya Deren, Ida Lupino and Helen Levitt to name a few.) She studied filmmaking with Hans Richter at the City College of New York, and made her first film, an adaptation of Daniel Nagrin’s ballet *Dance in the Sun*, in 1953. The film featured fluid intercuts from interior and exterior locations and did *not* (as dance films traditionally had) cut between long shots and close-ups of the dancers, which Clarke believed broke up the original patterns of expression in the choreography. She believed that “dance as it existed on the stage had to be destroyed in order to have a good film and not just a rather poor document.” (From Gretchen Berg’s “Interview with Shirley Clarke,” *Film Culture*, no. 44, Spring 1967: 52.)

Clarke’s conversations with fellow dancer and filmmaker Maya Deren encouraged her to further her progress. There was a love-hate relationship between the two women pioneer filmmakers (Deren reportedly invited Clarke to come to her apartment to view Deren’s films — and then charged her admission), but Deren inspired Clarke to see natural human movement as a form of dance as pure as the abstract movements she had previously been filming. Dance, in Deren’s interpretation, was an extension of the human consciousness in planes not “anchored in conventional spatiotemporal logic.” Clarke’s *In Paris Parks* (1954) manifested this concept, although its style differed greatly from Deren’s because of its disregard for a rigid structure of motion and because of its upbeat jazz music, which reflected the idea of abstract movement itself. Clarke would later go on to further include jazz, which itself challenged traditional values in music, in almost all her soundtracks. She *definitely* aimed to challenge established values in cinema in her own work.

In Paris Parks is one of her finest early films and it all started by accident. Clarke had traveled to Paris to make a film about the famed mime Étienne DeCroux. She arrived with her camera, her equipment and her daughter Wendy in tow, only to find that he had gone off to Italy. She was in a fury, but with nothing to do, she found herself taking Wendy to the park. On the second day, she realized that the playing of the children was in itself a dance. So she made “*a dance of life*.”

Clarke returned to New York to become a full-time filmmaker, enrolling in the City College of New York’s film program. She joined the Independent Film Maker’s Association and entered her dance films into

competitions. Her third film, *Bullfight*, is the only filmed performance of the legendary choreographer Anna Sokolow. Its success, winning awards at the 1955 Edinburgh and Venice Film Festivals, along with awards for her other short films, solidified Clarke's career. By 1958, Clarke had become a leading figure in the world of avant-garde film.

Her 1957 film, *A Moment in Love* was named one of the ten best nontheatrical films of the year by *The New York Times*. Clarke was also chosen, along with other filmmakers, to create short film loops depicting scenes of American life for the United States Pavilion at the 1958 Brussels World's Fair. She became known as an advocate for the small independent film community in New York, and soon after began to turn towards social issues in her filmmaking.

In 1958, she, Irving Jacoby and Willard van Dyke started a short film on 666 Fifth Avenue (known as the Tishman Building), then a year under construction. Working in 35mm for the first time, she called it "a musical comedy about the building of a skyscraper." They received an Academy Award nomination for *Skyscraper* (1960). As her fame grew, so did her ambition.

Clarke was now a vital part of the burgeoning post-war American film movement. She was one of the first—and the only woman—signers of the New American Cinema manifesto in 1961. She, like many of her contemporaries, was influenced by the works of Lionel Rogosin (*On the Bowery*), James Agee (*The Quiet One*), Helen Leavitt (*In the Street*), Roberto Rossellini (especially *Open City*) and the cinema vérité filmmakers.

Clarke's sister Elaine (married to critic Kenneth Tynan and a noted author in her own right) wrote in her autobiography that she was the first to suggest to Shirley that she consider a play by a friend of hers, Jack Gelber, for her first feature. Controversial from the start, "The Connection" had opened to negative reviews, but within a few months, had become the hit of New York theatre. Clarke had seen the play but wasn't as certain as her sister. Elaine convinced Shirley that the play had a ready-made audience and a cast that was perfect for the film. Shirley went back to see the play again and left thoroughly convinced and excited. Elaine set up a meeting between the playwright and the filmmaker. Gelber later described Clarke as "a rushing river. Warm, quick, garrulous, laughing at the slightest provocation, she seemed ready to jump at any new experience out there."

Clarke and co-producer Lewis Allen had a novel idea to raise the money — they would fund the film the same way producers found backers for a Broadway play — by reaching out to hundreds of small subscribers. At the time, this kind of fundraising was unheard of for film. And like the play, it wasn't the only thing that was unconventional about the project.



Taking the raw, graphic depiction of drug addicts that he had written for the stage, Gelber and Clarke changed the character of the director Jim Dunn to a filmmaker and added a level of humor by poking fun at the world of cinema vérité movement. And while constricted to a single set, Clarke combined the French New Wave's mobile camera with a whirling choreography of movement and jazz unseen in independent film before. The film was a hit at Cannes, but it was promptly banned by government censor boards for indecent language and a struggle ensued to have it theatrically screened in the United States. After a two-year battle, the producers and director ultimately won in court and as important as it was judicially, it was sadly a case of too little too late as the film lost its timeliness and failed at the box office. Among filmmakers, it was highly influential but the film has been sadly out of distribution since the early 1980s.

"For years I'd felt like an outsider, so I identified with the problems of minority groups. I thought it was more important to be some kind of goddamned junkie who felt alienated rather than to say I am an alienated woman who doesn't feel part of the world and who wants in." — Los Angeles Times interview, 1976



"Right now, I'm revolting against the conventions of movies. Who says a film has to cost a million dollars and be safe and innocuous enough to satisfy every 12-year-old in America?... We're creating a movie equivalent of Off Broadway, fresh and experimental and personal. The lovely thing is that I'm alive at just the time when I can do this." — Shirley Clarke, 1962

Clarke's next film, *The Cool World*, was based on a Warren Miller novel. Significantly, it was another collaboration with actor Carl Lee. The son of actor Canada Lee, Carl had been one of the stars of *The Connection* (as Cowboy) and during the filming the pair fell in love. Clarke told her sister that he was the great love that she had been waiting for all her life. After the screening of *The Connection* at Cannes, Shirley took off with Carl for a year in Europe. Elaine later wrote that by that time the polite young man she had known was already heavily into drugs and dealing. Carl and Shirley's relationship was tumultuous but lasted more than twenty years until his death in 1986.

The Cool World was another melding of harsh reality (this time, set in Harlem), music and choreography. Produced by Fred Wiseman, it has rarely been seen since the 1960s. The film opened at the Venice Film Festival. Clarke attended the festival with Carl, her mother, her daughter, Wendy and her niece, Tracy Tynan. (Tynan went on to marry filmmaker Jim McBride whose film *David Holzman's Diary* is reminiscent of Clarke's work.) Sadly, *The Cool World* is now only available in worn 16mm prints from Wiseman's Zipporah Films.

In 1964, Clarke directed *Robert Frost: A Lover's Quarrel with the World*. The famed poet was 88 years old and it was filmed very shortly before his death. The film revealed Frost's warmth and charm as he appeared at speaking engagements at Amherst and Sarah Lawrence Colleges.

Clarke combined this footage with conversations about Frost's work, scenes of his life in rural Vermont and reminiscences about his career. The poet is also seen receiving an award from President Kennedy and touring an aircraft carrier. Shot for public television, Clarke reportedly struggled with her producer and unhappy with the final film. But *Robert Frost: A Lover's Quarrel with the World* won the Academy Award for Best Documentary that year and as her daughter Wendy writes, "Shirley did consider [it an honor] that she won an Academy Award for this film and even went to Los Angeles to the Academy Awards. She sat just behind Danny Kaye."

The stress of finishing and releasing *The Cool World* (she had many arguments with her producer Wiseman), difficulties with *Robert Frost* and the death of her father brought about a crisis in Clarke's life. In January 1965, she left Lee and entered a rehab facility in Connecticut. After that, with the help of Elaine, she moved into the Hotel Chelsea, a legendary haven for artists, authors, musicians and members of New York's arts community. Shirley lived in number 822 — one of the coveted "penthouses" with access from the roof that were slightly larger than the tiny rooms in the rest of the building — and her apartment quickly became a focal point for the New York cultural scene. Elaine remembers that Shirley had two poodles in those days. Their dinner — hamburgers without the buns or fries — was delivered every day from the Chelsea's legendary restaurant, El Quixote.

Clarke's fourth feature, *Portrait of Jason*, proved to be a completely different kind of project from her other films. It is perhaps her masterpiece.

Stripping away the contrivances of fiction, Clarke pursued the purest of cinéma vérité while still challenging its perception. *Portrait of Jason* would be one person, one interview and made to look unedited. (The film, however, was brilliantly cut by Clarke and two assistants over the course of several months.) Clarke and Lee chose as their subject Jason Holliday (formerly Aaron Payne), a gay African-American cabaret performer with a knack for drama. They filmed him over the course of one evening in her Chelsea Hotel apartment. Holliday's stories — involving racism, homophobia, parental abuse, drugs, sex and prostitution — would have been shocking for the day if his candor and humor had not charmed both the filmmaker and viewer. The film balances on a fine edge between truth and dramatic performance, tragedy and humor, trust and abuse. It remains a greatly respected and vital LGBT film. Although preserved by MoMA from a 35mm print, it too has not been commercially available since the 1980s. Milestone has acquired the rights to *Portrait of Jason*, and has undertaken a worldwide search for master materials.

But despite the success *Portrait of Jason*, Clarke found it increasingly difficult to find financing for her films. In 1969 Clarke received a grant from the Museum of Modern Art to develop a system where video could be used to edit film. Although a remarkably prescient idea, foreshadowing the introduction of non-linear editing systems by five years, it was too far ahead of the technological curve and failed. This video experiment, however, intrigued Clarke and she started experimenting with the medium. Around this time, she also became interested in making a documentary on controversial jazz figure, Ornette Coleman, but the project remained unfinished for many years.

"Video allows for an emotional response on the part of the person editing. What's going to change is that you're going to have the same kind of freedom that actors have on stage, yet you can record it. It allows the filmmaker to stay in the creative process longer." — Los Angeles Times interview, 1976

In the 1970s and early 1980s, Clarke experimented with live video performance, returning to her roots as a dancer. She formed the Teepee Video Space Troupe at her Hotel Chelsea penthouse. This group included video artists Andy Gurian, Bruce Ferguson, Stephanie Palewski, DeeDee Halleck, Vickie Polan, Shridher Bapat, Clarke's daughter Wendy Clarke and many others. The troupe worked in and around the hotel. Other participants included many of her neighbors in the building, including Viva, Arthur C. Clarke and Agnes Varda. (Around this time, Clarke appeared as herself in Varda's feature film, *Lion's Love*.) Many of these videos are in need of preservation — film historian and archivist Beth Capper is currently leading a project to catalog and preserve the documents and videos of the group. Please see her invaluable site <http://teepeevideospacetroupe.org/> for more information.

"If you're not a character when you're over sixty, you're nothing." — Shirley Clarke

Although Clarke approached Hollywood — and Hollywood approached her — several times, the opportunities all turned out to be work-for-hire jobs. It was something she wisely refused each time. But in an interview with Marjorie Rosen, Clarke remarked, "To tell the truth, if I had the talent or the particular abilities to make Hollywood movies, I guess I'd be making them — actually, as a moviegoer I personally would take the likes of *Duck Soup* over *The Connection* any day." It was also widely known that she had a deep love for anything related to Felix the Cat; the opening shot of the Felix Bar in *Ornette: Made in America* is an overt homage to the cartoon feline, much like a Hitchcock cameo. Wendy Clarke also points out that her mother often included images of human skulls in her films — not as symbols, but simply because she liked them.

Clarke became a professor teaching film and video production at UCLA in 1975 and stayed there for the next ten years. During this period, she also directed two video works based on the theater pieces by Sam Shepard and performed by Joe Chaikin. *Savage/Love* (1981) was a monologue by a murderer and *Tongues* (1983) has Chaikin speaking on life and death. In the 1980s, theater and film producer Kathelin Hoffman decided that she wanted to create a documentary about Ornette Coleman and discovered that Clarke had started one years before. She hired Clarke and worked with her to create the fifth and final feature film of Clarke's career, *Ornette: Made in America*. The documentary was very well received and marked a cinematic comeback of sorts for Clarke. Once again, she was on the cutting edge of film style — merging documentary techniques, video art, music videos and architecture into a meaningful statement. The celebratory premieres and career retrospectives that came with the film were personally satisfying for Clarke. She told her colleague DeeDee Halleck: *"Things are changing. I recently had five retrospectives. There's a sense of respect when I walk into a room. I was always on my way up and now I realize I'm no longer on my way up."*

However, in thinking about their days working together, the producer of *Ornette: Made in America*, Hoffman (now Kathelin Hoffman Gray) noted that Clarke was beginning to show signs of the Alzheimer's disease that soon took over the last decade of her life. As she reached her 70th birthday, Clarke was enjoying taking a look at the past and anticipating the future, just as memory loss started to take it all away from her.

When she became incapacitated, longtime friends David and Piper Cort took Shirley in to their home in Massachusetts. The three had met late in the 1970s through video and soon she and David were working on many projects together. Clarke spent her last years of her life with them, and the Corts made her as comfortable as they could. In 1997, Clarke had a stroke that left totally incapacitated. The Corts and her daughter Wendy filled Clarke's room at the Deaconess Palliative Hospice with photos and objects that she had cherished while friends and relatives visited. Fifteen days later, on September 23, Shirley Clarke died.

There were obituaries and tributes from around the world — many captured her talent, her generosity to her friends, her contribution to film and video and her ability to inspire the next generation of filmmakers. But for a filmmaker that specialized in subject matter that was intended to shock audiences, perhaps the most shocking aspect of Shirley Clarke's career is her lack of recognition in today's film history. Acknowledged by dozens of filmmakers as a major influence, there is still not one single book devoted to Shirley Clarke's life and work, nor has there been a significant release of her films. Milestone's PROJECT SHIRLEY is intended to present as many of her films in beautifully restored versions as possible and to bring her indomitable spirit back into this world.

Jackie McLean: Cadenza by Gary Giddins

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Jackie McLean, 1931-2006

In July 1975, Jackie McLean returned to action, after a seven-year lay-off spent teaching. The venue was New York's briefly reawakened Five Spot, on St. Mark's Place, packed every night with fans and musicians ignited by his combustible alto saxophone and dynamic septet. One evening, the band was finishing a set with a piece by Jackie's trumpet player, Terumaso Hino: McLean roared through a barbed and biting solo, then suddenly stopped and disappeared from the stage. He returned minutes later to play an even more rambunctious second solo, topped off with a mocking "Frere Jacques" quote.

Coming off the bandstand, he grabbed my arm (I had recently spent an afternoon interviewing him in his mother's sunny apartment, overlooking the Hudson River) and said, with characteristic delight, "Man, you just witnessed something historical. This was the reed I played that first solo on." He held it up triumphantly: It had a gash an eighth of an inch wide and just as deep from the top—by all mortal standards, an unplayable reed. Marveling anew, he added, "That's impossible. I'm gonna save this forever." At which point, someone noted that Sonny Rollins had been in to hear the set. "Yeah, Newk was there," Jackie said. "That's why I played the second solo. I didn't want Sonny to think I hadn't done my homework."

How could you not love a guy like that—passionate, smart, funny, boyishly sincere and always a bred in the bone *player*? We did love him, everything about him, growing up in the '60s with his Blue Note albums; reading his candidly recalled travails with drugs and law enforcement in A. B. Spellman's *Four Lives in the Bebop Business*; watching him in Shirley Clarke's film of the Jack Gelber play, *The Connection*, which had kept him working for four years when he didn't have a cabaret card, interpreting the uncanny Freddie Redd tunes that fixed McLean as everlastingly as a picture frame.

Above all, we loved his sound, which set his detractors' teeth on edge: dark and rich, round and hard, caustic but celebratory, and, oh yes, slightly sharp or maybe flat. It was—it is—the sound of a man with a mission, a storyteller who could stop time and sear the soul. Or as he put it, "It's just my sound." The sound was part of a style that included raspy asides and a motif-based approach to improvisation. A typical McLean solo will find him playing a fragment, and then repeating it even though the chords have changed, heightening the tension. Too melodic and intricate to qualify as mere riffs, these phrases keep the listener pleasurable suspended in the moment before McLean resolves them.

Born in 1931 in Harlem, a teenage wunderkind like his friend Sonny Rollins, he found his calling in 1944. His stepfather owned a record shop on 141st Street, and loved Armstrong, Holiday, Ellington, Dinah. Johnny Hodges, he told McLean, is "what an alto is supposed to sound like, not what you're doing." One day they were unpacking records in the store, and his stepfather said, "Here's a new one by Trummy Young." "It was 'Seventh Avenue.' When I heard the alto solo, I stopped working—I just couldn't believe it—and I said, 'Listen to *that* alto.' He said, 'That's a tenor.' I said, '*That's an alto!*' He took the record off, looked at it and said, 'Somebody named Charlie Parker, you're right, it's an alto. I don't think I like that.'"

McLean was sold. "Now's the Time" and "Koko" followed, and he went to see Bird at a concert in Lincoln Square. "I was in love, you know." He soon acquired a pantheon of mentors. Bud Powell taught him to play changes by ear. Other guides included Miles, Mingus, Blakey, and Monk: "We *all* learned from Monk. I luuuuuuv Monk." He began recording, in 1951, with Davis—Rollins, Mingus, and Blakey were also at the session—and soon he was recognized as a Parker acolyte with a difference. His phrasing had a harsh glare, fewer notes, waspishly asymmetrical phrases, a firm ground beat. He could kill on the blues, but he was more surprising on ballads, for which he found the most dramatic possible tempi.

Drugs derailed him, but he bounded back, inspired by Ornette Coleman and the avant-garde, recording such breakthrough albums as *Let Freedom Ring*, with its definitive, hair-raising treatment of Bud Powell's "I'll Keep Loving You," and *Destination ... Out!*, an enthralling highlight of his fruitful collaboration with Grachan Moncur III. His music had a contagious honesty: Musicians played at their best as his sidemen, just as he gave his all in his many sideman appearances—who can forget him on Mingus's *Pithecanthropus Erectus* or Abbey Lincoln's *The World is Falling Down*?

Similarly, when he turned to teaching, it was never just a gig—it was a fulltime commitment and then some. He began conducting workshops at the University of Hartford's Hartt School, but insisted on teaching history as well. By 1972, he was chairing a new African-American music department, one of the first of its kind to offer degrees; in 2000, it was renamed the Jackie McLean Institute of Jazz. At the same time, he and his wife Dolly founded and ran Artists Collective, an arts center in Hartford. Among many young musicians whose careers he advanced are his son Rene McLean, Michael Carvin, Abraham Burton, the Harper Brothers, Antoine Roney, Nat Reeves, and Alan Jay Palmer.

The 1990s proved to be the start of a tremendously gratifying period in his playing. In addition to exceptional new albums like *Dynasty*, *Rhythm of the Earth*, *Hat Trick*, and *Nature Boy*, he became a regular at the Dizzy Gillespie memorial celebrations at the Blue Note and helped usher in Christmas several years running, at the Village Vanguard, teaming with Cedar Walton and, until his death, Billy Higgins. At a 1995 concert, Rollins introduced Jackie as "the battler of Sugar Hill," and damned if he didn't steal the evening with two specialties, "Solar" and "A Cottage for Sale." Jackie McLean died March 31, at home in Hartford, at 74. But does a heart like his ever really stop beating?

Arthur J. Ornitz (November 28, 1916 – July 10, 1985)



Arthur Ornitz (left) with Shirley Clarke and cast on the set of **The Connection**

Arthur J. Ornitz was the son of screenwriter Samuel Ornitz who had co-founded the Screen Writers Guild and was later a member of the Hollywood Ten — film professionals who were blacklisted when they refused to name names during the McCarthy era.

Ornitz was born in New York in 1917 but his family moved to Hollywood when father Samuel was recruited by the studios based on the success of one of his novels, *Haunch, Paunch and Jowl*. While on summer vacation during high school, Ornitz's mother thought that he and his brother should be working. So she hired Gunter Fritsch, a cinematographer who had fled Nazi Germany, to teach Arthur and his brother Donald the basics of his craft. Arthur (with Fritsch) made his first film in 1937, a short Pete Smith film for MGM entitled *Wanted a Master* which was nominated for an Academy Award®. Two years later, Ornitz was hired to work on Joris Ivens' documentary, *The Power and the Land*. When World War II broke out, Ornitz joined the Signal Corp as a cinematographer, working at the film studios in Astoria, Queens and then overseas in the European Theatre of Operations. After the war, Ornitz stayed in France to work in the French film industry and collaborated on a documentary with Henri Storck — the film later became the inspiration for Francois Truffaut's *Les 400 Coups*. He returned to the States in 1951 and began his long career as a New York-based cameraman with television work for the next few years. In 1957 he was the cinematographer on *The Goddess*, kick-starting his career in the American film world.

Ornitz's background of working on documentaries, television and European films made him the perfect choice for Clarke's **The Connection** with its one-room set, combination of studio and mobile cameras, and homage to — and parody of — cinema vérité filmmakers. Arthur's wife, Dr. Hilda Wane Ornitz wrote in a tribute to him: "Ornitz was fearless and did not suffer fools gladly... He was very independent and one of a kind."

Arthur Ornitz is best known for his many captivating images of New York City, including such classics as *The Boys in the Band*, *Minnie and Moskowitz*, *A Thousand Clowns*, *Next Stop Greenwich Village*, *The Chosen* and perhaps most famously, *Serpico*.

Albert Brenner, Art Director (February 17, 1926 – present)

Production designer Albert Brenner has served as production designer or art director on 57 films over four decades and has received five Academy Award nominations and the Art Director's Guild's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Brenner's Oscar® nominations were for *Beaches* (1989), *2010: The Year We Make Contact* (1984), *California Suite* (1978), *The Turning Point* (1977) and *The Sunshine Boys* (1975). He designed five films for Herbert Ross, (including *The Goodbye Girl* and *I Ought to Be in Pictures*), five films for Garry Marshall (*Frankie & Johnny*, *Princess Diaries II*, *Georgia Rule* and *Pretty Woman*) and worked with Sidney Lumet on *Fail-Safe* and *The Morning After*. He has also worked with Mel Brooks, Billy Crystal (for his directorial debut *Mr. Saturday Night*), Ron Howard and Robert Mulligan.

Born in Brooklyn, Brenner served as an Air Force Gunner during World War II and attended Yale Drama School of Graduate Studies as a scenic design major. While designing for the stage, he also worked on live television for CBS and ABC. Albert segued into film working with (two-time Oscar winner) Richard Sylbert on *The Connection* and *The Pawnbroker*. Later, he worked with production designer Harry Horner on *The Hustler*, which won an Oscar® for Black-and-White Art Direction. Brenner's work as a production designer has spanned the range of motion picture styles and genres. He also designed the New York Street set in the back lot of Paramount Studios. Now retired, he lives with his wife in California and devotes his time to painting.

Richard Sylbert, Production Designer (April 16, 1928 – March 23, 2002)

Richard Sylbert, trained by the famed William Cameron Menzies, became himself a legendary Academy Award®-winning production designer and art director, known for such films as *Baby Doll*, *A Face in the Crowd*, *Splendor in the Grass*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Graduate*, *Chinatown*, *Reds*, *Dick Tracy*, *Mulholland Falls* and dozens of other classic films. In 1975 Robert Evans chose Sylbert to replace him as head of production for Paramount. He oversaw several hits while there including *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* and *The Bad News Bears* but his penchant for art house fare such as *Nashville* and *Days of Heaven* and his lack of concern over failures (after all, he was still the best Art Director in town) led Barry Diller to fire him in 1978. From a family of Romanian immigrants, Richard Sylbert grew up in Brooklyn (he read on the roof of his building by the lights of Ebbets Field), studied painting at the Tyler School of Art and fought in the Korean War before entering television in 1953 with the Hallmark Hall of Fame's production of *Hamlet*. His most-seen work might have been in television with his production design of the bar in *Cheers*. He died from cancer at the age of 73.

Jack Gelber (April 12, 1932 – May 9, 2003)

Jack Gelber was born in Chicago to a Jewish couple of Romanian and Russian descent. While at the University of Illinois, he first developed an interest in writing fiction. He moved to New York City in the mid-1950s and worked as a mimeograph operator at the United Nations. He became friends with the jazz musicians and theatre artists and after marrying in 1957 and spending time in Haiti, he decided there to combine his two interests. From this came his first play, which he described as "the seamier side, the underbelly of life." When he came back to New York, the play was accepted by Julian Beck & Judith Malina of The Living Theatre where he got his first theatrical education. They allowed him to be involved in every aspect of the production: "The whole experience had a kind of magic quality to it. In my innocence, I wanted to know everything." He was only 26 when his play "The Connection" initially shocked and appalled much of the theater world. ("A farrago of dirt," claimed *The New York Times*.) But championed by the critics Kenneth Tynan and Jerry Talmer, it soon became

one of the longest running off-Broadway plays of its day and winner of three Obie Awards. Although he never achieved similar success with his succeeding plays, he enjoyed a long and active career in theater (both as writer and director) as well as becoming a professor of drama at Columbia University, Brooklyn College and the New School. Professor Mac Wellman described him as "a man in a funny hat who never talked about himself or his work, but would talk endlessly and thoughtfully about each of his students."

"I was about to go to Berlin to see the premiere of my play The Zoo Story, but before I did, I saw a play that was one of the most exciting things I ever saw, or any of us ever saw.... I was so affected and energized by The Connection. It was exciting, dangerous, instructive and terrifying — all things theater should be. Jack was never bitter, always honest, tough and uncompromising" — Edward Albee

Jack Gelber on Shirley Clarke

Courtesy of Adam Hyman & Los Angeles Film Forum

Shirley remains an indelible presence. As a young man with a hit play running on the fringes of off-Broadway, I felt caught on the horns of a dilemma: I was flattered (maybe flattened would be a better word) and suspicious by the sometime attention coming out of Hollywood. Yet, Hollywood equaled sell-out for me and many of my generation. Having been raised on a steady diet of movies, I naturally, had a strong temptation to see "The Connection" up on the screen. What to do?

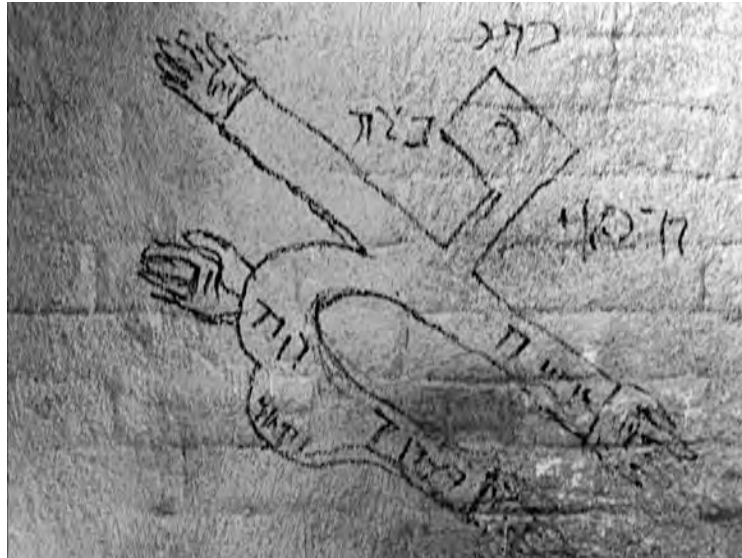
Into my life walked Shirley Clarke. Black bowler hat jauntily cocked on her head, dressed in black, stabbing the air with her signature little Schimmelpfennig cigar, laughing at her own secret jokes, her nervous energy level so high she hardly had time to spit out her words. Before I knew it I was in her house on 87th Street and she was showing me one of her short films, *Bridges-Go-Round*, on a cracked wall above a bookcase. I made up my mind instantly. Shirley was for me.

For the next year or more we worked together and became good friends. Shirley knew next to nothing about drugs, and very little about jazz. I knew even less about making a film. And so we taught each other. What characterized Shirley was her quickness, her openness and yes, her vulnerability. Little did I know that Shirley was about to step into a world which patronizingly mistrusted women directors, particularly a woman director who had no previous experience with full-length fiction films. As far as that world was concerned her short films counted for nothing.

In preparing for a tightly scheduled film shooting, Shirley and I hammered out possibilities between camera and action. But when it came to the actual shooting, Shirley faced tremendous resistance. Sometimes the actors gave her a hard time. They had all honed their stage performances in the off-Broadway run of the play. They never failed to remind Shirley (and me) that they knew their characters with greater depth and intimacy than she or I could ever fathom. They may have been right; however, none of them had the whole picture in mind. This constant low-level warfare frequently sent Shirley into the refuge of a dressing room to dry her tears and to take a deep breath before coming back out to do battle once again. These skirmishes with the actors were nothing compared to the resistance of the crew to her ideas on how to shoot the film. Even though Arthur Ornitz, the director of photography, and others were deeply sympathetic, the climate among the crew was so pervasively dedicated to doing things their own traditional ways that Shirley was in constant conflict with them. Shirley wanted to shoot more and more scenes with a hand-held 16mm Arriflex. She had to fight for every foot. She was told she was inexperienced, that her ideas were impractical, that the quality of the work would suffer. Whether she won or lost an argument, Shirley had the inner reserves to bounce back and keep on working to the finish.

Shirley was a lot of fun to be around. Like Felix the Cat, the inspiration for her costume, she had the playfulness of the curious. She liked to laugh a lot. And what a laugh it was. It was the shrieking laughter you hear on the steepest descent of a roller coaster. Scary sometimes, but memorable and worth every moment of the ride.

The Writing on the Wall



There are times when Milestone really gets obsessed with something in a movie that *might* mean something important and vital, or then again, might not. Prominent in the set for ***The Connection*** is an image drawn on wall above the bed. It is an odd bit of graffiti — written in Hebrew. There is a suggestion in the film that it might have been drawn by Sol as another character mentions that he knows Hebrew. But there is no reference to this image in the play and there has been nothing written about its significance. It has remained a mystery for fifty years. So Milestone sent its most intrepid archivist, Joanna Poses, out to seek its meaning.

Poses' friend Jessica Shimberg, Rabbinic Intern at Hillel at Temple University was the first to identify this: "It's not very clearly written, but they are (some of) the *sefirot*, the mystical emanations of the divine. On top is *keter* (crown), then zigzaggin' down it has *binah* (understanding), *hochmah* (wisdom), and then there are a few missing. Then it looks like it says *netzach* (eternity), *hod* (splendor) and *yesod* (foundation)."

Sefirot translates as "enumerations" and they are the ten attributes/emanations in Kabbalah through which G-d reveals himself and continuously creates both the physical realm and the chain of higher metaphysical realms. The *sefirot* (or *sephirot*) is often depicted as the Tree of Life.

Aharon Varady, Hierophant of The Open Siddur Project writes:

"That it is a Kabbalistic illustration of the *sephirot* — the creative emanations comprising creation — is plain. The way in which the *sephirot* are illustrated, to me at least, suggests a *sygil* (a symbol used in magic) composed of three letters: א, ב and ג — or IZaBaD. Seeing the hands jutting in four directions (?) also suggests to me that this is a particular Kabbalistic *sygil* to impress the importance or significance of the HaBaD movement in Hassidut."

The Habad, or Chabad movement is one of the world's larger Chasidic movements. The Lubavitch sector is *the* major branch of Habad. The letters א, ב and ג are the acronym for "Wisdom, Understanding and Knowledge."

Artist David Chaim Smith writes that the illustration "is a variation on the Hebrew letter alef. It appeared in certain editions of the *Zohar*."

The *Zohar*, meaning “splendor,” are commentaries on the Torah that became the foundational work in Kabbalah literature. It contains a guide to the spiritual states experienced as souls evolve. The highest level of spiritual wholeness is referred to as “the end of correction.”

Joel Hecker of the Zohar Education Project writes,

“This is a very interesting adaptation of an image of the sefirot, first printed, I believe, in Moshe Cordovero’s *Pardes Rimmonim*. Cordovero, 16th century Tsfat, known by the acronym Ramak, was the most important kabbalist in that sleepy town until the Ari, Rabbi Isaac Luria arrived. The figure is indeed a representation of the *sefirot* (not all of them are labeled, but they are all there), contained within the letter Alef. The letter alef signifies Divinity in its fullness by virtue of being the first letter of the alphabet and because it signifies the number 1. The letter is calligraphically written, according to the understanding of the kabbalists, as a composition of two yods and a vav. The yods are mirror images, one above and one below the diagonal vav in the middle. Numerically they signify $\aleph + \aleph + \aleph = 26$, which is the numerical equivalent of the tetragrammaton יהוה. The four hands in the corners are also part of the original drawing (though more skillfully drawn here). Though not all of the names of the sefirot are written there, they are implicit.”

Yet, the mystery remains: who created it and why is it in the film? Albert Brenner, the art director, insisted that he was responsible for the creation of the set. Yet, when asked recently about the *sefirot*, he realized that it could not have been his work.

Wendy Clarke conjectures that work could have been the influence of Lionel Ziprin, a poet/beatnik/comic book writer/kabbalist grandson of the renowned Orthodox Rabbi Nuftali Zvi Margolies Abulafia Ziprin. Lionel was a friend of Shirley’s who visited their apartment on many occasions and would lead marathon poetry sessions. Clarke suggested that the artwork itself was most likely done by the production designer, Richard Sylbert.

Let the discussion begin!

UCLA FILM & TELEVISION ARCHIVE

UCLA Film & Television Archive is globally renowned for its pioneering efforts to rescue, preserve and showcase moving image media—and is dedicated to ensuring that the collective visual memory of our time is explored and enjoyed for generations to come. <http://www.cinema.ucla.edu>

A unique resource for media study, the Archive is one of the largest repositories of moving image materials in the world—more than 400,000 titles. The Archive Research and Study Center provides free access to more than 10,000 items each year to international researchers from all disciplines. Hundreds of significant books, articles, plays and documentary films have been produced drawing on the Archive’s resources.

The Archive is renowned for its moving image restoration efforts and many of its important projects—*Blonde Venus* (1932, Josef von Sternberg), *Stagecoach* (1939, John Ford), *Double Indemnity* (1944, Billy Wilder), *The Red Shoes* (1948, Michael Powell & Emeric Pressburger), *The Prowler* (1951, Joseph Losey), *The Night of the Hunter* (1955, Charles Laughton), *Scorpio Rising* (1963, Kenneth Anger), *A Woman Under the Influence* (1974, John Cassavetes) and *The Times of Harvey Milk* (1984, Robert Epstein)—are invited to screen at prestigious venues and festivals around the globe.

The Archive presents more than 200-curated public screenings at UCLA’s Billy Wilder Theater in Los Angeles each year, combining the best of the classic and the new, the mainstream and the cutting-edge, focusing on important programs not normally available through commercial theaters.

UCLA Film & Television Archive is at the forefront in educating the next generation of professional archivists. UCLA’s Moving Image Archive Studies graduate degree program was the first of its kind in North America.

Milestone Film & Video

Since 1990, Milestone has been releasing classic cinema masterpieces, new foreign films, groundbreaking documentaries and American independent features. Thanks to the company's work in rediscovering and releasing such important films such as Charles Burnett's *Killer of Sheep*, Kent Mackenzie's *The Exiles*, Lionel Rogosin's *On the Bowery*, Mikhail Kalatozov's *I Am Cuba*, Marcel Ophuls' *The Sorrow and the Pity*, the Mariposa Film Group's *Word is Out* and Alfred Hitchcock's *Bon Voyage* and *Aventure Malgache*, Milestone has long occupied a position as one of the country's most influential independent distributors.

In 1995, Milestone received the first Special Archival Award from the National Society of Film Critics for its restoration and release of *I Am Cuba*. Manohla Dargis, then at the *LA Weekly*, chose Milestone as the 1999 "Indie Distributor of the Year." In 2004, the National Society of Film Critics again awarded Milestone with a Film Heritage award. That same year the International Film Seminars presented the company its prestigious Leo Award and the New York Film Critics Circle voted a Special Award "in honor of 15 years of restoring classic films." In 2007, Milestone was awarded the Fort Lee Film Commission's first Lewis Selznick Award for contributions to film history. Milestone/Milliarium won Best Rediscovery from the Il Cinema Ritrovato DVD Awards for its release of *Winter Soldier* in 2006 and again in 2010 for *The Exiles*.

In January 2008, the Los Angeles Film Critics Association chose to give its first Legacy of Cinema Award to Amy Heller and Dennis Doros of Milestone Film & Video "for their tireless efforts on behalf of film restoration and preservation." And in March 2008, Milestone became an Anthology Film Archive's Film Preservation honoree. In 2009, Dennis Doros was elected as one of the Directors of the Board of the Association of the Moving Image Archivists and established the organization's press office in 2010.

In 2011, Milestone was the first distributor ever chosen for two Film Heritage Awards in the same year by the National Society of Film Critics for *On the Bowery* and *Word is Out*. The American Library Association also selected *Word is Out* for their Notable Videos for Adult, the first classic film ever so chosen.

Important contemporary artists who have co-presented Milestone restorations include Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola, Barbara Kopple, Woody Allen, Steven Soderbergh, Thelma Schoonmaker, Jonathan Demme, Dustin Hoffman, Charles Burnett and Sherman Alexie.

"They care and they love movies." — Martin Scorsese

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