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Urban Decline, 1945-1975**

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Dedication

For Ariel and Violet.

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Hollywood Location Shooting in San Francisco and the Aesthetics of Urban Decline, 1945-1975

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Abstract: This dissertation traces the impact of Hollywood's widening practice of location shooting on the representation of San Francisco between 1945 and 1975. Over these three decades, location shooting evolved from an ancillary practice to the dominant method of Hollywood feature filmmaking and throughout this period, San Francisco remained a key urban location on the forefront of this shift in production practice. For location shooting to expand so extensively required a combination of economic, technological, logistical, and aesthetic developments that made shooting in San Francisco a viable strategy in comparison to the established method of shooting primarily on the sound stages and back lots of Los Angeles studios. New location production techniques intersected with a fundamental postwar shift in America's image of its cities. Despite San Francisco's marked stability compared to other U.S. urban centers, Hollywood depictions of the city grew bleaker as the urban crisis degraded the image of the city in American popular thought.

This dissertation relies on archival research into the production history of several American feature films and television series shot partially or entirely in San Francisco, drawn from The Margaret Herrick Library, University of Southern California's Warner Brothers Archives, University of California-Los Angeles Special Collections, and the San Francisco History Center of The San Francisco Public Library. Additional research in *Variety* and *American Cinematographer* provides a larger context for changes in Hollywood filmmaking practices as well as the production, critical reception, and box office success of specific features. Each chapter examines how major shifts in Hollywood production methods shaped urban location shooting, particularly in San Francisco. The chapters conclude with case studies of films shot in San Francisco that reveal how specific location production methods approached the challenges and aesthetic choices encountered in San Francisco. These film and television texts construct an urban paradigm indicative of both filmmaking practices and cultural perceptions of the city.

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Introduction

GOLDEN GATEWAY

The Golden Gate Bridge is the iconic symbol of San Francisco, captured innumerable times on film and television. It is also a filmmaking location with specific demands. In 1947, *Dark Passage* planned to shoot at the Presidio with the bridge in the background, but failed to realize the park was closed on Sundays, one of many incidents that reflected Hollywood filmmakers' limited experience with extensive location shooting in the immediate postwar era.¹ Alfred Hitchcock captured the bridge in its Technicolor postcard beauty for *Vertigo* (1958), in a style similar to the tourist footage featured in popular Cinerama travelogues. *Bullitt* (1968) hoped to take its famous car chase across the bridge, but the traffic problem proved insurmountable; new San Francisco mayor Joseph Alioto, an avid booster of location filmmaking in the city, negotiated an alternative location with the Bridge Authority.² In *Dirty Harry* (1971), in a dim, predawn shot, the bridge overhangs a group of medical workers, who in the next shot pull a nude 14-year old girl's body out of a drainage ditch. Not only this macabre image but also sufficient light for color film exposure would have been impossible to shoot a few years earlier.

These production details and screen images point to many of the factors that shaped the major studios' development of location shooting practices in the three decades following World War II. Changing economics, technologies, production values, and logistics not only allowed major studios to shoot more efficiently and effectively on location but also guided their choice of locations and style of location filmmaking. The

Golden Gate Bridge is as picturesque today as it was during the filming of *Dirty Harry* or *Vertigo*. Rather Hollywood's approach to capturing San Francisco as a setting underwent fundamental changes during the turbulent restructuring of the American film industry between the studio crises of the late 1940s and the rise of the blockbuster in the mid-1970s.

How did the dreamy San Francisco of *Vertigo* become the nightmare wasteland of *Dirty Harry*? The simplest explanation might be San Francisco undergoing a massive downturn akin to post-war Detroit. But San Francisco was one of the most prosperous American cities during the turbulent 1960s and early 1970s.³ Perhaps the different styles of directors Hitchcock and Don Siegel account for the disparate images of the city. Yet *Frenzy* (1972) provides nearly as bleak a picture of London as Siegel's San Francisco. San Francisco is a unique American city architecturally, topographically, and culturally. However with rare exception, it appeared onscreen with the same style and function of other popular urban locations of the period.

A primary but too often overlooked causal factor in Hollywood's shifting post-classical style is location shooting. A minority practice in the immediate postwar era, shooting on location became Hollywood's dominant mode of filmmaking by the 1970s. Dense, active cities like New York and San Francisco presented extensive logistical challenges for filmmakers and producers. While Westerns shooting on location in the 1950s and 1960s faced logistical challenges, rural landscapes lacked the cramped interiors and urban crowds that plagued urban location shoots. Yet the actual city offered a spectacle of people and structures hard to recreate on the back lot, an attraction that filmmakers and producers continually sought to capture. Improved location technologies and booms in films set in cities like San Francisco pushed filmmakers to seek out less photographed locations outside of downtown, beyond the familiar sight of the Golden

Gate Bridge and, after 1968, Haight-Ashbury. Urban location shooting not only provided some of the most influential films of New American cinema, but remained at the forefront of new production practices throughout the postwar era. While never becoming a film or television production center like Los Angeles or New York, San Francisco remained the third most popular city setting through the 1970s, at its peak overshadowing production in both cities.⁴

Something strange happened on the way to the city. As filming on location in American cities became routine, filmmakers began to seek out their roughest corners. San Francisco remained at the forefront of Hollywood's growing exploitation of urban location shooting. Yet the rising prevalence of filming in San Francisco during the 1960s and 1970s often degraded the city's most attractive vistas while exploring its ugly recesses. A grimy urban aesthetic emerged and deepened over time, in films like *Bullitt*, *Dirty Harry*, and *The Conversation* (1974). On film, the local image of San Francisco soon matched the emergent national image of the American city as a blighted battleground. While the problem of urban decline was a prominent issue in the 1940s, cities persisted as cultural centers, providing office jobs and entertainment districts, including the top movie theaters, for a growing suburban population. As the suburbs continued to burgeon, downtowns became less central to many Americans daily lives. The protests and race riots of the mid-1960s indelibly marked cities as crisis centers, inverting the cultural paradigm exemplified by the Hollywood western. Now civilization existed on the suburban periphery surrounding a core, impoverished wilderness (complete with African-American natives). As urban location shooting approached its zenith, the filmic image of San Francisco, along with most American cities, never looked worse.

This dissertation traces the intersecting postwar phenomena of location shooting and urban decline, examining films shot partially or entirely in San Francisco between 1945 and 1975. The industry crises of the immediate postwar years not only fundamentally changed the American studio system but also precipitated a boom in location shooting in the form of the semi-documentary. While the prevalence of location shooting did not rise linearly, by the late 1960s it would overtake sound stage production as the primary method of feature filmmaking. In 1975, *Jaws* became the paradigmatic high-concept blockbuster, leading to another major shift in emphasis between location shooting and major sets and special effects built in production and post-production facilities largely based in Los Angeles. I end my study here when the growth of location filmmaking finally ebbed.

Changing production practices and changing perceptions of the American city combined to indelibly alter Hollywood and America's image of urban space. Several historical modes of urban cinematic representation suggest several interrelated paradigm shifts. The practice of urban location shooting had to develop economically, technologically, and aesthetically to offset the greater control and efficiency offered by the physical studio. Similarly, location shooting had to meet or redefine professional standards of aesthetic realism established by sound stage production; in other words, cinematographers favored realistically lit sets over poorly lit real locations. Finally, changes in how Hollywood shot the city and how America saw the city came together onscreen. New tools and approaches for location shooting favored new locations, as did popular sentiments over the state of the central city, which could range from a tourist paradise to a lawless ruin. The choice of an urban setting, the choice of locations within an urban setting, and the organization of urban space through editing all suggest the boundaries of both urban representation and location shooting practice.

The constant among the many variables affecting film production is the city of San Francisco. Excluding Los Angeles and New York, San Francisco attracted significantly more film and television productions than any other American city during the entire period of this study. Unlike these cities, San Francisco was overwhelmingly a location, not a production center. While New York and Hollywood locations served resident filmmakers, feature filmmakers in San Francisco were primarily visitors. This single urban center provided filmmakers with a number of visually arresting landmarks and vistas whose recurrence helps identify subtle shifts in film form.

San Francisco's distinct urban form and culture underscores a critical argument running throughout this study. Real locations, no matter how exceptional, remain extremely malleable on film and in the imagination. Each chapter of this dissertation explores competing strategies for capturing San Francisco, but together they point towards a prevailing Hollywood urban aesthetic that can be traced and analyzed across specific historical periods. Only a handful of feature films, such as *Petulia* (1968), offer more than a cursory exploration of San Francisco's local culture. More often, the city is a background setting and a location set, a physical environment used to stage urban fantasies that reveal far more about Hollywood filmmaking and American culture than they do about San Francisco.

SCOPE

This dissertation covers three decades of Hollywood filmmaking in San Francisco. Certainly American filmmakers' use of location shooting and San Francisco begins far earlier. For example, in 1906, Thomas Edison filmed the destruction wrought by the San Francisco earthquake. The rise of the Hollywood studio system increased the

capacity and economic incentive to shoot most films in studios or on back lots. A handful of film companies continued operating in San Francisco through the 1920s, but none could compete with the Los Angeles studios after the coming of sound and the onset of the Depression.⁵ With rare exception, Classical Era Hollywood relied on second-unit footage, or preferably, existing stock footage, to suggest San Francisco settings while shooting on the sound stages, main lot, and ancillary lots.

For *Greed* (1924), Erich Von Stroheim shot for months on location in San Francisco in a fastidious attempt to capture the real settings of the novel, *McTeague*. The expense of such exhaustive location shooting, among other production excesses, ruined Von Stroheim's career and provided a powerful argument for building San Francisco settings on the studio lot.⁶ By the 1930s, films like *After the Thin Man* (1936) judiciously established San Francisco through a handful of establishing shots, including one of Nick (William Powell) and Nora (Myrna Loy) driving beside a cable car. As a setting, San Francisco befit the wealthy and urbane characters, while prompting studio sets such as a Chinatown nightclub and a foggy street. Location shooting proved an unnecessary expense, as it did for *The Maltese Falcon* (1942), which avoided a trip to San Francisco by relying on Warners' stock footage library and a handful of scenes shot on location in Los Angeles.⁷ Large standing sets on studio back lots readily stood in for San Francisco exteriors. For *San Francisco* (1937), MGM captured all of the principal photography of the city on the "New York Streets," standing sets on one of several back lots, including a twenty-minute earthquake sequence with full scale building sets rigged to collapse.⁸ B-filmmakers occasionally shot sequences in San Francisco, owing to practical factors such as their inability to build expensive sets, lack of studio space, and a willingness to compromise aesthetics by shooting quickly with available daylight. Yet America's entry

into World War II gas rationing further mitigated location shooting outside of Los Angeles for much of the war.⁹

Filmmakers returned from the war with a newfound experience working on location for combat cinematography. The war effort also motivated the development of the portable Eyemo camera. Coupled with labor unrest and a lack of studio space, the immediate postwar years brought a boom in urban location filmmaking.¹⁰ *Dark Passage* shot extensively in San Francisco, exemplified postwar approaches to location shooting and their limitations, adapting semi-documentary techniques from *The House on 92nd Street* (1945) and *The Naked City* (1948) to classical Hollywood form. The style of these semi-documentary films would have a profound effect on realist aesthetics, but the expense and unpredictability of shooting on location would convince Hollywood to rein in domestic location shooting by the early 1950s.

Throughout the 1950s and much of 1960s, technological and economic incentives favored a hybrid approach that combined location shooting and sound stage production for the vast majority of Hollywood films. For instance, scenic locations gained production value with the advent of widescreen and the prevalence of color filmmaking in the mid-1950s. But widescreen and color both demanded far more light, making it less expensive and more effective to combine location footage with studio-lit shots of the leading actors. Meanwhile, black-and-white film continued to grow faster, facilitating more extensive location shooting, including night exteriors and location interiors that proved impractical on color film

1968 marked a turning point, exemplified by *Bullitt*, one of the first major studio color films to be shot entirely on location. By the early 1970s, such a practice was commonplace and even television shows like *The Streets of San Francisco* (1972-1977) began shooting primarily on location. Popular locations like San Francisco added local

filmmaking facilities, such as labs and post-production houses, further encouraging location shooting. Francis Ford Coppola, who founded American Zoetrope in San Francisco in the late 1960s, completed all production and postproduction for *The Conversation* without leaving the city, an impossible feat for a major motion picture before 1968.

What appeared to industry observers to be an inevitable shift from sound stage filmmaking to location shooting in the early 1970s began to change direction by 1975. The rise of special effects laden blockbusters, such as *The Towering Inferno* (1974), *Star Wars* (1977), and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), required mechanical and optical effects impossible to achieve on location. Meanwhile, the unprecedented box office return on *Jaws* helped inflate production and advertising budgets for major pictures, making the below-the-line costs saved by shooting on location a less significant reward. While location shooting remained a component of feature filmmaking, by the end of the 1970s, Hollywood illusions provided far greater production value than real locations. I end this study in 1975, when the rise of the blockbuster era marked a similar paradigm shift for the Hollywood industry akin to 1945.

Like Hollywood filmmaking, the popular image of the American city would undergo drastic changes between 1945 and 1975. The prolonged Depression and onset of the war both stunted home and office construction in the 1930s and early 1940s. Postwar America faced an immediate housing shortage as well as aging downtowns in need of reconstruction. The next two decades would be inevitably marked by the urban phenomena of suburbanization, highway construction, white flight, and federally funded urban redevelopment. Population declines in major cities led to a sense of urban decline, but the race riots of the second half of the 1960s led to a national perception of an urban crisis.¹¹ As modern architecture failed to anticipate or alleviate urban disorder, the

dominant paradigm of the 20th century fell to pieces, exemplified by the 1972 demolition of the crime-ridden, modernist housing complex in St. Louis, Pruitt-Igoe. By the late 1970s, urban gentrification and Postmodern skyscrapers began to reestablish a shiny, elite business and residential districts in central cities.

The intersection between location shooting, popular perceptions of the American city, and urban design theory would play out onscreen. As location shooting boomed in the late 1960s, filmmakers sought out the blighted districts and gritty aesthetics that visualized the fears of an urban crisis.. For this dissertation I chose a specific city, San Francisco, rather than a host of American films shot in urban locations. While this offers a discrete object of study, it raises the question of whether Hollywood's filmmaking practice in San Francisco is unique or applicable to many American cities. As I explain in the next section, by virtue of its unique role as both city and filming location, San Francisco reveals a Hollywood urbanism extending well beyond the Bay Area.

SAN FRANCISCO EXCEPTIONALISM

Why San Francisco? This question not only shaped the path and argument of this dissertation but also shaped Hollywood filmmakers approach to the city as a location. The simplest answer is that San Francisco is exceptional in a variety of ways that make it particularly attractive to film. As a place with unique visual excitement and economic advantages, San Francisco provides a wealth of case studies for new developments in urban location shooting. As a relatively small city with identifiable landmarks, it provides a more cohesive set of images than the competing neighborhoods and overwhelming filmographies of cities like New York and Los Angeles. San Francisco films almost always feature the Bay Bridge, the Golden Gate Bridge, the Ferry Building, and trolley cars. Places like Coit Tower, the Legion of Honor, Fisherman's Wharf, Pacific Heights,

and by the late 1960s, Haight Ashbury, remain prevalent. Such a study requires fewer exceptions and omissions than these cities, but encompasses a more identifiable and influential set of films than Chicago, Boston, or Philadelphia.

Quantitative data suggests that San Francisco had a screen presence that well exceeded several more populous cities. Mark Shiel compiled a rigorous noir filmography of 518 titles from 1940 to 1959 and delineated the urban setting for each film. Not surprisingly, Los Angeles and New York accounted for over 110 films each. However San Francisco accounted for 36 films, three times as many as Chicago, a city with a far larger population and a rather famous history of crime.¹² Such a discrepancy cannot be solely attributed to Dashiell Hammet. Along with *The Maltese Falcon*, San Francisco settings appear in *This Gun For Hire* (1942), *The Lady From Shanghai* (1947), *Dark Passage*, *D.O.A.* (1950), *The House on Telegraph Hill* (1951), and *The Lineup* (1958). Between 1945-1975, 117 American feature films featured San Francisco locations; only 27 were shot in Chicago, the second or third largest city in the country for those three decades.¹³ As for films that made an impact, 36 Oscar nominated films featured San Francisco, while 10 featured Chicago.¹⁴ Simply put, San Francisco has had an impact on cinema quite disproportionate to its population size.

Several books testify to San Francisco's unique impact on screen. Nathaniel Rich's 2005 *San Francisco Noir* describes a salient location from each of over 40 crime films and how they dramatized it. Jim Van Buskirk and Will Shank provide a flexible walking tour of famous San Francisco movie locations in *Celluloid San Francisco* (2006). Published by George Lucas Books, Sheerly Avni's *Cinema by the Bay* (2006) provides brief essays on San Francisco film history, culminating in the work of Coppola, Lucas, and Pixar. This beautifully illustrated coffee-table book offers little detail and no criticism. Book-length scholarly work on San Francisco locations remains far less

specific to the city, more often honing in on individual films. For instance, a recent edited collection by Douglas Cunningham, *The San Francisco of Alfred Hitchcock's Vertigo* (2012), analyzes Hitchcock's use of various locations and the transformation of these film locations into tourist attractions. A sustained scholarly history of film images of San Francisco remains to be written, although such works exist for Los Angeles and New York.

Throughout the postwar Hollywood era, San Francisco remained a prominent shooting location, despite greater economic opportunities filming in other world cities. San Francisco could not offer the substantial financial incentives that lured Hollywood filmmakers to postwar Europe, such as the ability to spend frozen funds, lucrative co-production deals, and cheaper labor.¹⁵ As a California city, it could not even offer state-level incentives to entice Angeleno filmmakers to travel north. Nor could San Francisco ever promise better weather than Los Angeles. Instead, the city offered two key enticements, one tangible and one intangible. First, San Francisco remained the largest major city within a half-day's drive of Los Angeles; secondly, the image of San Francisco could appear to be a continent away from Hollywood.

Both Americans and Europeans have described San Francisco as a European city transplanted onto the Pacific Coast.¹⁶ Los Angeles, the harbinger of sprawling Postmodern urban space, seemed to find its antithesis in San Francisco, whose density and architecture remained persistently premodern. As Los Angeles pushed eastward and southward across vast plains, the city center shrank in importance; it eventually became commonplace for Los Angeles residents to never set foot in downtown. Meanwhile, San Francisco's peninsular site preserved a dense, active urban core. The bay and its two elegant bridges provided a spectrum of vistas for the camera. As Los Angeles made and remade itself through road and roadside construction, San Francisco residents fought to

successfully preserve urban districts and sights, right down to the iconic trolley cars. The most jarring change in San Francisco's urban environment from the 1920s through the 1970s was a 1960s skyscraper boom.¹⁷ Yet this vertical rather than horizontal growth preserved the most cherished districts, and added more sites to San Francisco's embarrassment of visual riches.

Aesthetics alone could never convince Hollywood producers to blithely dispatch filmmakers northward. If the studio system could produce *An American in Paris* without traveling to Paris (1951), why bother to trek up the coast to shoot in San Francisco with more than a second unit? The decision lay in the extent that a film property would benefit from location shooting. For instance, *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) suffered little from a lack of San Francisco location work, but shooting *Vertigo* (1958) without San Francisco location work would be inconceivable. San Francisco's unique proximity to Hollywood often made it the most economical city to film outside of Los Angeles. A trip to San Francisco could involve more trucking than flying, and producers could quickly return to meet with Hollywood executives if shooting went over budget or schedule. Similarly, second-unit crews could easily return for pickup shots.

These reduced costs helped put San Francisco at the forefront of location shooting practice. Yet urban location shooting remained far more complicated than shooting a Western on the back lot, studio ranch, or outskirts of Los Angeles. The visual excitement of a bustling city could be a logistical nightmare to control. Technological, industrial, and aesthetic changes in postwar Hollywood fundamentally shifted the economics of location shooting, approaching a point by the early 1970s when shooting on location could often prove cheaper than shooting in studio.¹⁸ This sea change contributed to a late 1960s boom in San Francisco production.

San Francisco offers another important exception to other cities: “Amidst the sorry picture of decline in America’s old, ethnically heterogeneous cities, San Francisco appears to offer a stunning example of success.”¹⁹ The postwar urban crisis had an incredible impact on America’s tenuous attitude towards the city. Urban decline appeared to illustrate and exacerbate the worst socio-economic and racial tensions of the era, culminating in the violent media spectacles of urban riots and protests in the mid- to late 1960s. San Francisco offered a rare picture of urban vibrancy and harmony against a national image of urban blight and chaos. As urban renewal identified New York and other cities with the wrecking ball, San Francisco raised construction cranes. San Francisco’s “Manhattanization” produced a new skyline to announce its emergence as a West Coast hub of business and technology.²⁰

On film, San Francisco underwent a far darker Manhattanization than its urban boosters could imagine. By the early 1970s, this beacon of urban hope looked as rundown and entropic as New York, a city struggling with street crime and teetering on the verge of bankruptcy. Films such as *Dirty Harry* and *The Conversation* depicted a San Francisco far more similar to the desolate New York of *The French Connection* and *Taxi Driver* (1976) than the city of *Vertigo* or *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner*. The exception to urban decline offscreen readily succumbed to it onscreen.

San Francisco’s relative prosperity during an era dominated by national stories of urban decline offers another advantage. This distinction helps separate San Francisco’s specific urban experience from its cinematic history. Changes onscreen, largely captured by non-resident filmmakers, reflect national concerns and Hollywood trends far more than local realities. The cinematic degradation of the urban exception suggests that filmmaking overpowers the local complexities of physical place far more readily than scholars have previously recognized—let alone closely examined. While filmmakers

always exploited San Francisco's unique production value as a location, the chosen sites varied with larger trends in filmmaking. In the 1950s and 1960s, tourist attractions were choice locations, but vice districts and redevelopment zones would be just as popular for the bleak urban crime dramas of the 1970s.

The near total omission of key parts of San Francisco's geography and history from Hollywood films further distinguishes the city from its screen image. Prior to the late 1960s, Hollywood filmmakers overwhelmingly focused on downtown San Francisco, all but ignoring neighborhoods outside of the city center. In *Petulia*, the appearance of Daly City, an area just south of the city, is a jarring exception to Hollywood's concentration on downtown scenic districts and surrounding tourist attractions. While *The Graduate* (1967) crossed into Berkeley and *The Laughing Policeman* (1973) set a scene in Oakland, the relationship between San Francisco and the rest of the Bay Area had a negligible impact on films shot in the city. San Francisco's late-1960s counterculture was a salient feature of the location-shooting boom in the city, but other aspects of San Francisco's cultural history were largely overlooked. For instance, *The Subterraneans* (1960), based on Jack Kerouac's novel about the city's Beat culture, was perhaps the only studio film of its period to depict this major San Francisco movement.²¹ Hollywood's image of San Francisco was narrowly focused, providing an object of study often isolated from the city's local contexts.

LOCATION SHOOTING AS PRACTICE

Shooting on location versus the studio lot has always involved a cost/benefit analysis. Production values, economic incentives, and relative risk are always critical factors, and in the classical Hollywood era, this analysis largely favored shooting on

sound stages and the backlot. The exceptional practice, shooting on location, entailed ceding a varying level of control provided by the studio infrastructure. Shooting second unit footage of the Golden Gate Bridge obviously entails less risk than shooting star actors driving across the bridge (as in *Dark Passage*), or racing through the streets of San Francisco in *Bullitt*. Historic increases in the prevalence of location shooting indicate either temporary or lasting changes that shift the balance favorably towards shooting off the set.

The key factors informing this decision can be broken into four categories: economics, technologies, aesthetics, and logistics. These same factors also define the practice of location shooting. Even crews shooting entirely on location are limited by budget, photographic requirements, the desired “look” of the film, and the difficulty of staging scenes in actual places. Furthermore, the relative impact of each of these factors changes over time. For instance, a technological development, faster film stock, reduced the need for larger lights, thus saving money, providing greater stylistic flexibility, and opening locations previously too narrow to accommodate larger lights. Conversely, a beautiful site captured in widescreen Technicolor could offer production value well worth the expense and difficulty of location shooting. While solutions to best balance these factors are specific to each scene and each film, Hollywood filmmakers regularly favored similar strategies that well suited historical limitations and opportunities. Industry-wide practices in location shooting not only motivated the choice of San Francisco as a location, but also guided filmmakers to certain parts of the city captured in a certain light.

In *Widescreen Cinema*, John Belton provides a valuable model for analyzing the complicated transition of a minority practice in Hollywood, large format cinema, into the dominant method of filmmaking. Rather than following a linear development, widescreen cinema emerged when economic forces, technological developments, and the culture of

movie going created the right circumstances for experimentation and rapid adoption of widescreen cinema. The mutual reinforcement of these contributing factors promoted a change in filmmaking practice by removing earlier obstacles to adoption.²² Similarly, location shooting predated sound stage filmmaking, but the Hollywood studio system of mass production realized greater efficiencies and aesthetic achievements working under the carefully controlled setting of the physical studio. Location shooting reemerged as a viable alternative to sound stage production in the postwar as studios coped with three decades of industry instability that separated the postwar decline of the Classical studio system and the relative stability of the blockbuster era. Meanwhile, improvements in technology, changing aesthetics, and refinements in production methods allowed location shooting to replace studio lot production as the primary Hollywood filmmaking practice by the early 1970s. In the process, San Francisco would be transformed from an occasional scenic backdrop to a living back lot for Hollywood filmmakers and television producers.

a. Economics

William Lafferty provides a precise example of how economic factors can promote location shooting. Rising production costs, labor unrest, and a shortage of studio space increased the incentive to shoot on location, producing a series of semi-documentary Hollywood films from 1945-1948.²³ However, the location filmmaking boom immediately following the war produced only a handful of features and one celebrated film: *The Naked City*. A sustained, industry-wide shift in dominance from studio shooting to location shooting suggests greater economic changes at work.

The economics of location production were inseparable from the economics of soundstage production for two fundamental reasons. The first is the major studios' enormous investment in physical production facilities, which by the 1930s covered vast tracts of Los Angeles real estate and boasted an array of onsite labor, industrial structures, and ancillary services akin to a small city.²⁴ An overhead charge, applied as a percentage cost to each film, paid for this massive infrastructure. Thus as Hollywood transitioned out of mass production and produced fewer films, each film had to shoulder a higher overhead charge. The quickest solution would be the periodic layoffs of hundreds of studio craftsmen, with the most drastic downsizing occurring during the crises of the late 1940s and the Hollywood Recession of 1969-1971. While shedding workers trimmed overhead, the studios still sat on acres of underutilized production space on the increasingly expensive real estate of Los Angeles. And although producing fewer films, the studios still required sound stages and back lot sets to complete most pictures through the late 1960s.

The tenuous solution would be a prolonged transition from production facilities to rental facilities, a model that increasingly paid overhead costs by renting stages to independent film producers, followed by television producers in the 1950s. This strategy remains the primary model for studio lots today, but the transition was turbulent, with studio lots often going from full to nearly empty in only a few years. Upturns in studio rentals facilitated runaway features that would require less use of studio space. Downturns led to major companies selling portions of their central and ancillary studio lots, and as overhead climbed, feature films needed to return to the lot before rising overhead and disuse lowered the value of studio assets. Until shooting entirely on location became a regular practice in the early 1970s, Hollywood favored a hybrid

approach, whereby the lots would be partially rented and partially occupied by studio-produced features.

The same hybrid approach would develop for individual films due to the second major economic motivator, production budgets. The postwar shift towards independent production dramatically changed Hollywood economics. Factors such as consent decrees to limit block booking, a shortage of film stock, and longer theatrical runs raised the value of individual features during World War II. Emphasizing fewer, more expensive features created a gap in the market for independent producers to fill. Such producers, particularly directors and stars, paid significantly lower taxes as independent companies rather than individual workers. If these factors spurred new independent producers to enter the market, larger changes altered the fundamental economic logic of production. If mass production favored economies of scale, the declining output of features favored one-time costs over fixed costs such as salaries and equipment purchases. Leasing talent and technology became more profitable than buying it, decreasing the economic advantage of in-house production. While the efficiencies of the set became less important, location shooting began to offer substantial financial incentives to shoot outside of Hollywood.²⁵

European location shooting offered the clearest economic advantages in the 1950s, allowing Hollywood to spend frozen funds and capitalize on co-production financing. They could also take advantage of cheaper labor costs abroad. Yet location shooting in Europe held additional risks; runaway production could yield runaway production expenses. For example, *Cleopatra* (1963) sapped Fox's resources as it expensively dragged on in Italy.²⁶ By the end of the 1950s, most of the savings gained through additional production funds and lower labor costs would dissipate through longer production schedules due to less experienced European foreign workers and inadequate

production facilities. And while location shooting remained a key component of runaway films, most productions still required typical set building and sound stage cinematography in facilities such as Rome's CineCitta and London's Pinewood Studios.

Shooting on location in the San Francisco had to be far more efficient to justify the expense because no comparable financial incentives existed. Yet after the price of set construction ballooned in the late 1940s, shooting certain scenes on location could be far cheaper than building them on the back lot. The growing contingent of independent producers in the 1950s, who owned no standing sets and bristled at the climbing rental fees for Hollywood studio space, experimented with more extensive location shooting. *The Lineup*, a lower-budget, independent production for Columbia, shot extensively in San Francisco, minimizing expensive studio work; the same year, Alfred Hitchcock, with an in-house production deal at Paramount, could afford to shoot most of *Vertigo* (1958) on the studio lot, relying on locations only for their photographic value. By the 1960s, Roger Corman would exemplify the efficiencies of location shooting, gladly sacrificing production value for the money saved on studio rentals and set construction. Corman's myriad teen exploitation films like *The Wild Angels* (1966) and *Wild in the Streets* (1968) sent young casts and crews to film on location with shoestring budgets.²⁷ Like earlier B-westerns, these location shoots offered natural spectacles without the cost of elaborate sets, backdrops and lighting.

By the 1960s, location shooting became far more prevalent, but scholars have largely overlooked the economics shifts driving this practice. Aside from foreign runaway production in the 1950s and the rise of New American Cinema (1967), scholars and journalists overwhelmingly describe Hollywood location shooting as an aesthetic rather than economic choice. For example, Peter Biskind describes location shooting as a stylistic movement led by late 1960s auteurs, but they had plenty of acclaimed precedents

from the early 1960s, like *Elmer Gantry* (1960), *Hud* (1963), *The Pawnbroker* (1965), and *The Russians are Coming, The Russians are Coming* (1965).²⁸ Meanwhile, dozens of road movies shot on location, ranging from exploitation films like *Drag Strip Girl* (1957) and *Drag Strip Riot* (1958) to major productions like *It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World* (1963) and *The Great Race* (1965). My research in *American Cinematographer* and *Variety* reveals that over the course of the 1960s, the cost of location shooting gradually declined due to technological and logistical innovations, many developed as a response to the restrictive budgets and schedules for television production.

The greatest boom in location shooting would occur during the Hollywood Recession of 1969-1971, which all but froze investment in new production with the exception of inexpensive features targeting the youth market. One of the unifying factors among young film production companies such as BBS and American Zoetrope would be sub-million dollar budgets, which qualified for a union exception to use smaller crews.²⁹ The recession brought historic levels of unemployment for union production workers, marking a nadir for Hollywood craft unions that had fought runaway production for decades but failed to bring steady production back to Hollywood. Meanwhile, cities such as New York and San Francisco offered full cooperation to further increase location shooting and reduce the cost.

The term “Hollywood” long held an imprecise meaning, describing a global American film industry with major production facilities located throughout Greater Los Angeles and executive offices in Los Angeles and New York. The rise of both location shooting and independent production during the period of this study brought further uncertainty to “Hollywood” films. The physical process of production became increasingly severed from the business decisions centered in Los Angeles as studio executives ceded direct control over daily production to independent producers often

working on location. As studio-financed and distributed productions boomed in other locations, such as London and San Francisco, *Variety* revealed a Hollywood struggling with its self-definition as feature production ceased to be a central function of the studio lots. Nonetheless, the limitations imposed by studio production deals and budgets favored certain styles and production techniques, especially on location. In this dissertation, the term Hollywood film does not assume a Los Angeles-based production or a consistent filmmaking practice. Rather it refers to production trends in American studio-financed features during specific periods of the film industry's prolonged reconfiguration following the collapse of the classical studio system.

Between the 1940s and 1970s, industry-wide economic shifts shaped both the expansion of location shooting and the types of feature films that favored location shooting. On the level of production costs, it is impossible to separate economic changes from technological development. Shooting foreign locations in the mid-1950s was prohibitively inefficient. Studios derived economy by manipulating finance agreements with other nations, not by developing a viable alternative to sound stage production. By the early 1960s for black-and-white film and the late 1960s for color, location filmmaking technology advanced to a point where it proved just as cost-effective as shooting on a sound stage.

b. Technology

While a host of production technologies facilitated location shooting, improvements in film speed and equipment mobility had the greatest impact. Arc lights provide a key example of both of these factors. Through the 1960s, these massive lights, which required an individual operator and generator for a power source, were a mainstay

of production both at the studio and on location. In the 1940s, even a cloudy day could require arc lights to boost exposure levels, and a rainy day could halt shooting due to inadequate light for a daytime shot.³⁰ They were far too big to fit in any interior location without high ceilings to accommodate them. Each time Kodak released faster black-and-white stock between the 1940s and 1960s, smaller lights, often powered by household electricity, could provide enough light to supplant these bulky, expensive, and time-consuming units. By the early 1960s, only night exteriors required arc lights, and by the mid-1960s, black-and-white cinematographers could delicately light any scene with an array of small lights rather than the aptly named Brute Arc. Color film required far more light, especially for widescreen processes. Only the arrival of Eastman 5254 stock in late 1968 allowed many color filmmakers to abandon their primary lighting tool. Leaving arc lights behind not only facilitated location shooting, but also opened up new film locations previously deemed impossible to photograph.

Barry Salt provides one of the most comprehensive studies of the development of film technology over decades of Hollywood filmmaking. However his focus on style and technology precludes a discussion of how production economics and film technology shape each other.³¹ In *The Talkies*, Donald Crafton provides a thorough example of how the interaction of economics and technology guided the transition to sound, and developments in location shooting proceeded in the same fashion, albeit over a much larger time period that required key components such as smaller lights, portable cameras, and handheld sound recorders.³² While certain technologies, such as the Cinemobile, were specifically designed for location production, other developments, such as smaller lights and faster film stock, impacted sound stage production as well as non-theatrical production. As a result, the development of filmmaking technologies vital to location shooting moves in multiple directions, with technologies gaining prominence in

documentary filmmaking and television before being transplanted to location filmmaking. Subsequently, certain location technologies, such as Arriflex cameras, were readily adapted to sound stage work to add speed, flexibility, and a style of location realism.

Looking at larger trends in Hollywood production practices and economics helps explain the development of location shooting as an ancillary practice. The combat conditions of World War II both accelerated the development of handheld cameras and set a precedent for their use in Hollywood location shooting immediately after the war.³³ The financial incentive to shoot European locations created a greater need for faster film stock and mobile camera units. Television's rapid production pace created a stronger demand for faster setups and lower lighting costs, driving the development of faster and more portable technologies. The downsizing of studio camera departments and the rise of independent production helped move technological innovations away from the studio, as technicians marketed their production tools to independent producers and rental houses. The Cinemobile exemplified these trends as a technology developed for television location shooting that found ready acceptance during the location shooting boom of the Hollywood recession.

Location technology also had to compete with established studio technologies for establishing photorealistic backgrounds, particularly rear projection, which underwent modest improvements over the course of the 1950s and 1960s. Through rear projection, color widescreen films, which required very high light levels for the actors, could meticulously light the stars in the studio while second unit crews provided ideally lit background plates. Rear projection also offered an economic compromise between two expensive alternatives, building large sets and shooting principal photography on location. Thus the realism associated with location shooting, which I will discuss in the

next section, could only be efficiently achieved in situations where both actors and backgrounds could be simultaneously captured under proper exposure. Similarly, interior location shots with exterior backgrounds needed to carefully balance exposure levels and color temperature. In short, while rear projection appears artificial to contemporary viewers, capturing the alternative on location could also prove technologically complicated or produce a less convincing image due to lighting contrasts between foreground and background.

c. Aesthetics

Film scholars often identify realism as both the goal of location shooting and its aesthetic result. However, competing styles and production practices make it impossible to mutually define a realist style and location shooting. For instance, the escapist *Gigi* (1958) shot extensively on location while the stark, urban drama, *Blackboard Jungle* (1955), rarely left the Columbia lot. Directors and cinematographers pursuing a realist aesthetic undeniably favored location shooting, but the practice alone was no guarantee of photorealistic results for two important reasons. First, the technical and economic demands of location shooting inevitably compromised attempts at greater realism. Secondly, location shooting often pursued real places as spectacular backdrops rather than realistic settings.

Before describing the role of location shooting among Hollywood's changing aesthetics in the three decades following the war, I must again emphasize how critical economic and technical factors were to the achievement of realism outside of the studio. Shooting on a limited budget, poor weather and logistical problems on location could quickly set filmmakers behind schedule, resulting in missed scenes and discontinuities

within scenes. This remained true despite major technological advances. For example, as Coppola fell behind schedule shooting *The Conversation* Walter Murch's unconventional editing not only added art-cinema flair, but also compensated for segments of the narrative that Coppola could not afford to shoot. For cinematographers working in the 1940s, improper exposure at a cloudy location threatened the appearance of a realistic setting far more than the use of sets. Changing light levels on location wreaked havoc on continuity as late as *Jaws*. Finally, as discussed with rear projection, composite shots created at the studio could offer a more realistic image than location shooting and a safer process for dangerous scenes such as car chases.

Even in ideal shooting conditions, real locations were not synonymous with realist aesthetics. In particular, San Francisco, with its collection of landmarks and picturesque vistas, often imbued even in semi-documentary style films with moments of visual revelry. *Bullitt's* famed car chase was both the exemplar for realist location shooting in the late 1960s and a fantastical tour of the city whose screen time far exceeds its narrative importance. Thus location shooting offered the same tension between narrative and spectacle inherent to classical Hollywood cinema as theorized by Tom Gunning.³⁴ Indeed, filmmakers' emphasis on real locations could cause the background to intrude on the foreground, vying for visual and narrative attention. Haskell Wexler, arguably the most influential realist cinematographer of the 1960s and 1970s, brought this tension to its apex in *Medium Cool* (1969), where the Chicago Convention riots in the background overshadow the actress walking through the foreground.

André Bazin addresses this tension from another important angle in an early essay on Italian neo-realism. He writes, "Realism in art can only be achieved in one way—through artifice."³⁵ For Bazin, film fundamentally aims to produce "the illusion of reality," and hence a core contradiction between artistic technique and material reality

lies at the heart of filmmaking. Location shooting adds a sense of realism through photographic verisimilitude, but such an effect can conspire against the real conditions of an actual place. Thus in *Dirty Harry*, location shooting suggested that San Francisco was falling into ruin despite outperforming most American cities in fighting economic, cultural, and social decline.³⁶

In a more pragmatic passage, Bazin notes how the grey tonality of Rossellini's films cleverly matched newsreel aesthetics.³⁷ Here a stronger illusion of reality arose via association with contemporary documentary films, a mode of filmmaking purporting to reveal actual events as they unfolded. In his war trilogy, Rossellini encouraged viewers to conflate a realist style with realistic content, making staged events appear more true to life by adapting the style of non-fiction filmmaking. A similar conflation of style and content underlies less critical realist assumptions in film scholarship. As in neo-realism, the use of real locations *per se* does not necessarily enhance a film's realism. Instead, location filmmaking employs the perceived realism of lived spaces and the generic association of filming lived spaces with documentary form (often paired with other stylistic allusions to documentary, such as handheld camerawork). The resulting film narrative produced a persuasive but precarious illusion of reality. A realist aesthetic had to adapt to changes in film aesthetics and technology, as well as changes in public perceptions of spatial reality, such as the condition of American cities. Similarly, to maintain a semi-documentary aesthetic, Hollywood films had to adapt to new documentary styles, such as cinema-verité, which required new techniques, lighting schemes, mobile cameras, and zoom lenses.

Realist aesthetics had generic associations that factored into the progression of location shooting. Most of the case studies in this dissertation are detective and police films, genres most frequently set in urban milieu where real locations offered convincing

and exciting realms of action for protagonists. Yet there are important exceptions that show how readily location shooting and realist narratives could be divorced. As Robert Shandley detailed in *Runaway Romances*, touristic love stories set in European cities in the 1950s and 1960s featured actors traipsing through real foreign locations; in these popular features such as *Roman Holiday* (1953), as well as Cinerama travelogues, beautiful locations were a spectacle despite their ontological realism. As John Belton has argued, developments in widescreen cinema created a renewed novelty phase where real locations, extended horizontally across the frame, were not merely settings but escapist attractions.³⁸ *Vertigo* offered a similar storybook depiction of San Francisco, albeit as a component of a murder plot.

As location shooting became a major component of most features by the late 1960s, it set a standard of photographic realism that permeated all genres. In 1967, several critics pilloried the style of *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?*, where San Francisco appeared largely through painted backdrops and rear projection.³⁹ Drawing-room comedies had little association with realist aesthetics, but as location shooting became an industry-wide practice, location-shooting techniques and aesthetics permeated more films. Even the fantastical disaster film, *The Towering Inferno*, employed handheld cameras and zooms to make studio sets appear to be an actual skyscraper in San Francisco. As Bazin observed in the late-1940s, semi-documentary technique added a sense of realism to realistic narratives. But Hollywood producers also found that semi-documentary techniques could also add a sense of realism to fantastical stories and situations.

In *Hollywood Lighting*, Patrick Keating provides four functional groupings for cinematography that offer a useful terminology to discuss changing norms in aesthetic realism between 1945 and 1975. Keating identifies storytelling, realism, pictorial quality,

and glamour as the four fundamental goals of cinematic lighting, but notes that such effects are rarely achieved in isolation. Instead classical Hollywood cinematographers favor techniques that achieve more than one of these qualities; for example, low key lighting establishes the emotional tone of a crime story, the appropriate setting for criminals hiding their deeds in the darkness, and arguably the psychological reality of a bleak, sinister lifestyle.⁴⁰ Even glamour, the seeming antithesis of realism, may be realistic for a story featuring glamorous lifestyles, as in the European romances of the 1950s.

Film noir remains a key critical paradigm for realist aesthetics in the 1940s and 1950s. But from its earliest definitions, film noir suggested both realism and stylization, leading James Naremore to conclude that there is no unifying aesthetic to cover film noir.⁴¹ Film noir could achieve photographic realism through location shooting in real urban spaces, but these aesthetic touches did not overtake the demands of socially real narratives or the stylized, psychological realism of melodramatic lighting.⁴² As Keating concluded, classical Hollywood realism was an art of compromise; the exceptional practice of location shooting had to bend to the firmly established demands of studio-constructed realism.⁴³

The Naked City, perhaps the definitive semi-documentary urban crime drama of the late 1940s, alternated between an aesthetic realism and a narrative realism. The photographic realism of location shooting, particularly the exterior shots of the city paired with a documentary-style narrator, set the tone. For interiors, however, typical studio lighting helped add shadows and depth to sparse interior sets.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, the exterior location footage and realistic narrative depiction of police procedure helped compensate for the generic interior shots.⁴⁵ *Dark Passage*, set in San Francisco, represented a more stylized semi-documentary aesthetic, in no small part due to the need

to glamorously light Lauren Bacall and Humphrey Bogart. Yet the insistence on professional polish throughout the film helped minimize both the extent and the impact of location footage. The struggle to balance the roughness of documentary style, a source of realism, with the aesthetic standards of sound stage lighting, would remain a defining challenge for filmmakers shooting on location through the 1960s.

A paradigm shift in the 1950s created a rather different pairing of photographic realism and glamour realism, or more succinctly, tourism. If in *The Naked City*, location shooting added a realism to compensate for artificially lit interiors, now the spectacle of real locations augmented the spectacle of Hollywood color cinematography and lighting. Black and white police procedurals on television, such as *Dragnet* (1951-1959) and *The Lineup* (1954-1960), set in San Francisco, as well as modest budget films, more closely adhered to their semi-documentary precedents. On low to modest budgets, real locations offered production value provided they could be shot expediently with available daylight. In this form, a less ambitious semi-documentary style chose adequately captured real locations over the meticulous, low-key lighting associated with other film noirs.

A critical reevaluation of location shooting as a potential asset compared to studio filmmaking developed over the 1950s. Otto Preminger offered a common explanation for location filming: audiences prefer authentic locations for authentic stories. Such rhetoric helped sell these films, but it denied a less noticeable element of realism: pictorial quality. When Paramount shot *Roman Holiday*, studio executives made a conscious decision to sacrifice Hollywood quality in order to extract frozen Italian funds.⁴⁶ Real locations cannot serve as realistic settings if shot or edited without professional competence or consistency. Paramount successfully gambled that an economically advantageous realism (Italian location shooting) might overcome sub-Hollywood aesthetic standards. This incident underlines Hollywood's own contribution to realism

that is as vital as it is counterintuitive. Hollywood's expensive sets and artificial lighting produced a paradigm for film realism, where departures, whether more or less photographically realistic, risked audience awareness of the illusion. This helps explain the prevalence of rear projection through the 1960s, which allowed both scenic backdrops and foreground actors to be ideally photographed separately rather than compromise for both planes of the image. Filmmakers most often chose this artificial combination of foreground and background over shooting actors on location, where figure lighting had to partially concede to the real background.

Blake Edwards' two 1962 San Francisco films, *Experiment in Terror* and *Days of Wine and Roses* remind us of a significant realist form prevalent in the early 1960s: the black-and-white Cinemascope film. These films, as well as others like *The Hustler*, *Hud*, and later, *In Cold Blood*, exemplified a major aesthetic trend associated with location shooting and "natural lighting," a term cinematographers used to describe setting lights to best simulate the actual appearance of real locations. The style set the visual tone for a wave of realist American films, such as several Tennessee Williams adaptations, where dark stories of tortured, isolated people played out primarily in American locations rather than Los Angeles back lots. These films once again cross-fertilized notions of realism in the two previous periods. As the novelty phase wore off (and the TV profits remained in black and white), the combined spectacle of color and widescreen continued in genres such as the epic and the romance. Yet the contemporary social issue films of the 1960s rejected both the stylization of the city in film noir and the glamorization of the foreign escapade. They bought the hard focus of noir, along with more sensitive film stock for exterior cinematography, to the expanded canvas of the widescreen frame.

There is an important aesthetic continuity between filmmakers shooting bleak American stories on location in the 1950s and 1960s and the New American Cinema of

the later 1960s. Many of the filmmakers of this era, such as Blake Edwards, John Frankenheimer, and Sidney Lumet, began shooting live television dramas before moving into features, and this experience informed a new style of location shooting. The chronology of realism too often excludes this period, and Shandley provides a clear case in point. He argues how the location practices of the 1950s create a bridge to the New American cinema of the late 1960s, overlooking this key formative period.⁴⁷ And while James Monaco's history, *The Sixties*, acknowledges early 60s films like *The Hustler*, 1967 still serves as the 'watershed' year without careful attention to these films' debt to this earlier period of acclaimed social realism. Denise Mann touches upon this aesthetic in films like *The Sweet Smell of Success* (1957) and *A Face in the Crowd* (1957), but rather than gesturing towards the early 1960s, she leaves these as high points of postwar independent production and speculates on their impact on post-1967 American cinema.⁴⁸ The present work will help fill this gap in scholarship, more carefully rejoining New American Cinema to developments in late 1950s television and filmmaking in the first half of the 1960s.

In 1968, several production practices relied on portable Arriflex cameras, available light, zoom lenses, and ad-hoc camera setups to shoot extensively on location without spending hours lighting locations or carefully controlling crowds. Often lumped under an umbrella-term, "cinema-vérité," this location shooting technique was used for television series, television commercials, direct-cinema documentaries, and New Wave art films in various countries. In the late 1960s, as several media converged in this effective style that offered a "new look" for Hollywood features, various media converged on San Francisco as the new capital of the counter-culture. Location shooting not only quickly expanded for Hollywood features but increasingly captured cities with little staging, capturing public sites before background subjects could notice a camera.

Two young British directors, Richard Lester and Peter Yates, adapted the popular style of British youth films to remarkably different films, *Bullitt* and *Petulia*, both released in 1968 and shot entirely on location in San Francisco. At a time of rapid cultural upheaval, filmmakers increasingly favored capturing the moment over capturing a perfectly lit and composed shot. Meanwhile, the documentary association of the style helped establish a new style of semi-documentaries that defined most urban films of the early 1970s.

As location shooting expanded, cinema aesthetics grew darker, both as a response to the violence of the era and as excitement over faster film stock that now allowed filmmakers to shoot in near total darkness. With black-and-white film all but eliminated from Hollywood features by the late 1960s, filmmakers also crafted a bleak color aesthetic for films that less than a decade earlier, would have been shot in black and white. Extensive location shooting in American cities in *Midnight Cowboy*, *Dirty Harry*, *The French Connection*, and *The Conversation* sought out the worst corners of the city to fit the growing public perception of urban decay following the wave of race riots and student protests in American cities in the late 1960s. As shooting films almost entirely on location became the dominant style for Hollywood filmmaking, the new semi-documentaries exploited efficient location techniques to penetrate the ugly recesses of the struggling inner city.

d. Logistics

Actual production histories are often anecdotal, or worse apocryphal. Perhaps dubious Hollywood memoirs and “Making of...” specials have alienated most scholars from researching the details of individual productions. In recent years, work in the subfield of production studies, notably John Caldwell’s *Production Culture* and the

edited collection by Vicki Mayer, Miranda Banks, and Caldwell, *Production Studies*, has established closer attention to the daily realities of production labor.⁴⁹ The focus of the vast majority of production studies work has been contemporary rather than historical, in part due to an emphasis on ethnographies of production workers. Furthermore, the cultural studies emphasis of production studies addresses the impact of production upon creative industry employees, rather than the details of production processes. In this dissertation, I similarly explore working conditions for production personnel but with a rather different objective.

While location filming grew more efficient over the period of this study, it remained a complicated process involving not only transporting and setting up equipment, but forcing residential places to function like sets, which much be controlled for not only lighting, art direction and sound but also permission of use and public safety. Unlike productions shot in Los Angeles, distant location shoots in cities like San Francisco required feeding and housing dozens if not hundreds of workers, including cast and crew. Unless they secured an alternative interior location, producers remained at the mercy of bad weather, which could not only degrade the image but in the 1940s and 1950s, could make shooting impossible. Larger crews and longer setups drew crowds, particularly in places that unlike New York and Los Angeles, were unaccustomed to regular filmmaking. Local policemen would be required to both secure the set and secure the surrounding population from danger, particularly during car chases and explosions performed on location. Finally, filmmakers risked losing access to locations or future opportunities to shoot in a location if they inconvenienced residents or embarrassed prominent citizens with their screen representations.

Over the period of this study, location shooting rose from an ancillary practice to the primary method for principal photography in Hollywood features. Not until the 1970s

did Hollywood fully develop methods for efficiently coping with all of these logistical difficulties. Shooting extensively on location in the late 1940s was an experimental practice, as was each further expansion of location shooting in ensuing decades. Crowds ruined scenes not only in *Dark Passage* but also in 1960s films like *Experiment in Terror*. Finding interior locations as backup sets in case of bad weather only developed as a practice in the 1960s. While a successful location shoot could save money over building expensive sets, it introduced a higher level of variability on the cost of the picture. Once over budget or schedule, productions could be forced to return to the lot before incurring even greater costs. Steve McQueen had to break his contract with Warner Brothers in order to keep an over-budget *Bullitt* in San Francisco rather than shoot remaining car chases on the back lot.⁵⁰

As San Francisco gained frequent attention from Hollywood producers in the 1960s, it also developed practices to better accommodate location filmmakers. John Lindsay set the model for courting productions to New York in the second half of the 1960s.⁵¹ San Francisco's Mayor Alioto would follow suit, hoping to use San Francisco's boom in media attention to build a regular filmmaking economy and perhaps establish San Francisco as a feature production center. Yet as location filmmaking grew more frequent, the stardust fell from residents eyes and they demanded more from Hollywood. Alioto and other proponents of location filmmaking struggled against other prominent residents who saw greater inconveniences and bad publicity for the city coming from Hollywood productions, particularly the violent police films and television series that dominated San Francisco's screen image. Location shooting in San Francisco boomed just prior to an era where several other cities vied for film production with financial incentives such as tax breaks. San Francisco provides an early case study of a popular

location trying to transition into a production center, based largely on its famous appearance.

CINEMA AND THE CITY

My study of San Francisco's screen image contributes to a growing body of interdisciplinary scholarship on the relationship between cinema and the city. Since the mid-1990s, the analysis of cinema and urban space has produced a major concentration of interdisciplinary scholarship. David Clarke's edited collection, *The Cinematic City*, appeared in 1997 as the first major collection structured around filmed cities. Since then, over half a dozen relevant collections have appeared, including *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context* (ed. Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice, 2001), *Screening the City* (2003), *Cities in Transition: The Moving Image and the Modern Metropolis* (ed. Andrew Webber and Emma Wilson, 2008), *The City and the Moving Image* (ed. Richard Koeck and Les Roberts, 2010), *Noir Urbanisms: Dystopic Images of the Modern City* (ed. Gyan Prakash, 2010), and *Urban Cinematics* (Francois Penz and Andong Lu, 2011). The number of collections underscores not only how many scholars address the topic of cities and cinema but the disparity between their approaches. For example, Penz and Lu's multidisciplinary collection draws upon scholars from film studies, architecture, landscape design, urban design, geography and urban history, *Urban Cinematics* both analyzes onscreen cities and suggests how film analysis could shape urban design.

While scholarship on cinema and the city uses a diversity of approaches, areas of concentration emerge around specific locations, specific time periods, and even specific films. For instance, both architectural and film historian Giuliana Bruno and urban

theorist David Harvey would explore *Blade Runner* (1982) as the defining cinematic vision of the Postmodern urban condition.⁵² I will briefly describe these major concentrations of scholarship to both identify the lack of scholarship on San Francisco as a film location as well as the relative lack of detailed scholarship that spans a specific city for more than a decade. The exceptions are Los Angeles and New York, but as production centers, these cities have a different relationship between filmmakers and the city than cities like San Francisco that primarily served as a location.

Despite its relative abundance as a location for American film, no scholarly work carefully addresses San Francisco's screen representation beyond a single film case study. With the exception of Cunningham's edited collection on *Vertigo*, only a handful of authors analyze a San Francisco film with an emphasis on urban space.⁵³ While this may appear to be a flagrant omission, the same could be said for most cities except the following five: New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Rome, and Berlin. Not surprisingly, these are the filmmaking capitals of the four historically largest Western filmmaking countries.

Scholarship on these five major cities frequently falls into specific time periods, which include: Early cinema in New York (1890s-1910s), Weimar cinema in Berlin (1920s-1930s), film noir in Los Angeles (1940s-1950s), Neo-Realism in Rome (1940s-1950s), French New Wave in Paris (1960), American Auteur cinema in New York (1970s), and Postmodern cinema in Los Angeles (1980s-1990s). The limitation of such concentrated work on key periods is the ability to analyze larger changes in urban production practices. Only a handful of studies span multiple decades in a single city, including two works on Hollywood cinema in New York (Richard Kozarski's *Hollywood on the Hudson* and James Sanders' *Celluloid Skyline*) and Mark Shiel's recent work on Hollywood cinema and Los Angeles (*The Real Los Angeles*). Other scholars have traced Hollywood urbanism over several decades in New York and Los Angeles through

specific urban typologies, including Merrill Schleier's *Skyscraper Cinema* and Pam Wojciek's *The Apartment Plot*.⁵⁴ These longer views trace changes in depiction and signification for urban iconography, and thus inform this current work, which emphasizes incremental changes in production practices and urban depiction.

Unlike New York and Los Angeles, San Francisco never developed a local feature filmmaking industry. By the late 1960s, San Francisco had a number of filmmakers, but they largely concentrated on television commercials and later, underground filmmaking. Only in the early 1970s could filmmakers based in Northern California actually shoot and edit feature films in San Francisco, including Francis Ford Coppola, George Lucas, and Michael Ritchie. Filmmakers shooting on location in Los Angeles were by and large shooting their home city. Many filmmakers working in New York had the same local experience, especially directors like John Frankenheimer and Sidney Lumet, who emerged from New York's live television industry. In Hollywood films, San Francisco largely appeared through the eyes of visiting filmmakers, not resident artists. San Francisco was primarily a location, not a production center, and thus its screen depiction often reveals more about Hollywood's approach to cities than San Francisco's specific urban culture.

Scholarship on the cinematic depiction of cities always faces a question of causation: to what extent do filmmakers shape the image of a city and to what extent does the actual city shape films? For many scholars, films shot on location in cities lend poetic meaning and criticism to the real changes in a city's urban history. Edward Dimendberg exemplifies such an approach in *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity*. Here film noir serves as an emotional exploration of the spatial strategies transforming Los Angeles from a modern into a Postmodern city. Stanley Corkin's *Starring New York: Filming the Grime and the Glamour of the Long 1970s* (2011) moves even further towards an urban

explanation of film. For Corkin, New York's changing urban status, structures, and strategies actually molded the narratives of films shot in 1970s New York. Similarly, in *Street Smart: The New York of Lumet, Allen, Scorsese, and Lee* (2005), Richard Blake argued that growing up in New York tangibly impacted the style and subject of New York filmmakers.

Implicit in Blake's work is a counterargument, particularly when he argues that New York filmmakers employ a "New York" aesthetic, even when making films set outside of New York.⁵⁵ If New York is a state of mind, then filmmakers can Manhattanize any location. *Dirty Harry* Scholars such as James Sanders distinguish between the fantasy of New York constructed on the sound stage and films shot in the actual city.⁵⁶ Yet the common conflation of realism and real locations masks the fact that filmmakers are more than capable of constructing urban fantasies while shooting on location. For example, *Bullitt* and *Petulia* shot almost simultaneously in San Francisco and suggested two remarkably different cities. Even local filmmakers, such as Clint Eastwood, found a San Francisco in *Dirty Harry* that more closely resembled a declining downtown Manhattan than the actual city.

With rare exception, the local realities of San Francisco's unique urban culture would be subsumed by Hollywood's prevailing methods for depicting cities. While acknowledging misrepresentation, this dissertation is not concerned with a colloquial debate over real vs. 'reel' cities. Hollywood films that adhere faithfully to local geographies are rare exceptions. Like films shot in strict continuity, they represent a minority practice with intangible results. Hollywood's 'creative geography' largely followed decisions based on economic efficiency. Attention to real vs. reel masks another assumption: that a real city can be fully captured on film. This is the myth of total cinema magnified to an urban scale.

CRIME, LOCATION SHOOTING, AND URBAN REALISM

All of the case studies in this dissertation feature crimes, and for most of them, crime is the central plotline. This is not an arbitrary decision but rather an indication of the strong tie between Hollywood urban realism, location shooting, and crime genres, including semi-documentaries, film noirs, detective dramas, and police films. Over half of the 117 films set partially or entirely in San Francisco produced between 1945 and 1975 are crime stories.⁵⁷ These include many of the most influential films shot in the city, such as *Vertigo*, *Bullitt*, and *Dirty Harry*, as well as films that pushed the boundaries of location shooting, such as *Dark Passage*, *Experiment in Terror*, and *The Conversation*. As a point of comparison, the most popular comedies set in San Francisco, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967) and *What's up, Doc?* (1972), were described by critics and filmmakers as unrealistic, old-Hollywood depictions of the city.⁵⁸ While genre analysis is not the major focus of my study, genre conventions clearly shaped the types of films that shot in San Francisco in a given period.

As described earlier, location shooting is not synonymous with realism, but Hollywood filmmakers often conflated this practice and aesthetic goal, particularly in crime genres. Urban settings were a staple of many crime films, especially after the popular wave of gangster films like *Little Caesar* and *Scarface* in the early 1930s. Furthermore, semi-documentaries like *The Naked City* (1948) suggested that the distinction between the actual city and the studio reproduction was not found in high society settings, but in violent action occurring in the streets of working-class districts and tenements. Like the New York exposes from which *The Naked City* took its name,

realist photography and lurid violence was a staple of journalism that inflected Hollywood's association between crime stories and urban location shooting.⁵⁹

There was an inherent tension in Hollywood's attempt to capture this type of urban realism on location in San Francisco. On the one hand, as film noir set in Los Angeles began a centrifugal movement away from downtown to match the city's automotive suburbanization, San Francisco offered an attractive alternative for crime stories suited to a dense urban core.⁶⁰ On the other hand, San Francisco's picture book beauty ran counter to an aesthetic of gritty urban realism. This tension was far easier to resolve in black-and-white film, where shadowy lighting readily transformed urban space into nightmarish settings. With Hollywood's full transition to color in the late 1960s, filmmakers had to develop new ways to dim the bright colors of *Vertigo* to the flat palette of *The Conversation*. At the same time, the urban crisis of the late 1960s pushed filmmakers to depict San Francisco more starkly than the dark beauty of noir.

Between 1945 and the late 1950s, location shooting was largely defined in opposition to shooting on studio sets. By the late 1960s, it developed in opposition to studio-style cinematography. This transition had major implications for Hollywood's realist style shooting in San Francisco. Through this earlier period, *American Cinematographer* praised the realism of films that shot on location without sacrificing the professional polish of studio cinematography. A new semi-documentary style, popularized by Haskell Wexler in the late-1960s, instead gained praise as a realist aesthetic nearly impossible to capture on the studio lot. *Bullitt* employed a similar style that shaped location realism in San Francisco during its late 1960s and early 1970s boom period. Yet the new style also encouraged filmmakers to avoid or degrade the still extant scenic beauty of San Francisco, strongly associated with classical Hollywood cinematography. Shooting during a period of popular alarm over the urban crisis, location

cinematography found analogues to urban decay in rougher-looking techniques, such as handheld camera work and color desaturation.

San Francisco uniquely reveals Hollywood's struggle between two urban realist ideologies. The first, exemplified by crime films and social problem films, such as *Days of Wine and Roses* (1962), defined urban space as an exciting but dangerous realm of crime, vice, and economic struggle. The second, exemplified by location shooting, defined urban realism as a fidelity to actual urban sites and cultures. In San Francisco, which defied America's deepening sense of urban decline and later, urban chaos, the former increasingly won out over the latter. While location filmmakers ostensibly opposed Hollywood fantasy, they nonetheless favored preconceptions of the city over the urban realities they encountered on location. This dissertation both acknowledges this creative city building practice and disputes the popular notion that location shooting generally provides a more authentic representation of actual cities.

METHODOLOGY

Roughly 120 Hollywood films were set partially or entirely in San Francisco between 1945 and 1975.⁶¹ San Francisco also served as a location for several television series, including long-running shows like *The Lineup*, *Ironside* (1967-1975), and *The Streets of San Francisco*, as well as a number of 1970s television movies. Rather than summarizing each of these productions, I suggest both shared and distinct characteristics of screen depictions of San Francisco in a given era. For detailed case studies in each chapter, I chose films and television series that best fit several criteria, including the extent of their location shooting in San Francisco, their relevance to industry-wide trends

in location shooting, their relative box office impact, the availability of archival production material, and the level of scholarly interest in film studies.

Many of the chosen films and series are indelibly associated with San Francisco, such as *Vertigo*, *Bullitt*, *Dirty Harry*, and *The Streets of San Francisco*. Others are well known but less clearly associated with the city, such as *Dark Passage*, *Days of Wine and Roses*, *The Conversation*, and *The Towering Inferno*. Finally, I have included lesser-known studio films that offer unique explorations of San Francisco, such as *The Lineup* and *Petulia*. The majority of these films are crime or police films, so questions of genre cannot be wholly ignored. However, the choice of an urban setting, often favored by crime and police stories, largely explains this prevalence. Instead of excluding films based on genre, I consider the genre conventions informing the urban depiction of each film. I have excluded films and series set in the past, such as *I Remember Mama* and *Have Gun, Will Travel*, instead focusing on contemporaneous visions of the city,

Archival research at the Herrick Library, the Warners Archive, and UCLA special collections provided the foundation for production histories of many of the films. Mayor Alioto's papers at the San Francisco History Center provided other production details as well as important insights into San Francisco's active participation in drawing Hollywood producers to the city and assisting their productions. *American Cinematographer* provided a nuanced picture of aesthetic and technological developments in location filmmaking, including case studies of films such as *Experiment in Terror*, as well as influential productions shot elsewhere, such as *The Battle of Algiers*, *The Graduate*, and *The French Connection* on filmmaking in San Francisco and trends in location shooting. *Variety* provided important information on industrial changes and the economic value of both location shooting and the physical studio lots.

Each chapter covers a specific time period marked by significant changes to the practice of location shooting. I proceed through the economic factors that facilitated and obstructed location filmmaking, as well as the technical and aesthetic changes that motivated new location techniques. I also detail the logistical challenges specific to dense urban areas like San Francisco. Because all of these factors intertwine, certain sections are more or less discrete in their separation of competing factors in order to best clarify the forces that drove changes in location shooting. The first three chapters, covering 1945 through 1965, deal largely with the development of location shooting as a supplementary practice to studio-based production. The last three chapters cover 1965 through 1975, when location shooting emerged as a viable alternative to sound stage and back lot production, soon becoming the dominant method of Hollywood filmmaking between the late 1960s and mid-1970s.

San Francisco itself receives more or less attention depending on its relative impact on Hollywood filmmaking. For instance, before Alioto became mayor in 1968, the city itself provided little more than beautiful locations and a local police contact. The overwhelming media response to the Summer of Love, followed by the active involvement of city government in drawing filmmakers to San Francisco, played a crucial part in shaping the city's continued prevalence as a film and television location. This study not only analyzes the changing practice of location shooting in San Francisco and its effect on depictions of the city, but also traces the city's evolution from an ancillary site to a booming production site that, by the early 1970s, could have more Hollywood productions shooting in town than Los Angeles.

Production histories of films shot in San Francisco help specify how logistical and technical procedures shaped the form of each film. Several chapters rely on pairs of case studies, where through textual and stylistic analysis, I compare countervailing methods

and aesthetics. Each film offers a unique model of San Francisco, structured by narrative and aesthetic choices. This cinematic approach to a real location exists at a threshold between filmmaking practices and contemporary conceptions of the urban condition. While San Francisco remained rich in tourist sites and distinctive urban cultures, its screen image changed with national images of the city itself and the American city in general. San Francisco had a carefully cultivated image, but Hollywood's shifting urban aesthetics and location practices eventually overwhelmed it.

Chapter 1 details postwar location shooting during the 1940s and early 1950s, analyzing the industry crisis that promoted semi-documentary location shooting and the technological limitations of such a practice. A case study of *Dark Passage* reveals how rudimentary Hollywood location shooting remained in an era dominated by soundstage production. Meanwhile the demands of classical Hollywood aesthetics muted the distinction between location shooting and studio-bound production.

Chapter 2 argues that a cine-tourist aesthetic allowed scenic location footage to intrude upon narrative development to exploit tourist locations as renewed attractions for color widescreen exhibition. Meanwhile, lower budget black-and-white filmmakers exploited urban locations as set pieces they could not afford to build. A tourist center with postcard views, San Francisco attracted both types of location production, exemplified by case studies of *Vertigo* and *The Lineup*. *Vertigo* took a hybrid approach to location shooting in San Francisco, typical of major pictures of the 1950s, establishing the lead actors against location backgrounds while completing the majority of principal photography on the sound stage. *The Lineup* shot more extensively on location in San Francisco because distinctive urban locations were the primary source of production value for the film. Both films not only offer a cine-tourist adventure, but also implicitly critique the relationship between tourism, as theorized by Dean MacCannell, and

urbanism, as diagnosed by 1950s urbanists troubled by the declining centrality of the downtown core.

Chapter 3 focuses on a pair of 1962 Blake Edwards films set in San Francisco and shot partially on location, *Days of Wine and Roses* and *Experiment in Terror*. Laxer Production Code enforcement and technological improvements in black-and-white filmmaking shaped a wave of dark, realist dramas extensively shot in real locations. Edwards and other television-trained filmmakers found more efficient ways to shoot in urban locations. Despite San Francisco's continued role as a cine-tourist backdrop for escapist Hollywood films, Edwards showed how effectively San Francisco locations could be transformed into a low-key nightmare landscapes for desperate characters.

In the first three chapters, San Francisco remained a background for Hollywood production, but as San Francisco emerged as the popular center of America's young counterculture in the late 1960s, Hollywood filmmakers rushed to make San Francisco settings a key component of a wide array of films. New location shooting practices and technologies shared by European art cinema, television, and documentary production further opened the city to location filmmaking, facilitated by a new mayor, Joseph Alioto, invested in drawing production to the city. Shot entirely on location in San Francisco in 1968, both *Petulia* and *Bullitt* sought to authentically capture San Francisco's unique culture, but found drastically different cities, showing how effectively Hollywood production transformed real locations rather than transmitting them.

Chapter 4 looks at *Dirty Harry* as a defining film that like the myriad police films that followed it, stage San Francisco as a bleak, chaotic city modeled on a declining New York City. By the early 1970s, location filmmaking became the dominant method of Hollywood production, facilitated by portable equipment designed specifically for location shooting. At the same time, filmmakers worked forcefully to degrade color film

and studio polish, creating a new semi-documentary aesthetic that in turn sought the least picturesque corners of cities like San Francisco. The sleazy, crime-ridden city of *Dirty Harry* fit the popular imagination of the urban crisis stoked by race riots and other urban protests, proving durable enough to be serialized in *The Streets of San Francisco*. As Mayor Alioto effectively wooed location production from New York and Los Angeles, location productions made the city appear increasingly blighted.

Chapter 5 details San Francisco's struggles with a glut of Hollywood location production in the mid-1970s that spurred residents to question whether the economic benefits of location shooting outweighed the increasingly negative screen image of the city and the inconveniences caused by production crews. Two 1974 films set and shot in San Francisco, *The Conversation* and *The Towering Inferno*, alternatively reveal the peak of location production in San Francisco and the nascent blockbuster aesthetic that would pull filmmakers back to the Hollywood lots. Francis Ford Coppola conceived, shot, and edited *The Conversation* entirely in San Francisco, home of his American Zoetrope production facility. Yet even a resident filmmaker followed the increasingly dire depiction of American cities. Alternatively, *The Towering Inferno* built an expensive, escapist disaster too dangerous and expansive to capture on location, showing how special effects and blockbuster spectacles eroded the value of location shooting at its mid-1970s peak.

In my conclusion, I summarize how changes in location shooting transformed San Francisco's screen image and allowed the city to emerge as one of the first American urban centers for location shooting outside of Los Angeles and New York. Unlike contemporary centers of location shooting like Louisiana that draw Hollywood production primarily through tax incentives, San Francisco attracted filmmakers largely based on its visual qualities, convenience, and the cooperation of its local government.

Despite aspiring to become a production center, the city remained primarily a location, malleable to Hollywood's narratives, production practices, and aesthetics. San Francisco's screen image reveals more about Hollywood's developing practice of location shooting than it does about San Francisco's unique urban form and culture.

Notes:

¹ Daily production progress reports, 29 October- 30 November 1946, fol. 1488, *Dark Passage* Production File, Warner Bros. Archive, Department of Special Collections, Doheny Library, University of Southern California (hereafter cited as Warners Archive, USC).

² Philip Hager, "City Helps Out: Background for Films? Often It's San Francisco," *L.A. Times*, December 9, 1973, F1, 31.

³ Richard Walker, "An Appetite for the City," in, *Reclaiming San Francisco*, eds. James Brook, Chris Carlsson and Nancy Peters (San Francisco: City Lights, 1998), 9.

⁴ For a comparison of San Francisco and Chicago in Hollywood film, see Appendix.

⁵ Geoffrey Bell, *The Golden Gate and the Silver Screen* (New York: Assoc. U. Presses, 1984), 133-134.

⁶ Richard Koszarski, *Von: The Life and Films of Erich Von Stroheim* (New York: Proscenium, 2001), 143-149; Thomas Schatz, *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era* (New York: Holt and Co., 1988), 34-35.

⁷ General research record, 28 May 1941, fol. 712, *Maltese Falcon* Production File, Warners Archive, USC; Location Expense sheet, 24 May 1941, fol. 1435, *ibid.*

⁸ Steven Bingen, Stephen Sylvester, and Michael Troyan, *MGM: Hollywood's Greatest Backlot* (Solano Beach, CA: Santa Monica Press, 2011), 211-213, 298-299.

⁹ For the effect of wartime rationing on production practices, see Sheri Chinen Biesen, *Blackout: World War II and the Origins of Film Noir* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2005), 63.

¹⁰ William Lafferty, "A Reappraisal of the Semi-Documentary in Hollywood, 1945-1948," *The Velvet Light Trap* 20 (1983): 22-26.

¹¹ For a comprehensive analysis of the postwar rhetoric on urban decay, see Robert Beauregard, *Voices of Decline: The Postwar Fate of U.S. Cities* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1994).

¹² Mark Shiel. "A Regional Geography of Film Noir: Urban Dystopias On-and Off-Screen," in Prakash, Gyan, ed., *Noir Urbanisms: Dystopic Images of the Modern City* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2010), 79-80.

¹³ New York remained the largest city between 1940 and 1970. Los Angeles became the third largest city by 1950 and the second largest by 1970, passing Chicago. The following website offers a comprehensive list of population data from censuses and other relevant sources: <http://www.peakbagger.com/pbgeog/histmetropop.aspx>.

¹⁴ See Appendix for films set in San Francisco and Chicago, culled and crosschecked from several online databases and fan websites listing films by city setting.

¹⁵ Peter Lev, *The Fifties: Transforming the Screen, 1950-1959* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 148-155.

¹⁶ James Brook, et. al, *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), viii; Victor Gruen, *The Heart of Our Cities* (Simon and Schuster: New York, 1964), 11.

¹⁷ Brian Godfrey, "Urban Development and Redevelopment in San Francisco," *The Geographical Review*, 87, No. 3 (July 1997): 316-319.

¹⁸ Chapters 5 and 6 offer several examples, including *The French Connection* (1971), *Dirty Harry* (1971), *The Candidate* (1972), and *The Conversation* (1974).

¹⁹ Susan Fainstein et. al, *Restructuring the City: The Political Economy of Urban Redevelopment* (New York: Longman, 1986), 202.

²⁰ Godfrey, "Urban Development," 316-319.

²¹ Bingen, 297-298.

²² John Belton, *Widescreen Cinema* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 1992), 5-14.

²³ William Lafferty, "A Reappraisal. Of the Semi-Documentary in Hollywood, 1945-1948," 20 (1983), 22-26.

²⁴ For a detailed analysis of the Hollywood studios functioning like cities in the 1930s, see Mark Shiel, *Hollywood Cinema and the Real Los Angeles* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 128-136.

²⁵ Janet Staiger, "Individualism versus Collectivism," *Screen* 4-5 (July-October 1983), 76-79.

²⁶ Matthew Bernstein, *Walter Wanger: Hollywood Independent* (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota Press, 2000), 358-374.

²⁷ Corman's American International Pictures also served as a training ground for key personnel working on Hollywood films. Both Frank Keller, editor of *Bullitt*, and Francis Ford Coppola, director of *The Conversation*, worked at AIP.

²⁸ Peter Biskind, *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls: How The Sex-Drugs-And-Rock 'n' Roll Generation Saved Hollywood* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 34.

²⁹ "Four Kept in Hollywood; Producers Appreciate Nickel & Dime Savings," *Variety*, March 18, 1970, 6.

³⁰ Daily production progress reports, 29 October 1946- 30 November 1946, fol. 1488, *Dark Passage* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.

³¹ Barry Salt, *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis*, 2nd ed. (London: Starwood, 1992).

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- ³² Donald Crafton, *The Talkies, American Cinema's Transition to Sound, 1926-1931* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1999).
- ³³ Thomas Doherty, "Documenting the 1940s," in Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust: The American Cinema in the 1940s* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1999), 416-418.
- ³⁴ Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," *Wide Angle*, 8, 3-4 (1986): 63-70.
- ³⁵ André Bazin, *What is Cinema, Vol. 2*, ed., trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 2005), 26.
- ³⁶ Fainstein, 202.
- ³⁷ Bazin, 33.
- ³⁸ Belton, 12-14.
- ³⁹ Mark Harris, *Pictures at a Revolution: Five Movies and the Birth of New Hollywood*, (New York: Penguin, 2009), 373.
- ⁴⁰ Patrick Keating, *Hollywood Lighting from the Silent Era to Film Noir* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 6.
- ⁴¹ James Naremore, *More Than Night: Film Noir in Its Contexts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 10.
- ⁴² Keating, 345-6.
- ⁴³ *Ibid*, 50.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 245-248.
- ⁴⁵ As suggested earlier, shooting in actual interior locations was extremely difficult until the late 1960s, as large lighting units barely fit into cramped interior locations.
- ⁴⁶ Robert R Shandley, *Runaway Romances: Hollywood's Postwar Tour of Europe* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), 31.
- ⁴⁷ Shandley, 159.
- ⁴⁸ Denise Mann, *Hollywood Independents: The Postwar Talent Takeover* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 251-252.
- ⁴⁹ The best survey of contemporary production studies scholarship is Vicki Mayer, Miranda Banks, and John Caldwell, eds. *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* (London: Routledge, 2009).
- ⁵⁰ William Fraker oral history, 145-146, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills, California (hereafter cited as Herrick Library).
- ⁵¹ Stanley Corkin, *Starring New York: Filming the Grime and the Glamour of the Long 1970s* (New York: Oxford U. Press, 2011), 6-7.
- ⁵² See Giuliana Bruno, "Ramble City: Postmodernism and 'Blade Runner,'" *October*, Vol. 41 (Summer 1987): 61-74; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1989), 308-323.
- ⁵³ See William Luhr and Peter Lehman, "Experiment in Terror: Dystopian Modernism, the Police Procedural, and the Space of Anxiety," in Murray Pomerance, *Cinema and Modernity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers U. Press, 2006), 174-193; see also Allan Siegel,

“After the Sixties: Changing Paradigms in the Representation of Urban Space,” in eds. Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice, *Screening the City* (London: Verso, 2003), 137-159.

⁵⁴ Exceptions to this short periodization include the following: Merrill Schleier, *Skyscraper Cinema: Architecture and Gender in American Film* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Mark Shiel, *Hollywood Cinema and the Real Los Angeles* (London: Reaktion, 2012); Pamela Wojick. *The Apartment Plot: Urban Living in American Film and Popular Culture, 1945 to 1975* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁵⁵ Richard Blake, *Street Smart: The New York of Lumet, Allen, Scorsese, and Lee* (Lexington: U. of Kentucky Press, 2005), 38.

⁵⁶ James Sanders, *Celluloid Skyline* (New York: Knopf, 2001), 61-83.

⁵⁷ See Appendix for the list of films. At least sixty of these films are either film noirs, police films, or crime stories, including four comedy capers.

⁵⁸ See Chapters 4 and 5.

⁵⁹ Higashi, 353-365.

⁶⁰ Dimendberg, 166-206.

⁶¹ See Appendix.

Chapter 1: Postwar Location Shooting, The Semi-Documentary, and *Dark Passage*

Between 1945 and 1948, Hollywood launched a new subgenre, the semi-documentary, whose primary stylistic distinction would be location shooting in various American cities. The boom in semi-documentaries represented the first extensive use of location shooting for Hollywood features since the silent era.¹ By using portable technologies and production methods developed for combat documentaries, filmmakers sought to bring documentary realism to a series of crime and espionage stories. Despite the box-office appeal of several semi-documentaries, such as *The House on 92nd Street* (1945) and *Call Northside 777* (1948), this subgenre all but disappeared following its most ambitious production, Mark Hellinger's *The Naked City* (1948). Hollywood's spiraling production costs and overhead promoted experiments in shooting films on location to avoid the expense of building major sets. The production of films such as *The Naked City* (1948) and *Dark Passage* (1947) revealed that Hollywood filmmakers' inexperience working extensively away from the sound stage, as well as steep logistical and technological barriers, made location shooting a false economy. Hollywood crews often fell behind schedule due to the unpredictability of actual urban spaces, causing location expenses to spiral upwards to rival set-building costs. As major studios slashed production budgets in the late 1940s, the semi-documentary proved less efficient than carefully supervised productions primarily shot on the soundstage. The term semi-documentary would emerge by the 1950s as a style rather than a subgenre as the 1940s boom in urban location thrillers had a clear impact on Hollywood's realist aesthetics and location production methods for decades to come. On the other hand, semi-documentaries

revealed the formidable obstacles Hollywood needed to overcome to efficiently shoot on location, a practical reality that limited the extent of location shooting whenever financial incentives, such as those offered by European countries by the early 1950s, did not exist. In the decade between 1945 and 1954, at least forty-four Hollywood films featured a contemporary San Francisco setting; except for *Dark Passage* and *The House On Telegraph Hill* (1951), no production appeared to stay longer than a week. While *Dark Passage* shot first-unit footage throughout the city and surrounding areas, *The House On Telegraph Hill* limited most of its location work to a single site on Telegraph Hill, indicative of a more conservative approach to location shooting that followed the end of the semi-documentary boom in 1948.

Dark Passage, which shot on location in San Francisco for nearly a month, presents a limit case for location shooting in San Francisco during the rapidly declining Classical Hollywood era. Despite the prolonged urban shooting schedule, the resulting film rarely differentiates itself from the image of San Francisco appearing in other 1940s and 1950s films. Production difficulties help explain the film's struggle to capture stars on location, as well as the false economy of location shooting. Yet production correspondence and the film itself reveal how readily the norms of Classical Hollywood filmmaking could transform unique locations into dramatically limited settings. Whether in background projection or full location shooting, the image of San Francisco would be circumscribed not only by the demands of the story and stars, but also by a cinematic logic that carefully circumscribed the role and appearance of urban setting.

LOCATION TECHNOLOGIES

A variety of technologies that facilitated location shooting would gain industry acceptance in Hollywood by the end of the 1940s. The rapid adoption of these new tools not only suggested the growing importance of location shooting in postwar Hollywood filmmaking but also revealed how poorly equipped Hollywood was for extensive location shooting. The economic and logistical difficulty of capturing San Francisco and other cities on film would become clearly apparent to production executives overseeing a wave of postwar semi-documentaries. Existing equipment designed for the sound stage often limited the effectiveness of new, more portable cameras and lights. As in later eras, technologies that reduced overall lighting requirements had the most substantial impact on location shooting, simultaneously adding time, money, and stylistic latitude to productions through quicker lighting setups and smaller crews. Despite the development of portable cameras and lighting units, by the end of the semi-documentary boom in the late 1940s, rear-projected backgrounds still proved far more cost-effective than location shooting for a great majority of studio productions.

Not surprisingly, World War II played a decisive factor in promoting location shooting outside of Hollywood. Several major Hollywood producers and directors such as Darryl Zanuck, William Wyler, and John Huston served in the Army Signal Corps., adapting their studio experience to shooting combat documentaries on location. Among the fundamental challenges of representing warfare would be developing production tools that functioned efficiently and effectively in not only dangerous but poorly lit locations. Unlike sound stage production, which facilitated precise lighting, set design, and repeated takes, combat cinematography needed to capture events as they unfolded with little control over the settings or lighting.² Engineers responded with the Eyemo, a 16mm camera that would be portable, durable, and could be operated handheld. The camera's

ability to capture real locations would have a clear application in realist Hollywood dramas shooting on location in the postwar era.

In mid-1945, as the war reached its end, cinematographer James Wong Howe argued how extensively this new camera could alter Hollywood production practices in an *American Cinematographer* article broadly titled, "Post-war Motion Pictures." Showing the pragmatism of a Hollywood veteran, he led with the economic advantages of the combat camera: "The 16mm camera, according to Jimmy [Wong Howe], has more maneuverability, costs less to operate and necessitates lower production costs. As a result, its adoption by professional picture producers will bring greater flexibility to Hollywood movie methods and help accentuate the film as an art by eliminating many of its costlier practices which have in the past tended to reduce the screen's area of experimentation."³ Howe neatly expressed how an interplay between technology and economics could change production practices, as it would with each innovation that facilitated location shooting. While new technologies, such as handheld cameras and portable lights created new aesthetic possibilities, their increased efficiency created room in the budget and schedule to develop new production methods.

For Howe, economy would be the mother of invention. He cited Karl Freund's mobile camerawork for *Variety* (1925) and *The Last Laugh* (1924) to support his claim. Another advantage of the smaller camera evident in *The Last Laugh* was the ability to better match camera movement to actor movement. By retaining smaller gauge film, which reduced the need for powerful lighting units, Hollywood could shoot more frequently with natural light. The portable camera might also recreate the vivid realism of combat newsreels for narrative features, perhaps a necessary reaction to a documentary style that "put Hollywood professional 'realism' to shame."⁴ Howe doubted Hollywood

cameramen returning from war service would simply abandon their experience while implying that audiences would retain a similar attention to realism.⁵

MGM's 1946 film *Lady in the Lake* appeared to confirm Howe's predictions (aside the adoption of 16mm). Cinematographer Paul Vogel had served as a cameraman in Europe with the Signal Corps. He particularly appreciated the combat camera's ability to capture the point of view of soldiers on the front, creating a visceral, embodied experience for home front audiences. *Lady in the Lake* would famously capture the entire action of the film from the optical perspective of the protagonist, played by director Robert Montgomery. Vogel shot extensively with an Eyemo camera, specifically designed for shooting combat footage in tight spaces with available light; Bell and Howell would frequently advertise these features of the Eyemo in advertisements in *American Cinematographer*. The unique style gained industry attention, although critics and audiences found the film's POV experiment "gimmicky." Warners' *Dark Passage*, which began shooting soon after *Lady's* release in November of 1946, attempted a more limited application of the technique, hoping to add a thrilling sense of presence within real locations in San Francisco.⁶

The handheld camera would further improve with the introduction of the French Éclair and German Arriflex and cameras in the late 1940s. Unlike the Eyemo, these cameras offered direct reflex viewing, allowing the cameraman to see a reflection of the image captured by the camera lens.⁷ For the first time, professional cinematographers could see an image while they filmed, which proved particularly useful to maintain proper framing during ad hoc camera movement. The new handheld cameras were specifically designed for 35mm Hollywood filmmaking, eliminating the need for studio camera departments to retrofit combat cameras for the production of dramatic features.⁸ While undergoing periodic redesigns, the Arriflex camera would remain a staple of

location filmmaking through the 1970s, facilitating camera movement in cramped interiors, uneven ground, and other locations that prevented laying dolly track. However in the 1940s, the promise of shooting on location with a light, portable camera quickly met the weighty reality of existing lighting and sound technology.

Louis De Rochemont, who produced and directed the *March of Time* newsreel series, would pioneer the semi-documentary with *The House on 92nd Street*, followed by *13 Rue Madeline* (1947), both shot by Norman Brodine. Shooting both exteriors and interiors on location, the small, mobile camera would be largely constrained by large lights and other rigs. Setting up equipment in actual interiors for *13 Rue Madeleine* left barely enough room for the actors or cameramen. Meanwhile, each location required generators since professional lights demanded more power than household electricity could provide.⁹ Sound equipment designed for large sound stages proved just as cumbersome. Thus the efficiency of the portable camera could be quickly overwhelmed by the additional equipment and crewmembers required for adequate lighting and sound.

An incident from the production of *The Steel Trap* (1952) exemplified the challenge of fitting equipment, crews, and actors into restrictive locations. Cinematographer Ernest Laszlo shot most of the film in downtown Los Angeles. Capturing two actors speaking in the backseat of a taxi required the following procedure: “Two taxis were securely tied together in tandem... The players, Laszlo, the director, camera, and camera crew were crowded into the second taxi; the sound recording equipment and power supply batteries were in the first taxi along with the driver, a gaffer, and sound recording engineer.”¹⁰ Marlon Brando would make a famous speech in the backseat of a taxi in *On The Waterfront* (1954), renowned for its location photography. Producers wisely chose a studio reproduction with an improbable set of venetian blinds

covering the taxi's rear window. Even the lightest camera could not outmaneuver the other massive pieces of equipment needed to shoot on location.

Location difficulties helped spur more efficient lighting units. By 1948, Universal developed the quad-light, a rectangular metal pan that accommodated four photoflood bulbs. These lights, primarily used by amateur photographers, helped light small location interiors for *The Naked City*. The new lighting units, which could be powered by utility lines, reduced the need for generators. When William Daniels won the Oscar for Best Cinematography, he helped legitimize the application of photofloods for Hollywood location shooting. The potential savings were readily apparent when Daniels shot *Deported* (1950) in Italy. The lights, packed into two trunks, arrived in Italy via air in 32 hours; Daniels contrasted this with the 14 days it took to transport lights to Italy via ship for *Ben Hur* (1925).¹¹ Photofloods could be particularly handy for shooting night exteriors; Robert Surtees would attach them to streetlights to capture night for night scenes in the film noir, *Act of Violence* (1948).¹²

More photosensitive film stock held the greatest potential for improving both the cost and aesthetics of location shooting by reducing the necessary light levels for every scene. However Eastman would not offer significantly faster black-and-white stock until Tri-X debuted in 1953, and even this new stock produced a grainier image than the standard Plus-X.¹³ Instead, studios experimented with alternative films stocks and development processes hoping to effectively shoot on location at lower levels of illumination, particularly at night. Universal even experimented with shooting day for night scenes with infrared film to economize rather than eliminate dark scenes from scripts due to location lighting expenses.¹⁴ Paramount technicians found a less cumbersome solution, a development process known as latensification. Latensification could intensify lighting on exposed negative film, effectively adding up to 2-fstops

during development (similar to post-flashing, widely used in the 1970s). Paramount realized the clearest benefits on location: “Production has been able to use many desirable locations which otherwise could not have been considered, either because of prohibitive lighting expense or because of restrictions which would have made it impossible to bring in the necessary lighting.¹⁵”

Latensification would play a role in two of Paramount’s seminal film noirs of 1950. In *Asphalt Jungle*, John Huston and cinematographer Hal Rosson captured a chase through a dark tunnel, lit only by existing light bulbs.¹⁶ For *Sunset Boulevard*, Billy Wilder and cinematographer John Seitz used the process on 15% of the film to maintain depth of field in low-key lighting.¹⁷ From the urban nightscapes of *Asphalt Jungle* to the shadowy interiors of Norma Desmond’s mansion, the ability to use less light not only opened new locations to filmmakers but allowed cinematographers to use more subtle lighting effects, helping distinguish low-key A-noirs from high contrast, B-crime thrillers: *Asphalt Jungle* and *Sunset Boulevard* would both be nominated for Best Picture and Best Cinematography (in 1951 and 1952 respectively). The success of latensification in these films stemmed from its invisibility; rather than creating a spectacular effect, the process facilitated location shooting by reducing the aesthetic compromise required to shoot a challenging location. Paramount came to use the process for adverse lighting conditions in up to two-thirds of their productions.¹⁸

As with all new technologies that reduced illumination levels, the effect of latensification would be just as much economic as aesthetic. By the end of 1949, every major studio except MGM would adopt latensification to varying degrees. At Columbia, latensification allowed the studio to overhaul its method of B film production, relying on “50 foot-candle lighting,” roughly 60% of standard light levels. Now smaller lights, like photofloods and Color Trans, consumed less power and took far less time to rig. For

“comedy shorts and action westerns,” Columbia found that, “the arty lighting and photography employed in major features is unnecessary.”¹⁹ While lower light levels offered aesthetic benefits for expensive pictures they offered cost cuts for cheaper features. The same distinction occurred when faster film stocks appeared in the 1950s and 1960s; television series chose to reduce lighting output to save costs while major Hollywood productions explored new locations and subtler lighting schemes.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, myriad technical solutions emerged to address the myriad inefficiencies of location filmmaking. For instance, in 1948, cinematographer Robert Burks devised a mobile film lab that promised to save hours of work for assistant cameramen, who could spend up to three hours after shooting working in makeshift darkrooms and another two hours transporting equipment to and from locations.²⁰ This production vehicle anticipated the CineMobile of the early 1970s, which neatly packaged feature production equipment into a single van or truck; by contrast, Burks’ 7000-lb, 22-foot trailer merely held equipment for a single production department. Disney debuted a new mobile generator unit in 1950, while various car-mounted camera lifts for crane shots appeared throughout the early 1950s.²¹ Crewmembers even devised a new system of hand signals for use in noisy outdoor locations, such as the windy Malibu beach settings for Goldwyn’s *With All My Love*.²² The range of innovations highlighted how little attention Hollywood had paid to designing technologies that could function effectively outside of the studio lot.

While new production technologies could increase the efficiency of location shooting, they competed with improvements in producing location backgrounds on the sound stage. For instance, M.B. Paul won a technical Oscar for his large translucent photographic backgrounds. Previously, photographic backgrounds had to be printed in sections and meticulously woven together in order to create a large enough backdrop.²³

As an early adopter of this technology, Goldwyn studios eliminated two days of location shooting on *With All My Love*, as well as reduced their lighting costs for background transparencies. Furthermore, Lee Garmes could continue to use “small aperture” photography, inspired by Gregg Toland’s high depth-of-field cinematography; such a style would be difficult to achieve with either lower light levels on location or painted backdrops.²⁴ Unlike Howe, many cinematographers preferred the lighting control of the studio to the inconsistent illumination of location shooting.

While rear-projection can appear staged to contemporary viewers, postwar filmmakers described it almost synonymously with location realism. For example, Joseph LaShelle who won an Oscar for shooting *Laura* (1947), described the practice on *Under My Skin* (1950) as follows : “A majority of studio action was filmed against process plates provided by scenes shot on location, following the usual procedure of staging live action in front of translucent screens on which background scenes are projected by rear projection. Thus the authenticity of backgrounds was maintained throughout.”²⁵ LaShelle suggests that photographic backgrounds of real settings added more realism than staged settings, regardless of the fact that the actors and real settings were never physically co-present. He would follow the same procedure for gritty noirs like *D.O.A.*, which extensively relied on rear projections of San Francisco. For LaShelle, “closer shots filmed in the studio must match the location quality as closely as possible while at the same time achieving the amount of technical finish one expects from Hollywood major studio cinematography.”²⁶ Rather than adapting Hollywood standards to real locations, Hollywood cinematographers like Garmes and LaShelle largely sought to adapt real locations to Hollywood’s photographic standards, typical of the aesthetic balancing act Patrick Keating describes. Unrefined, “documentary” realism, would be relegated to

lower-budget features; *The Steel Trap* could not afford rear projection, necessitating the cumbersome tandem-taxi rig.²⁷

Rear projection allowed actual locations to more carefully follow the dramatic movement of the film. While *Lady From Shanghai* filmed at San Francisco's Steinhart Aquarium, the backgrounds of sea creatures would be projected and enlarged by process at the studio. *American Cinematographer* praised the resulting effect, where Welles timed the appearance of eels and octopi to specific lines of dialogue.²⁸ Hitchcock achieved the same dramatic timing of real location footage with actors on set in *Vertigo*, when Scottie and Madeline's first kiss coincides with crashing waves in the background. The aquarium scene in *Lady From Shanghai* also simulated on set the silhouetted backlighting of characters lit by the tank lights, an impossible feat without modifying the fish tanks on location. Thus rear projection held the potential to better photograph San Francisco backgrounds and better dramatize footage captured on location.

LOCATION PRODUCTION AND THE OVERHEAD PROBLEM

The Hollywood studios thrived on building realistic settings within the confines of sound stages, back lots, and ancillary sites, such as the Warners Ranch. Wartime restrictions on gasoline and Los Angeles location shooting did nothing to deter studios from setting myriad film noirs in American cities like New York and San Francisco.²⁹ Thus the decision to shoot a wave of semi-documentaries in various cities cannot be solely attributed to realist aesthetics or technological innovations, which proved inadequate in reducing production costs. Rather, as William Lafferty details, the postwar semi-documentary boom directly responded to quickly rising set construction costs and

overhead expenses, as well as violent labor unrest. A roughly three year experiment with extensive location shooting (1945-1948) revealed that semi-documentary style location shooting proved just as expensive as set building and far more unpredictable. Instead, by the early 1950s, Hollywood pruned production budgets and production schedules, favoring careful planning and cost assessment over new production techniques. As a result, domestic location shooting became primarily a supplement to studio-based filmmaking rather than a viable alternative.

1940s production budgets, schedules, and correspondence reveal how poorly location shooting fared as a cost-saving alternative to set building. *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) exemplified the efficient process of constructing onscreen San Francisco without leaving Los Angeles. By contrast, postwar semi-documentary productions like *The Naked City* (1948) revealed the full variety of costs and logistical difficulties incurred shooting on location. Following an industry-wide reevaluation of production practices, studios embraced a far more limited program of location shooting by 1949.

The Maltese Falcon, arguably the original film noir, takes place in San Francisco, but there is no evidence that any crewmember set foot in that city during the making of the Warner Bros. film. Instead, the San Francisco of the *Maltese Falcon* already existed in Warners' stock footage and stills. Leo Kuter of the Art Department would send regular requests to the Research Department for specific scenes, and the Research Department would respond with the appropriate footage. For instance, on May 15, 1941, Kuter requested "San Francisco Streets Business – Apt Houses etc. – Hotel Lobby – Mart Hopkins." Research responded with 5 clips from "US Streets Calif Miscellaneous, 18

clips of “U S Apt Houses Calif SF” and 3 clips of “US Hotels Cali S.F.”³⁰ When no footage existed, research could find it elsewhere. A request for “ext and int of bus stations San Francisco” ended with a request to a Santa Fe Public Relations firm, with “2 negs being picked up by transportation.”³¹ Existing footage would also make it easy for the art department to recreate San Francisco sets to match the stock footage.

The Maltese Falcon budget had a small provision for location shooting, but only for three scenes shot in the Los Angeles area. These included “Ext. Bush Street- 2 Nights, Ext. Water Front- 1 Day, and Ext. Street.”³² These three locations would cover exteriors of Sam Spade’s apartment and two other apartments, as well as the docks and backgrounds for the murder sequence. Even this limited location shooting reveals how many additional expenses could quickly accumulate on location. For example, \$600 of the \$1213 budget to shoot at Bush street went to renting buildings and rigging lights. These were particularly short night shoots, since the crew could only work until midnight. The rest of the budget went to 150 hot lunches, six policemen, four watchmen, equipment parking, a location man, and miscellaneous expenses.³³ By doubling Los Angeles for San Francisco, Warners’ avoided the lodging, transportation, and additional union fee expenses for distant location shooting.

Less distinctive urban exteriors could be easily reproduced on the lot, where New York Street stood in for the exterior of Spade’s apartment at night. The crew shot apartment exteriors and an alley sequence, where Spade discusses Archer’s murder with detectives, on the Brownstone Street set.³⁴ An additional location expense appeared in a special request by the Location Department to the Special Effects Department to capture

backgrounds in Bronson Canyon.³⁵ One final use of location shooting would be for retakes. After principal photography ended in June, John Huston needed another shot to match a process shot of Archer's murder. A crew picked up this shot of the exterior of a hillside at a controlled location, the Warner Bros. ranch.

The Maltese Falcon exemplifies how efficiently classical Hollywood could capture believable settings in real cities with limited location work. Interiors dominate the film, particularly in dialogue heavy films. Meanwhile, dark city streets add atmosphere for the film's two major action pieces: Archer's murder and Wilmer's (Elisha Cook Jr.) fight with Spade in the alleyway. In both scenes stylish low-key lighting provides a secondary function of masking details of the background and architecture that might distinguish San Francisco from Los Angeles or a studio mockup of New York. Meanwhile, stock footage covers the wider vistas that establish San Francisco as a distinct place. The art department specifically requested images of Embarcadero and the Bay Bridge, scenic waterfront places that establish the photographic reality of San Francisco. Excluding the stock footage and the occasional prop sign, *The Maltese Falcon* leaves no trace of any specific city.

Just three years later, another Bogart film, *To Have and Have Not* (1944) shot just as extensively on the studio lot, despite a further flung story. In late 1943, Hawks hoped to shoot backgrounds for the picture, about a boat captain in the Florida Keys and Cuba, on location in Cuba, if he could sort out the island's political uncertainty.³⁶ Instead, the already over-budget picture shot exteriors in the Balboa and Laguna islands of Southern California. After three days of first unit work, the second unit covered the remainder of

this nearby location with doubles instead of stars.³⁷ Warners' Research Department detailed all of the existing stock footage that could be used in the film, while supplying a "bible" of relevant images of Cuba and Key West.³⁸

While the production process mirrored *The Maltese Falcon*, the budget told a different story. The total cost of *The Maltese Falcon*, \$381,000, paled in comparison to the \$1,552,587.88 cost of *To Have and Have Not*. While high inflation and a higher salary for Bacall brought additional expenses, they paled in comparison to the growing cost of set construction. Accounting for roughly half the amount of the cast salary on *Maltese*, set-building expenses ballooned from \$25,000 to \$162,154.50 for *To Have*, costing over \$20,000 more than the actors (with Bogart's salary withheld from the budget). Meanwhile, "Trick, Miniature and Glasses" (a budget category including background mattes and rear projection) swelled from \$3,560 to \$61,616.85. As with every studio, an overhead charge would be applied to each picture to account for the price of keeping the facilities staffed and running. For both pictures, this came in above 40% so that each dollar over the budget would incur another 40 cents in expenses after the picture's completion.³⁹ Thus despite Hawks' proven track record as a director, Jack Warner would send regular telegrams complaining about the number of takes in the dailies or the two weeks behind schedule.⁴⁰

At the war's end, labor strife exacerbated these growing expenses. Not surprisingly, the most aggressive union was CSA, whose largest contingent of members were carpenters, the men who built the sets. What began as a jurisdictional dispute between the CSA and IATSE grew into a power play by the studios to replace CSA

carpenters with less skilled and lower-paid IATSE workers in September of 1947. A violent battle between union members and police broke out at the Warners Lot in 1946. The lockout of CSA workers began in October of 1947, a month before *Dark Passage* began principal photography. Meanwhile, sporadic violence, such as union members beating up painters who crossed the picket line, continued at Warners.⁴¹ With skilled carpenters locked out and potential violence at their gates, late 1947 would be the perfect time to send Bogart and Lauren Bacall up to San Francisco for a month.

William Lafferty attributes these expenses, as well as limited set space, to spurring the semi-documentary boom.⁴² Yet another factor was the ongoing involvement of the Civil Protection Administration (CPA), a government agency limiting Hollywood set building during World War II. In April of 1946, nearly a year after the bombing of Hiroshima, the CPA continued to impose a \$15,000 limit on set construction. This, coupled with the demand for set space, all but eliminated retakes for most Hollywood productions once principal photography was completed.⁴³ While wartime set building restrictions persisted, travel options only increased with the postwar growth of commercial flight. David O. Selznick decided to shoot all of his pictures in real locales, including London for *The Paradine Case* (1947) and Concord, Massachusetts for *Little Women* (1949), because “airplane travel making Hollywood only a 50-hour trip from any place on the globe.”⁴⁴

Extensive location shooting in American cities peaked between April of 1946 and August of 1947. *Variety* headlines such as, “Studios Broaden Program of Filming Yarns in Real Locale,” and “WB Scatters Units to 4 Winds; Locationing Hits Record High.”⁴⁵

By August of 1947, RKO had twelve pictures in production, but only two shooting on the home lot.⁴⁶ While filmmakers and studios continued to cite realism as a reason for shooting on location, *Variety* made the economic incentives explicit in a June 10, 1947 headline, “Studio is Saving Set Costs Thru Location Lensing.” The article begins: “Studios are shopping around for stories which can easily be filmed on actual locations, thus eliminating costs of set construction. During past six months this item has become so major an expense factor that plenty of story properties have been shelved.” Prestigious realist films were no exception. For instance, “Mark Hellinger currently is filming ‘The Naked City’ in New York as direct outgrowth of upped set costs.”⁴⁷

While *Naked City* exemplified the economic incentives for location shooting, it also proved that extensive location shooting was often a false economy in the late 1940s. The production incurred \$42,688 in travel expenses, including \$5958 for 18 round trip air tickets to New York, and \$4,455 for 11 round trip rail tickets. Hotel meals and lodging for cast and crew totaled \$22,735. Director Dassin and Cinematographer Daniels needed hotel rooms for 75 days. Meanwhile, an additional \$3000 went to feeding New York crews and extras.⁴⁸ Mayor William O’Dwyer actively courted Hollywood filmmakers to shoot in New York, promising “full cooperation of city.”⁴⁹ Yet the *Naked City* expense report lists miscellaneous expenses of \$10,000 for the New York Police Department Athletic Fund and \$7500 for Gratuities and Entertainment for New York Police, suggesting that “full cooperation” came at a steep price.⁵⁰

The logistics of shooting *The Naked City* became equally daunting. Hellinger needed to airmail all the dailies to Los Angeles for screening. New York had no

procedure for approving so many location shoots at one time, requiring individual permits for each of the 107 locations at least a day in advance. Meanwhile, thirty-four exterior locations drew large crowds.⁵¹ At one point, the crew hired a juggler to draw onlookers away from the set.⁵² In order to grab street scenes without alerting pedestrians, Daniels used a camera hidden behind a mirrored-glass window of a van. This concealment proved effective, but reduced light by at least two f-stops.⁵³ Filmmakers working in San Francisco faced similar challenges, with the important exception of lower transportation and shipping costs.

Variety noted Hellinger's flight to New York to begin *Naked City* on the front page of its August 18, 1947 edition. Yet the lead headline, "Slice Film Costs 30%" suggested that location shooting alone could not solve Hollywood's production expense crisis.⁵⁴ The imposition of a 75% tax in Hollywood's most important foreign market, England, would be the final straw that motivated an industry-wide effort to reduce production costs by 30-40%. While Hollywood continued its efforts to reduce construction costs and less successfully, star salaries, several studios decided to freeze productions until scripts and budgets could be finalized to ensure continuous shooting. Executives also targeted wastefulness in scripts and shooting practices. In 1947, semi-documentaries appeared to be a cheaper alternative to expensive, set bound pictures. By 1948, expensive productions like the *Naked City and Dark Passage* suggested that extensive location shooting added as many new costs as it saved in set construction including production delays caused by inclement weather and logistical problems that exacerbated "shooting waste."

MGM, the studio with the biggest back lot and thus the least incentive to shoot on location, led the “economy wave” with a strategy of more careful production planning and shorter shooting times, cutting production time 25-40%. In terms of days, 54-day shoots became 36-day shoots, while for smaller films, 36-day shoots became 20-day shoots. These and other changes, such as negotiation with talent, brought the budget for *Joan of Lorraine* from \$5 to \$6 million down to \$4 million dollars.⁵⁵ Precise planning and tight schedules ran counter to the unpredictability of late 1940s location shooting, while the success of cost-saving measures reduced the need for alternatives to studio-based production.

Fox’s production head, Darryl Zanuck, added specifics to MGM’s strategy in a series of late 1940s memos . In May of 1947, he addressed Fox’s directors, including Elia Kazan, Ernst Lubitsch, Joseph Mankiewicz, Otto Preminger, and John Stahl, with a point-by point-criticism of working methods, made “critically urgent” in light of the industry’s economic struggles. First he emphasized preplanning, noting that, “Even if only one superfluous angle per day is shot, this could easily add six to nine days to a schedule.”⁵⁶ Other troublesome practices included building sets with four wild walls for flexibility rather than necessity, time-consuming “fluid” crane shots, and long takes.⁵⁷ He swept aside possible objections. Directors complained about overly large crews, but an increase in union and guild jurisdictions over the past five years made this an unavoidable reality. Instead, directors should eliminate crews through controlling setting: for instance, if shrubs and lights stayed in place, no greens men or electricians would be required to

move them. As for high overhead charges, the only solution would be shorter shooting schedules, which would spread the cost of overhead over a higher number of pictures.⁵⁸

In a similar December 1949 memo accompanied by a detailed spreadsheet, Zanuck emphasized the 1,652 feet of footage per film that never reached the screen. Over the course of 23 pictures in 1949, this cost \$2,226,000, or “the physical cost of approximately four feature “A” productions.”⁵⁹ By point of comparison, Dassin and Hellinger shot nearly 225,000 feet of film for *Naked City*; this length was nearly equivalent to the first cut of all of Fox’s 23 features combined!⁶⁰ Dassin’s shot a less ambitious semi-documentary for Fox in 1949, *Thieves’ Highway*, capturing real location footage in San Francisco’s large produce market. Zanuck marked this picture’s 2,820 feet of eliminated footage with an asterisk, noting: “These pictures, in respect of added scenes and retakes, are of special interest.”⁶¹ The unpredictability of partially controlled, actual locations, made semi-documentaries particularly prone to overshooting and retakes. As Hollywood studios pursued more careful cost oversight, location shooting offered poor accountability compared to sound stage production.

Mark Shiel identified a decline in film noirs shot in New York in the 1950s as compared to Los Angeles.⁶² The prevalence of Los Angeles in 1950s noir would clearly shape the genre, and the difficulty of filming in other American cities helped drive this trend. By January of 1950, budget paring stabilized for all studios at roughly 25% of 1946 per picture costs, and as *Variety* noted, Warners exemplified the change. “Story is the same everywhere. Warners took 80 days to lens ‘Dark Passage,’ Humphrey Bogart starrer, in ’46. A year ago his pix were coming under the wire in the low 70’s. In 1949

‘Chain Lightning’ was brought in in 60 days.⁶³ While studios would continue to lament actors’ high salaries, they saved money in an area they better controlled: below-the-line costs.

Tighter budgets far from ended location shooting. What they ended was the extensive, first-unit location shooting that defined the semi-documentary boom of the postwar era. Urban semi-documentaries became more infrequent, like *Panic in the Streets* (1950), shot in New Orleans. The failure of this film, as well as *Asphalt Jungle*, suggested to Zanuck that the market for violent crime films was dying, and Fox largely left the semi-documentary genre that it had pioneered.⁶⁴ Meanwhile location shoots were strictly budgeted, allowing little room to add extra days for production difficulties. William Wellman shot *Across the Wide Missouri* in 1951 for MGM, a studio often synonymous with lavish productions. Amidst rain and snow, Wellman’s crew hurriedly switched between multiple alternative setups to match previously shot footage. His comment, “No Time For Weather,” headlined an *American Cinematographer* article on the production, a clear contrast to *Dark Passage*, where producers waited out several rainy days in San Francisco.⁶⁵

Between 1947 and 1952, roughly thirty films shot on location in San Francisco,⁶⁶ but only Warners’ *Dark Passage* shot extensive first-unit footage in the city. RKO, which shot at least ten features in San Francisco between 1945 and 1952, offered a more typical model for economical, restrained location shooting, particularly in the wake of the industry’s overhead crisis. *Born to Kill*, (1946) directed by Robert Wise and starring Claire Trevor, captured all of its San Francisco locations with process shots. The final

cost was about \$450,000, and included a 27% overhead cost. In 1947, *Night Song*, starring Dana Andrews and directed by John Cromwell, cost far more, \$189,000 with 29.5% overage cost. A higher location budget provided for three days of second unit cinematography with two doubles. By 1948, overhead had swelled to 51.9%, likely due to the production of fewer pictures, yet production budgets were successfully trimmed. *Every Girl Should Be Married*, starring Cary Grant, included the lead actors in a one-day shoot in San Francisco, and came in at only about \$1,240,000. RKO scaled back its overhead to 43.4% in 1949 and 30.2% in 1950. A sample of three pictures, *The Woman on Pier 13* (1949), *Born to Be Bad* (1950), and *Where Danger Lives* (1950), all cost between \$900,000 and \$1,000,000. While *Woman on Pier 13* shot 1st and 2nd unit at the Bethlehem Shipyards for three days, neither *Born to Be Bad* nor *Where Danger Lives* ever set foot in San Francisco. Nick Ray managed to shoot *Born to Be Bad* in ten days.⁶⁷

As in the case of RKO shooting in San Francisco, location shooting would stabilize along with production economies, as domestic location shooting supplemented rather than supplant studio production. Second-unit work, including shooting backgrounds for rear projection, provided authentic backdrops that added production value without the high expense of either set building or prolonged, first-unit location shooting. Second-unit location footage offered an inexpensive, realistic alternative to stock footage or painted backdrops. By contrast, first-unit location work, unless supported by financial incentives such as frozen European funds, was limited to what could not be captured on the lot at a comparable cost. San Francisco appeared regularly in Hollywood films, but largely in process photography for modestly budgeted crime noirs

and melodramas. *Dark Passage*, a semi-documentary A-picture that shot a month of 1st-unit footage in San Francisco, was a key exception. As a limit case for what Hollywood could accomplish in San Francisco, its production history reveals the inefficiency, inexperience, and at times imperceptible aesthetic value of late 1940s urban location shooting.

THE PRODUCTION OF DARK PASSAGE

Urban location shooting presented the antithesis of the controlled, predetermined shooting conditions of sound stage production. Ironically, location shooting could only be cost effective if locations functioned exactly like sets. *The Naked City* sought to build a style and a story out of New York city itself. Most semi-documentaries attempted to do opposite: force the city to fit into the constraints of a predetermined story, style, shooting schedule, and budget. The San Francisco of *Dark Passage* fell somewhere in between the urban shooting program *The Naked City* and the quasi-semi-documentaries to come, exemplified by *The House on Telegraph Hill*.

Dark Passage combined the popular semi-documentary format with the popular screen couple of Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall. The story of fugitive Vincent Parry, who must change his face through plastic surgery before fighting to clear his name, also provided an opportunity to exploit handheld, point-of-view camerawork on location in order to hide Parry's face. Premiering during the peak of the semi-documentary boom, the film would go over budget and over schedule before premiering to middling reviews and tepid box office returns. The various technical and logistical problems encountered

on location demonstrated the inadequacy of Hollywood's location practice in comparison to sound stage shooting. These challenges not only increased the expense of location production but circumscribed where and how location shooting in San Francisco could proceed. Coupled with a rigorous attention to narrative and spatial clarity, *Dark Passage* often minimized the visible distinction between real locations and studio sets, effectively negating some of the production value gained through first-unit shooting in San Francisco.

Warners' publicity department clippings describe *Dark Passage* as a semi-documentary: "*Dark Passage*" is another in a succession of thrillers photographed against authentic locales; in this case, San Francisco."⁶⁸ They also aligned the film with producer Jerry Wald's larger body of work: "Like the recent few Jerry Wald productions, this one leans to the semi-documentary in its treatment. It is set in San Francisco, generally, and location shots being the real thing give the plot striking credence."⁶⁹ Actually Wald's previous four pictures—*Mildred Pierce* (1945), *Humoresque* (1946), *The Unfaithful* (1947), and *Possessed* (1947)—bore little resemblance to films like *The House on 92nd Street* or *The Naked City*. All but *The Unfaithful* starred Joan Crawford as a headstrong woman caught up in romantic plots with deadly consequences. They all featured noir aesthetics, but without the police procedural or criminal plots commonly associated with the semi-documentary. At least for publicity purposes, the use of real locations for backdrops, a downbeat plot, and low-key lighting would sufficiently fit the broad definition of this 1940s trend. *Dark Passage* would expand the use of real

locations, but the overall look of the picture would not be radically different from the Crawford melodramas.

An important distinction would be the extensive use of first-person camerawork throughout the opening third of *Dark Passage*. This “gimmick,” as *Variety* called it, followed quickly on the heels of *Lady on the Lake*, released in January of 1947; *Dark Passage* began shooting in late October of 1946. For at least one reviewer, *Dark Passage*’s more limited use of POV camerawork was a virtue: “Unlike ‘The Lady in the Lake,’ which used the device merely as a novelty and with little imagination, ‘Dark Passage’ tells the first quarter of its story in the first person for reasons of dramatic necessity.”⁷⁰ The necessity would be Humphrey Bogart playing fugitive Vincent Parry, who resorts to plastic surgery to hide his identity. Post-operation, he looks like Bogart; pre-operation, the camera takes his place. Even this limited camera effect displeased Richard Coe of *The Washington Post*, who would prefer makeup effects to, “the absurd shift of the camera’s role.”⁷¹

While the dramatic value of anthropomorphic camera movement would be debated, this technique fell within the same technological and industrial trends that drove postwar location shooting. The use of mobile, lightweight cameras to shoot POV shots became one method of adapting combat newsreel techniques to dramatic pictures. Hollywood producers sought an analogous sense of embodiment and excitement, drawing viewers closer to the character’s experience in the story milieu rather than soldier’s experience at the front. Warners’ synopsis clearly suggest this effect: “During the first

part of the picture the camera itself is the fugitive, seeing and hearing only what the fugitive himself is able to see from his point of view.”⁷²

Warner Bros. also had a technical advantage over MGM: a German newsreel camera brought back by Walter Klinger of the Foreign Department after the war. Commercially released as the Arriflex following its use on *Dark Passage*, this camera proved more portable and steadier than the Eyemo combat camera used on *Lady in the Lake*. Even more importantly, the Arri was the only professional camera that offered a direct viewfinder; the camera operator would see exactly what the camera saw, creating a seamless optical perspective for Bogart’s character.⁷³ Wald and director Daves requested two days of experimental camera work to test this first-person effect. The “German camera” was the clear choice, but key challenges remained to simulate the perspective of a moving human.⁷⁴

For instance, a person walking veers vertically and horizontally as they move from one leg to another. Yet such an effect had to be minimized so as not to distract the viewer. Keating describes a similar conundrum from the early teens. The recreation of a sunset through theatrical lighting threatened to concern the viewer with the realism of the effect over the reality effect of the drama.⁷⁵ Camera technicians solved the problem with a shoulder harness. In the future, they hoped to combine this apparatus with a small, double gyroscope being developed at Stage 5, Warners' process shot stage. Amazingly, Warners’ camera department had figured out the essential components of a Steadicam thirty years before its debut. Yet the Steadicam proved most advantageous in tight quarters on location (*The Shining*) and to simulate POV movement (as in myriad slasher

films of the 1980s). The fact that Warners never completed a prototype speaks to the decline of extensive location shooting, as well as the failure of POV camerawork to improve box office returns for films like *Dark Passage*. Meanwhile, economy measures limited camera experimentation, as indicated by Zanuck's late 1940s screed against unnecessary camera movement.⁷⁶

The goal of the extensive POV camerawork would be to identify the audience with Bogart's escaped convict, "sharing, precariously, every action that takes place."⁷⁷ However seeing the world through one character's eyes meant seeing a fraction of the different camera perspectives that helped orient the viewer. The camera department advised the POV shots to include close shots, medium shots, and full shots to provide "the variation on the screen" achieved by cutting. Meanwhile, since cutting would break the effect of a continuous POV, the camera-character would need to move to establish new angles. The camera department gave a more general warning:

Much more emphasis must be given in this picture to foreground objects and props that will immediately establish geography than in the average pictures. In other words, the first object or objects the camera sees as the camera-character enters the scene or moves to a new setting should identify, in the audience's mind, the exact nature of the setting so that the audience will not have to guess where they are.⁷⁸

Before leaving for San Francisco, the city's role had already been circumscribed to the demands of the innovative camera technique. For the first 40 pages of the film, the spaces of the city would need to speak directly to the character's position, to a greater extent than typical settings. If the image of San Francisco grew too complex, it threatened to disorient the viewer and disembodiment them from the fugitive.

These complicated camera demands called for a cinematographer with special technical skills. In September of 1946, Wald specifically requested Robert Burks, who began his career working at Warners' special effects stage, Stage 5.⁷⁹ Burks would go on to shoot many of Hitchcock's technically demanding films, including two in the Bay Area, *Vertigo* (1958) and *The Birds* (1962). Wald would change his mind a month later: "Last night Del [Daves] and I had a long talk with Bogart and Bacall. If you could work it out, they would be very happy with Sid Hickox as the cameraman. As you know, Hickox did her last two pictures, and she feels that he could do a good job with her again."⁸⁰ The POV camera proved less important than the object of its gaze; the stars chose the cameraman who would best light Bacall, replacing the cameraman best equipped to handle a complicated production on location.

Writer/director Delmer Daves was a native of San Francisco, bringing a knowledge of less stereotypical San Francisco locations to the production. However preproduction would still shape the geography of San Francisco for *Dark Passage*. As with *The Maltese Falcon* seven years earlier, the research department would search the stock footage library for useful clips. Some of the requests for footage included several approaches to the Golden Gate Bridge and an exterior of a modern Russian Hill apartment.⁸¹ By staging characters walking or driving through actual locations, Daves minimized the use of stock footage in the finished film. Such moments helped establish the leading characters in actual settings, a continued point of emphasis for location shoots in the 1950s and 1960s.

Warners' legal department actively eliminated San Francisco's real people, places and local institutions from the script. "Benton Street," which existed in San Francisco, would be renamed "Benson Street." Since an actual "Irene Janney" lived in the city, Bacall's character would become "Irene Jenson." Even the daily newspaper would be changed from "The Chronicle" to "The San Francisco Record."⁸² For the knowledgeable viewer catching a glimpse of the paper, legal censorship threatened to defeat the sense of realism provided by location footage.

Close to 30 crewmembers traveled from Hollywood to Marin County, near San Francisco, to begin shooting *Dark Passage* on October 29, 1946. In addition to these studio personnel, three actors, two doubles, six state motor police, one bus, and a handful of cars and trucks were required for the first day of shooting. The studio paid for 120 lunches, the best estimate of the number of people working on location on October 30.⁸³ The studio would also need to cover dinner and lodging for the more than thirty traveling employees. This included Sundays, when union members could not work without steep penalties. On location, each additional day of fully crewed production could exponentially raise the budget compared to a studio day. For instance, Frank Capra shot scenes for *Riding High* (1949) at a San Francisco racetrack. By shaving a day and a half off the schedule and avoiding the weekend, he saved \$25,000.⁸⁴

Despite these financial imperatives, *Dark Passage* soon fell behind schedule. While the labor lockout provided the ideal time to shoot on location, November was a far from ideal month to shoot in San Francisco. By the second day of shooting, fog disrupted filming at an unspecified San Francisco bridge. The crew left the hotel at 7:45 a.m. and

was ready to shoot by 10:45, but fog prevented principal shooting. The crew tried to shoot inserts, but by 11:30, they called it quits as the fog moved in again. Moving to another location, the crew faced further lighting changes and rigged additional lights. By 3:30 p.m., the fog had returned, and without enough light to shoot, the day was called off. They resolved to find new locations and backup locations for the next day. This impromptu planning was a partial success; they only lost half of the following day due to poor light and high winds.⁸⁵

By the time the first unit returned to the Warners lot on November 25th, either poor lighting, rain, or both had interrupted at least fifteen of the twenty-five location shooting days. Despite decades of technological development in Hollywood, Los Angeles' ample sunlight and dry climate remained significant advantages. A similar environment would help make Italy a prime location for runaway production in the 1950s. Upon canceling shooting at the Presidio during *Dark Passage*, a cameraman noted, "the bridge and background would look like a poor process shot."⁸⁶ Ironically, filmmakers could produce a more realistic illusion on a studio set than shooting a real location on a hazy day.

Failing to adequately plan for inclement weather was one of several indications that the crew lacked experience with extensive location shooting. For instance, the company tried to make up time by shooting at the Presidio on a Sunday. After nearly an hour setting up their shot, they learned they did not have permission to shoot there on Sundays.⁸⁷ On another day, the company had to switch locations because the lights they needed were being rigged for a night shoot elsewhere.⁸⁸ While the studio secured

permissions for locations, one apartment owner appeared unprepared for the schedule, and steadily complained about the long days and late shooting hours.⁸⁹ In a field in Marin County, the production either found the wrong landowner or never asked for permission. When the owner approached the crew, they claimed they had permission and rudely shooed her away. After attending the film and seeing her property featured, Warners' legal department received a complaint letter.⁹⁰

While the crew appeared unaccustomed to working on location, San Franciscans were similarly unaccustomed to Hollywood movie stars working in town for an entire month. Herb Caen peppered his Chronicle column with Bacall and Bogart sightings. He also wrote, "So many San Francitizens cluster around the 'Dark Passage' company, on location here, that shooting sometimes is almost impossible."⁹¹ The biggest crowd incident would at least provide an item for Warners' publicity department. They announced, "More than 1,500 San Francisco movie fans tied up traffic at the Golden Gate bridge and brought out a dozen highway patrolmen to disperse the crowds when Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall were working in a toll-gate shot on the San Francisco entrance to the bridge... the stars obliged with autographs and posed with photographs until the situation got out of hand."⁹² San Francisco's population density, coupled with infrequent Hollywood location shooting, generated enough onlookers to shut down part of the city. Either by fortune or foresight, *Dark Passage* rarely shot in such public locations; but by avoiding the crowds, the film sacrificed a prime asset of location shooting: seeing star actors appear in a city's most popular places.⁹³



Fig. 1.1. A rare shot of Humphrey Bogart on location with visible San Francisco residents in *Dark Passage* (Warner Bros. 1947).

One method to avoid such problems would be shooting with a hidden camera. Bogart walking through the street would cause far less notice without a large camera crew setting up for hours preceding his arrival. Wald suggested such a shot for Parry's final escape, in order to add "a natural quality" as cars passing Bogart would provide a sense of documentary realism. (Figure 1.1).⁹⁴ However Bogart's unforgettable face and the reduced aesthetic quality of hidden camerawork limited the use of this technique.

Extensive second-unit cinematography with Bogart's body double, Joe Smith, proved a far more effective and efficient method for capturing the protagonist within the bustling city. While stunt doubles make for exciting anecdotes, the body double served a far more practical role in studio-era location shooting. He drew far less attention in a crowd, preventing the star-struck commotion of the Golden Gate bridge shoot to occur on a daily basis. Wide shots could mask his identity while also allowing the camera crew a greater subject distance to remain less conspicuous. These wide shots could also

incorporate the spectacle of the crowded urban landscape of pedestrian and motor traffic into the film, rather than expensively recreating it with extras and police cordons. Second unit work maximized the efficiency of the more valuable first unit crew. Delmer Daves could return to direct the principal actors, rather than tying up the production schedule shooting backgrounds. Finally, a special effects unit would capture technically demanding shots and backgrounds for rear-projection. Cinematographers like Hickox specialized in lighting sets and female leads, making it far more efficient to keep him with the actors and allow technical experts to capture some of the innovative first-person camerawork for *Dark Passage*.

The second unit worked far more efficiently and inconspicuously on location than the first unit. For example, the second unit shot Smith at three public locations in a single day, two intersections and inside a cable car, an impossible feat with the crowd attention paid to Bogart. When the first unit returned to the studio, the special effects unit stayed on location for five additional days, saving the studio the daily cost of keeping a larger cast and crew on location. Upon returning, this special effects crew would employ the backgrounds they shot for rear-projection scenes filmed at Stage 8.⁹⁵ The second unit footage amounted to far more than just establishing shots and transitions. The climax of the film featured Vincent Parry fleeing on foot, trolley, and bus through downtown of San Francisco. Aside from the interior of the bus station (constructed in studio), the viewer never saw Bogart's face. Instead, Joe Smith provided the action finale that finally opens the active San Francisco downtown to the camera.⁹⁶

Producer Jerry Wald oversaw the production from the studio, but distance and labor problems made remote supervision more difficult. He would write Bogart and Bacall saying, “Because of the labor strike, we’ve not been able to see too much of the work done, but what we have seen has made the whole trip worthwhile.”⁹⁷ Meanwhile, Daves could only view dailies without sound in San Francisco. Even after the resolution of the labor dispute, productions shooting on location relied on Hollywood labs to develop dailies in locations like San Francisco that lacked a professional development facility. Commonly location productions faced multi-day delays in receiving dailies or simply shot without dailies.⁹⁸

Wald remained most encouraged by the “documentary feeling” he saw in the footage.⁹⁹ In fact the ongoing rain spurred Daves to shoot some interiors on location, and Wald loved these improvised setups. He wrote, “The shots you made in the interior of the hotel lobby are as good photographically as anything you could do at the studio. They have more reality and certainly give a documentary feeling you could never capture at the studio.”¹⁰⁰ He encouraged Daves to shoot a bus station scene on location if bad weather persisted. Wald highlighted the fundamental contradiction of this period of location shooting. The best location footage looks as good as studio work *and* distinctively more real than studio work. Such an achievement requires a rather subtle aesthetic distinction, because the rough edges of even a polished documentary style would fail the first criteria. Instead, the hotel lobby scene in the final film looked indistinguishable from a studio set; a perception of enhanced realism might only come with the knowledge that the scene was shot on location.

Wald's second major point of emphasis was geographical clarity. Certainly the camera tests highlighted the need for spatial clarity for the POV effects, but Wald's focus on geography extended well beyond this effect. During the POV section, Wald suggested a shot of Parry looking up and down the street. The reason was not to sell the effect, but to establish the surroundings of the apartment for later conventionally shot scenes. Wald also emphasized the geographical links between shots. When Parry ascends a staircase on Telegraph Hill following his surgery. Wald specifically asked for closer coverage than a long shot to clarify the connection between background warehouses and the adjacent flight of steps.¹⁰¹ When Bogart escaped on a bus towards a flight to South America, Wald suggested a pan from the departing bus to a vista of the city. This apparent scenic indulgence had a precise function: to smooth the dissolve to an establishing shot of a café in South America.

While San Francisco's unique sights offered a production asset, they also threatened to perplex viewers unfamiliar with the city. For instance, the camera followed Irene's car down the exit ramp from the Golden Gate Bridge; the road curves back to reveal a view of the bridge in the foreground. Wald thought most viewers would be confused to see the bridge a second time, and suggested further shots to clarify the roadways. A cable car turntable adds suspense by extending Bogart's attempt to flee the city unnoticed. Yet Wald wrote, "We are afraid you might get a laugh from people not living in San Francisco at seeing an entire trolley car pushed around. By getting a long shot shooting down at a cable car arriving at the turn-table and seeing the turn-table, it will clarify the entire geography (Figure 1.2)."¹⁰² Shooting character movement through a

complex urban location, continuity editing becomes more than a simple matter of linking individual shots together. Preserving the coherent space of Hollywood Classicism involves a thoughtful and efficient spatial exposition that reorients the viewer to the specific locomotive rules of actual places.¹⁰³



Fig. 1.2. Establishing shot of a trolley turntable to reorient the viewer in *Dark Passage*.

Wald's plain suggestions imply profound ways that location shooting can challenge and conform to Hollywood's controlled spatial logic. In *Classical Hollywood Cinema*, Bordwell writes, "Space becomes chiefly a container for character action: the story has appropriated it. That a locale is of little interest in its own right is shown by the fact that typically the exposition of space takes up the least time of any phase of the scene."¹⁰⁴ Yet a common element of any urban location thriller is the protagonist traveling, sneaking, chasing, or being chased through the city. Here the excitement hinges on the continual establishment of space, character navigation of space, and

reestablishment of new space. Wald, like most Hollywood filmmakers, stressed spatial clarity; his strategy for dealing with local eccentricities would be to expand spatial exposition with additional shots. Such a strategy preserved the actual geography of San Francisco. Yet no film shot partially on location could totally follow this strategy. Instead, creative geography had to form new chains of shots connecting local spaces to studio sets.

In other words, local geographies had to follow a paradigmatic geography of Hollywood filmmaking. Locations that could not be instantly read into an image required more careful attention. Furthermore, the price for leaving gaps in continuity was far more costly on location. *Dark Passage* provided Warners with another expensive piece of publicity when Delmer Daves flew a door in from San Francisco to the studio for a one-day shoot. This was the easiest way to match an apartment exterior shot on location with the studio set.¹⁰⁵

THE SAN FRANCISCO OF DARK PASSAGE

While *Dark Passage* exemplified the myriad production difficulties facing Hollywood crews in San Francisco, it also provided the most thorough onscreen representation of the city prior to the 1958 films *Vertigo* and *The Lineup*. With the exception of a few scenes, the resulting image of the city did not depart significantly from other films set in San Francisco. After entering the city, most classical Hollywood narratives remained largely in wealthy interiors on a hilltop overlooking the bay and most often, the Golden Gate Bridge. While *Dark Passage* features Russian Hill, other scenic

districts offer similar topographies *The Falcon in San Francisco* (1945) and *Born to Be Bad* (1950) center on Nob Hill mansions, while *The House on Telegraph Hill* largely occurs within its titular location. Although Vincent Parry is an escaped convict, he comes from the world of society women like Madge Rapf (Agnes Moorhead) and hides with society girl Irene Jansen (Bacall). Early scenes briefly capture Marin County and San Quentin, but the film remains largely confined to downtown districts, unlike the sprawling car trips to come in *Vertigo* and *Bullitt*.

Hollywood's image of a wealthy, scenic downtown hub was no different than the image that San Francisco itself successfully projected for much of its postwar history.¹⁰⁶ However an emphasis on socially and physically elevated central districts has a clear aesthetic motivation as well. Jansen's large apartment windows reveal a postcard view of the bridge and the ships by the bay. Even lower class characters, like the criminals in *Born to Kill* (1947), find their way to mansions, as well as Golden Gate and Bay Bridge backdrops. Such stunning views often draw cinematic attention away from the actual city, as the camera gazes outward from the city center rather than towards it. The urban center of San Francisco successfully functions as a structuring absence.

San Francisco's small, centralized downtown seems particularly suited for the centripetal film noir described by Edward Dimendberg, where the city draws characters inward like a beacon. Dimendberg ties these trajectories to nostalgia for the thriving central core that faded away in so many American cities.¹⁰⁷ San Francisco, whose downtown faced the same challenge of suburbanization, presented a beautiful image that seemed to deny such a trend. Instead of urban decline, Hollywood's aesthetic preference

for bay views also made San Francisco an “empty focal point,”¹⁰⁸. An image of the Golden Gate Bridge can establish San Francisco as a setting far more clearly than an image of the downtown that excludes the bridge. *Dark Passage*, like most studio-era productions, sought to maximize the visual drama of the setting. Coupled with the difficulty of shooting stars in the actual downtown, bay views, backdrops, and a fight below the bridge establish the downtown at its edges rather than its center.



Fig. 1.3. Effective use of the Golden Gate Bridge as a location set piece in *Dark Passage*

Nonetheless, Parry’s fistfight with a blackmailer beneath the Golden Gate Bridge best exemplifies the production benefits of shooting on location. Rather than building an expensive set or relying on rear-projection, Daves frames the action against two real dramatic elements: the span of the bridge and the cliff of the Presidio (Figure 1.3). In various shots, the arches of the girders dramatically divide the characters in combat, while camera angles accentuate the height of the bridge and the steep fall below. Here the

physical presence of Bogart played against the actual landmark and landscape becomes an image that could never be as sharply or effectively captured in a studio. Fitting the production logistics, the scene played out in an ultimately controlled location, a small section of land with limited access on a military-controlled section of the city.

The climactic escape from San Francisco provides the most effective and extensive use of downtown San Francisco locations; it also relies on a body double and still limits the crowd exposure. Wide shots of Joe Smith running across a rooftop, climbing down a hotel fire escape and boarding a trolley car reveal a city with a beautiful bay backdrop that seems eerily devoid of people or traffic (Figure 1.4). A clever shot from inside the trolley finally captures our protagonist among the people of the city. Parry sits on the trolley in the foreground with his back to the camera, and the trolley movement reveals throngs of residents walking the streets. Intercut with wide crowd shots captured from rooftops, the viewer is briefly immersed in the life of the city. But the crowd is far from reassuring company; any pedestrian might recognize Parry from his image in the newspaper and foil his escape to South America.

With its extensive POV camerawork, *Dark Passage* sought to capture the story through the eyes of a fugitive. The production's location shooting was similarly fugitive: clandestinely capturing the city without drawing too much attention to the stars or crew. Eliminating Bogart's face from a quarter of the film made this an easier task, but despite this freedom, the POV shots in San Francisco largely occur on dark, empty streets. Daves wrote and directed this story of his hometown, but he effectively saw it through the eyes of a Hollywood professional. As a location, San Francisco would still only be a stage for

the story, not a driving element. Russian Hill offered a visually dramatic setting, where weakened by surgery, a bandaged Parry barely makes it up a steep set of stairs. While the view from the top is clearly San Francisco, the scene could effectively be staged on the hills of Los Angeles.



Fig 1.4. Body double Joe Smith helped filmmakers gain scenic shots without drawing attention during key action sequences in *Dark Passage*.

Despite the extended location shoot, *Dark Passage* still required plenty of rear projection. The benefit of shooting on location came with the variety of backdrops and the ability to intercut these backdrops with second-unit location footage. For example, when Irene crosses the Golden Gate Bridge, several views trace the car entering a tunnel, approaching the toll booth, and finally exiting the bridge. These are matched with rear projected images of Irene driving with bridge traffic behind her as well as wide shots of the car traveling past the bridge and pulling up to the apartment. The extent of this driving footage helps draw out this suspenseful scene and maximize the value of the commotion caused by shooting Lauren Bacall at the bridge tollbooth. It also demonstrated how effectively second unit footage could capture a location, making

expensive first-unit location production appear to be an unnecessary expense. Other than one wide shot, the shots of Bacall appear readily reproducible on a studio stage.

By showing such limited control of location shooting in 1940s San Francisco, the production of *Dark Passage* suggests a limited cinematic vision of the city. However a superficial, scenographic vision of urbanism has a rich history in American city building. Perhaps the definitive manifestation of this strategy was Daniel Burnham's Chicago plan of 1909, the culmination of the era's City Beautiful movement. As Peter Hall describes in *Cities of Tomorrow*:

Its basic concept was grand enough even if singularly vague as to instrumentalities: it was "to restore to the city a lost visual and aesthetic harmony, thereby creating the physical prerequisite for the emergence of a harmonious social order;" the chaotic city that had arisen through too-rapid growth and too-rich mixture of nationalities, would be given order by cutting new thoroughfares, removing slums, and extending parks. Its very confusion of social objectives and purely aesthetic means was apparently, the quality that endeared it to the upper and middle classes who backed the Progressive movement.¹⁰⁹

Burnham actually proposed a similar plan for post-earthquake San Francisco, but commercial pressures prevented an overhaul of San Francisco's Victorian houses and gridded streets.¹¹⁰ Hollywood managed to do what Burnham could not: manipulate San Francisco's eccentric cityscape into visual harmony. Hollywood had a similar stake in visual order, which simultaneously provided aesthetic beauty and narrative clarity. Foregoing the expense of rebuilding the city, Hollywood could reedit the city to clarify the relationship between monuments and districts. Filmmakers could similarly exclude the ethnicities and slums unsuitable for a patrician San Franciscan protagonist or unsightly for viewers.

The City Beautiful movement shaped the city for a privileged class, providing an image of visual order instead of solutions to the social problems that caused urban disorder. Hollywood shaped its city for its privileged characters. Parry stalks through warehouse districts, seedy apartments, and a Meat Wagon eatery. These lower class spaces rise to meet the demands of the fugitive story, often to highlight the danger that Parry faces. Whether shot on location or not, these places are sets, stitched into the narrative rather than woven into the larger city. For instance, the warehouses merely set up an exciting climb up the steps to the Russian Hill apartment, as well as the workers below who threaten to spot Parry. As Wald's memos clarify, they are landmarks of orientation, not connotation.

How do the apparently opposing styles film noir and City Beautiful coexist in *Dark Passage*? Dimendberg provides a useful distinction between distant shots of the city, presenting a coherent whole, and ground level representations of the city, which provide glimpses of the seamy underbelly of this image. Street scenes in noir films may accentuate the growing cracks in the cohesive city of the past.¹¹¹ While film noirs such as *Double Indemnity* (1944) and *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955) may highlight this dialectic between the modern American city and the rising postmodern megalopolis, Hollywood filmmakers remained uniquely adept at avoiding such diegetic disruptions. In *Dark Passage*, Parry traverses the dangerous parts of the city at night to seek out an illegal plastic surgeon. Such an action threatens the logic of a city far less than if he sought such surgery on Market Street in broad daylight. In fact the elided distance between the panoramic view of the city and the street level view facilitates an ordered city as much as

it facilitates Hollywood production practices. Between the street level view and the panoramic view, districts and neighborhoods intersect, and a clearer geography of the city comes into view. Such details could only impede the Classical Hollywood narrative, where character movement and progression maps the useful districts of the city. Meanwhile, capturing blocks and districts on location would be far more difficult than distant shots and street scenes.

THE LIMITS OF LOCATION AND THE POWER OF SET DESIGN: THE HOUSE ON TELEGRAPH HILL

Ironically, Wald's meticulous attention to visual clarity did not extend to the clarity of the convoluted script for *Dark Passage*. One reviewer summed up the consensus with the headline: "Don't Be Reasonable: Then You'll Like *Dark Passage*."¹¹² Perhaps Daves, who wrote and directed the film, paid more attention to the city than the plot. However these public failures revealed far less about major changes in postwar Hollywood filmmaking than the film's prolonged production. As an experiment in location filmmaking, brought about by a labor stoppage, *Dark Passage* failed to justify the expense of shooting extensively in an urban environment outside of Los Angeles. By contrast, *The House on Telegraph Hill* maximized the value of its San Francisco setting through set design, matte work, and carefully planned scenic and action shots in the city.



Figure 1.5. *The House on Telegraph Hill* (20th Cent. Fox, 1951). Top: night establishing shot with matted in upper floors; bottom: daylight exteriors in front of restaurant location in San Francisco.

The House on Telegraph Hill scheduled three weeks of location shooting in San Francisco for August of 1950.¹¹³ In *American Cinematographer*, Herb Lightman praised the “authentic mood” of the exteriors shot largely around San Francisco. But, “it is inside the mansion itself, where the main body of the action takes place, that the camera functions most directly as an instrument of mood.”¹¹⁴ The film was nominated for best

art-direction, using the ornate house as a shadowy trap for the heroine much like *Rebecca* (1940). Meanwhile, the interior plot helped navigate a potential production problem: there was no house on Telegraph Hill.¹¹⁵

Telegraph Hill overlooked the Bay Bridge, Alcatraz, and three other islands, rivaling the Golden Gate views of Nob Hill and Russian Hill. However the only large site offering such a view was a restaurant. Undeterred, set builders constructed the mansion's first floor façade around the restaurant. The rest of the building was added by matte painting after the location filming (Figure 1.5). Lightman noted that “needless to say, the match is a perfect one,” and watching the film today, it is still almost impossible to see where the façade ends and the matte begins. By limiting San Francisco filming to exteriors, D.P. Lucian Ballard could capture picturesque images of a number of landmarks such as Union Market, the Marina, the Embarcadero, Coit Tower, and the Golden Gate Bridge. Despite rarely capturing stars on location, crowds still flooded some of the shoots as they had during *Dark Passage*. The crew found a sidewalk elevator to capture a busy Market Street with a camouflaged camera.¹¹⁶

Like *Dark Passage*, *The House on Telegraph Hill* took advantage of San Francisco's topography, but by staging most of the exterior action on the cloistered restaurant grounds (dressed as the mansion back lawn), the San Francisco setting functioned like a back lot set. The hilltop featured panoramic views of the city as well as dramatic potential. In one scene, Victoria (Valentina Cortese) falls through a hole in a mysterious back clubhouse, where she dangles off the hill above the rear-projected city. The streets below the hill featured prominently in a major action sequence, when a cut

brake line sent Victoria's car hurtling down the hill. Shots of the speeding vehicle and car-mounted POV shots allowed an effective action sequence to be captured by a second-unit crew. Only a handful of scenes, set at the waterfront and Union Street grocery, featured actors walking through the city; like *Dark Passage*, the backgrounds of these public spaces were almost deserted. While *Dark Passage* struggled to make San Francisco function like a back lot, later productions like *The House on Telegraph Hill* tailored stories and shooting schedules to the specific challenges of location shooting. Nonetheless, even three weeks of carefully controlled, first-unit location shooting in San Francisco remained an exceptional practice.

Lightman noted how well Lucian Ballard captured "the specific glamour of that cosmopolitan metropolis."¹¹⁷ Regardless of the quality of the cinematography, postwar San Francisco would consistently appear as such: specific, glamorous, and cosmopolitan. The city offered distinct landmarks like the Golden Gate Bridge, tony residences, and a variety of districts, such as Telegraph Hill, Chinatown, and Fisherman's Wharf. While rarely a site for extensive location shooting, San Francisco's popularity as a setting for Hollywood features and documentaries had nearly exhausted the city's panoply of sights by the early 1950s. Robert Wise compared it to Monument Valley, where "every nook and cranny of the area has been seen on the screen a dozen times."¹¹⁸ Despite its overexposure on film, San Francisco remained a popular setting in the 1950s as new production practices and technologies reinvigorated the production value of scenic locations.

The simultaneous development of widescreen cinema and runaway production in the 1950s would draw Hollywood further out of the constraints of lush interiors and tight narratives. Filmed in color widescreen, scenic urban locations like San Francisco became a greater production asset for the new exhibition formats, while the expansion of tourism raised the city to a spectacle in its own right. Financial incentives opened foreign locations to runaway production, placing a newfound emphasis on authentic backgrounds and location shooting. Television and independent production also developed new location shooting practices that would shape the studios' aesthetic response to competition. Finally, studios' increasing reliance on fewer, costlier A pictures helped inflate production budgets, allowing them to better accommodate the expense and uncertainty of location shooting. The postcard beauty of San Francisco made the city a privileged domestic site for Hollywood production as the functional city of Classical Hollywood came to accommodate the scenic digression of cine-tourism.

Notes:

¹As Mark Shiel notes, the 1930s through the mid-1940s would be overwhelmingly dominated by production on the studio lot rather than on location. See Mark Shiel, *Hollywood Cinema and the Real Los Angeles* (London: Reaktion, 2012), 128.

²Signal Corps filmmakers would effectively stage other scenes to supplement such documentaries and restore control over the image and narrative. See Thomas Doherty, "Documenting the 1940s," in Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust: The American Cinema in the 1940s* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1999), 410-411.

³Ezra Goodman, "Post-War Motion Pictures," *AC* (May 1945): 160, 172 (*American Cinematographer* hereafter cited as *AC*).

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

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- ⁶ “Studios Broaden Program of Filming Yarns in Real Locale,” *Daily Variety*, Oct. 24, 1946, 18.
- ⁷ Barry Salt, *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis*, 2nd ed (London: Starword, 1992), 230-231
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Herb Lightman, “13 Rue Madeleine,” *AC* (December 1948): 88-89, 110-111.
- ¹⁰ Arthur Rowan, “The Steel Trap,” *AC* (November 1952): 478, 496-498.
- ¹¹ Frederick Foster, “Economy Lighting with Photofloods,” *AC* (January 1950): 11, 20.
- ¹² Robert Surtees, “The Story of Filming ‘Act of Violence,’” *AC* (August 1948): 268, 282-284.
- ¹³ Salt, 241.
- ¹⁴ Leigh Allen, “They Do It with Infra-Red!,” *AC* (October 1949): 360, 376-378.
- ¹⁵ Hollis Moyses, “Latensification,” *AC* (December 1948): 409, 426.
- ¹⁶ Herb Lightman, “Realism with a Master’s Touch,” *AC* (August 1950): 271, 286-288.
- ¹⁷ Herb Lightman, “Old Master, New Tricks,” (September 1950): *AC*, 309, 318-320.
- ¹⁸ Leigh Allen, “New Speed for Films,” *AC* (December 1949, 440, 456-457.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Wilfrid Cline, “Mobile Camera Lab,” *AC* (December 1948): 410; 423.
- ²¹ Ralph Lawton, “Disney Unveil New Mobile Generator Unit,” *AC* (February 1950): 49, 66; John del Valle, “Boom Shots Anywhere!,” *AC* (August 1950): 270, 282; “What’s New,” *AC* (April 1953): 152.
- ²² Leigh Allen, “Signal System,” *AC* (November 1949): 402, 417.
- ²³ Phil Tannura, “Translucent Photo Backgrounds Cut Production Costs,” *AC* (July 1949): 240-241, 259-260.
- ²⁴ Lee Garmes, “Lighting Translucent Backings,” *AC* (November 1949): 398-399, 417-418.
- ²⁵ Herb Lightman, “Matching Location Footage With Studio Shots,” *AC* (June 1950): 197, 215-216.
- ²⁶ Ibid
- ²⁷ Rowan, “The Steel Trap,” 478, 496-498.
- ²⁸ Herb Lightman, “The Lady From Shanghai,” *American Cinematographer* (June 1948): 200-201, 213.
- ²⁹ Sheri Chinen Biesen, *Blackout: World War II and the Origins of Film Noir* (Baltimore: John Hopkins U. Press, 2005), 63.
- ³⁰ General research record, 28 May 1941, box 1, fol. 712, *Maltese Falcon* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² Budget, 24 May 1941, box 1, fol. 712, *Maltese Falcon* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.
- ³³ Ibid.

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- ³⁴ Daily production progress reports, 14 June and 28 June 1941, fol. 714, *Maltese Falcon* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.
- ³⁵ Fred Tyler to Special Effect Department, 26 June 1941, fol. 714, *Maltese Falcon* Production File, Warners Archive, USC. This often-used Los Angeles location famously appeared as the Bat Cave for the *Batman* television series and in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956).
- ³⁶ Steve Trilling to Jack Warner, 9 December 1943, Story—memos and correspondence, *To Have and Have Not* Production File, Warners Archive.
- ³⁷ Production and Progress Report, 19 January 1944- 10 May 1944, fol. 1488, *To Have and Have Not* Production File, Warners Archive.
- ³⁸ Jack Sullivan to Dr. Kissauer, 5 October 1943, *To Have and Have Not* Research Record, Warners Archive.
- ³⁹ Weekly Production Cost, 29 February 1944, *To Have and Have Not* Production File, Warners Archive.
- ⁴⁰ Jack Warner to Howard Hawks 17 March 1944- 30 March 1944, *To Have and Have Not* Production File, Warners Archive.
- ⁴¹ “Studios Adopt Documentary Pic Format,” *Daily Variety*, October 1947.
- ⁴² William Lafferty, “A Reappraisal. Of the Semi-Documentary in Hollywood, 1945-1948,” *Velvet Light Trap* 20 (1983): 22-26.
- ⁴³ The American film industry worried about similar restrictions with the onset of the Korean War. See Herman Lowe, “Showbiz Scans the War Clouds,” *Daily Variety*, October 18, 1950, 4.
- ⁴⁴ “Selznick Will Shoot All Films With Real Locale,” *Daily Variety*, April 30, 1946, 3.
- ⁴⁵ “Studios Broaden Program of Filming Yarns in Real Locale,” *Daily Variety*, October 24, 1946, 18; “WB Scatters Units to 4 Winds,” *Daily Variety*, July 3, 1947, 3.
- ⁴⁶ “RKO Will Shoot 3 August Films on Location,” *Daily Variety*, July. 22, 1947, 6.
- ⁴⁷ “Studio is Saving Set Costs Thru Locale Lensing,” *Daily Variety*, June 10, 1947, 4.
- ⁴⁸ Production Budget and Cost Sheet, 4 June 1947, fol. 34, *The Naked City*, Gil Kurland papers, Herrick Library.
- ⁴⁹ “Studios Broaden,” *Daily Variety*, Oct. 24, 1946, 18.
- ⁵⁰ Production Budget and Cost Sheet, 4 June 1947, Kurland Collection.
- ⁵¹ Herb Lightman, “The Naked City,” *AC* (May 1948): 152-153, 178-179.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁴ “Slice Film Costs 30%,” *Daily Variety*, Aug. 18, 1947, 1, 5.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ Darryl Zanuck memo, 27 May 1947, fol. 144, 20th Century Fox, Lloyd Bacon papers, Herrick Library.
- ⁵⁷ It’s a wonder Otto Preminger made so many films at Fox.
- ⁵⁸ Zanuck memo, 27 May 1947, Lloyd Bacon Papers.

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- ⁵⁹ Darryl Zanuck memo, 12 December 1949, fol. 138, 20th Century Fox, Henry King papers, Herrick Library.
- ⁶⁰ Sumiko Higashi, "Realism in Urban Art and *The Naked City*," in eds. Jon Lewis and Eric Smoodin, *Looking Past the Screen: Case Studies in American Film History and Method* (Durham: Duke, 2007), 368-369; Zanuck Memo, 12 December 1949, Henry King Papers.
- ⁶¹ Zanuck Memo, 12 December 1949, Henry King Papers.
- ⁶² Mark Shiel. "A Regional Geography of Film Noir: Urban Dystopias On-and Off-Screen," in Prakash, Gyan, ed., *Noir Urbanisms: Dystopic Images of the Modern City* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2010), 79-97.
- ⁶³ Mike Connolly, "Production Costs Cut 25%," January 4, 1950, 23.
- ⁶⁴ Darryl Zanuck to King, 14 June 1950, Henry King papers.
- ⁶⁵ Daily production progress reports, 29 October- 30 November 1946, fol. 1488, *Dark Passage* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.
- ⁶⁶ Hortense Morton, "S.F. Popular Color Town For Makers of Movies," April 6, 1952, Movies/San Francisco, *S.F. Examiner* Clippings, S.F. History Center, S.F. Public Library (hereafter cited as Movies-S.F.).
- ⁶⁷ Budget data culled from the budgets in the production files for the above listed titles in ser. 1, RKO Studio Records, Young Research Library, UCLA Special Collections. (hereafter cited as UCLA-SC)
- ⁶⁸ *Hollywood Reporter* clipping, 3 September 1947, fol. 685, Publicity, *Dark Passage* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.
- ⁶⁹ *Film Daily* clipping, 3 September 1947, *ibid.*
- ⁷⁰ Newspaper clipping, 1947, *ibid.*
- ⁷¹ Richard Coe, "Don't Be Reasonable- Then You'll Like 'Dark Passage,'" *The Washington Post*, Oct. 3, 1947, B10.
- ⁷² Synopsis, fol. 1011, Research, *Dark Passage* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.
- ⁷³ Delmer Daves and Jerry Wald to Tenny Wright, 9 September 1946, fol. 1858, Story—memos and correspondence, *ibid.*
- ⁷⁴ "Notes on Experimental Camera Work," 23 October 1946, *ibid.*
- ⁷⁵ Patrick Keating, *Hollywood Lighting from the Silent Era to Film Noir* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 59-62.
- ⁷⁶ Zanuck memo, 27 May 1947, Lloyd Bacon Papers.
- ⁷⁷ "Notes on Experimental Camera Work," October 1946, Warners Archive, USC.
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁹ This biography by the American Society of Cinematographers mentions Burks special effects work. Stephen Pizello, "Robert Burks, ASC and Alfred Hitchcock," <https://www.theasc.com/protect/nov98/collab/pg2.htm> (Accessed July 4, 2014).
- ⁸⁰ Jerry Wald to Tenny Wright, 30 September 1946, fol. 1858, Story—memos and correspondence, *Dark Passage* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.
- ⁸¹ Research Department notes, 20 September 1946, *ibid.*

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- ⁸² Herb Lissauer to Wald, 1 September 1946, fol. 2459, Story, *ibid.*
- ⁸³ Daily production progress reports, 29 October- 30 November 1946, fol. 1488, *Dark Passage* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.
- ⁸⁴ “Capra Winds Tanforan Shots with 25G Savings,” *Daily Variety*, May 2, 1949, 1.
- ⁸⁵ Daily production progress reports, 29 October- 30 November 1946, fol. 1488, *Dark Passage* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.
- ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁹ Wald to Daves, November 14 1946, fol. 1858, Story—memos and correspondence, *Dark Passage* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.
- ⁹⁰ Elizabeth Darling to Warners Legal Dept., 28 October 1947, fol. 2459, Story, *ibid.*
- ⁹¹ Herb Caen clippings, fol. 685, Publicity, *ibid.*
- ⁹² Daily production progress reports, 29 October- 30 November 1946, fol. 1488, *ibid.*
- ⁹³ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁴ Wald to Daves, 21 November 1946, fol. 1858, Story—memos and correspondence, *Dark Passage* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.
- ⁹⁵ Daily production progress reports, 29 October- 30 November 1946, fol. 1488, *ibid.*
- ⁹⁶ Wald to Daves, 18 November 1946, fol. 1858, Story—memos and correspondence, *Dark Passage* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.
- ⁹⁷ Wald to Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, 8 November 1946, *ibid.*
- ⁹⁸ Vincent Farrar, “Tough Assignment,” *AC* (February 1950): 48, 62-63; William Mellor, “No Time for Weather,” *AC* (May 1951): 178-179; 199.
- ⁹⁹ Wald to Daves, 8 November 1946, fol. 1858, Story—memos and correspondence, *Dark Passage* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.
- ¹⁰⁰ Wald to Daves, 19 November 1946, *ibid.*
- ¹⁰¹ Wald to Fred Koenkamp, 26 November 1946, *ibid.*
- ¹⁰² Wald to Daves, 21 November 1946, *ibid.*
- ¹⁰³ David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristen Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 59.
- ¹⁰⁴ Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson, 63.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Daily Mirror*, 30 August 1947, fol. 685, Publicity, *Dark Passage* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.
- ¹⁰⁶ Eds. James Brook, Chris Carlsson and Nancy Peters, *Reclaiming San Francisco* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1998), vii-viii.
- ¹⁰⁷ Edward Dimendberg, *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 114.
- ¹⁰⁸ Quotation from Roland Barthes, “Semiology and the Urban.” Dimendberg, 114, 285.

¹⁰⁹ Peter Geoffrey Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Pub, 2002), 192-193.

¹¹⁰ Hall, 192.

¹¹¹ Dimendberg, 119-121.

¹¹² Coe, "Don't Be Reasonable," *The Washington Post*, Oct. 3, 1947, B10.

¹¹³ "Inside Hollywood," *Daily Variety*, August 7, 1950, 2.

¹¹⁴ Herb Lightman, "House on Telegraph Hill," *AC* (July 1951): 260-261, 274-275.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ "Inside Hollywood," *Daily Variety*, August 7, 1950, 2.

Chapter 2: The Cine-Tourist City: From Cinerama to *The Lineup* and *Vertigo*

Vertigo was a typical 1958 Hollywood film. Typical of a more stable relationship between independent and studio production. Typical of the integration of distant location shooting into the workflow of Classical Hollywood production methods. Typical of the spectacular locations featured in widescreen color pictures. And typical of the best and worst practices for weaving picturesque, urban travelogues into narrative cinema. *The Lineup* (1958), a seldom seen big screen adaptation of a popular television police procedural, appeared the same year and also shot in San Francisco.¹ *The Lineup* exemplified another staple of 1950s production, the “typical fare” that kept theaters from going dark and studios from going idle between blockbuster releases. Shooting black-and-white film on location proved far less expensive than relying largely on process shots on the Columbia lot, where the studio’s television subsidiary, Screen Gems, profitably occupied several soundstages previously reserved for feature film production. Director Don Siegel, a veteran of moderate-budgeted thrillers like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) and *Riot in Cell Block 13* (1954), shot more extensively in San Francisco than Hitchcock, who spent two first-unit weeks in the vicinity of San Francisco compared to over two months on the Paramount lot.²

Both films lead the viewer on a tour of San Francisco, but the characters and itineraries are as different as their production histories. In *Vertigo*, Scotty (Jimmy Stewart) is a local detective who falls victim to a voyeurism and nostalgia also imbued in the tourist experience of San Francisco. In *The Lineup*, San Francisco falls victim to Dancer (Eli Wallach), a contract killer on a murderous day trip through the city. The

urban spectacle serves as a siren, drawing characters towards danger while drawing dangerous characters to the city.

The appearance of two San Francisco films in 1958 that both exhibit and critique tourism underscores Hollywood's shift in urban aesthetics during the course of the 1950s. New technologies, exhibition practices, and production strategies allowed picturesque locations to increasingly intrude upon the film narrative, or in the case of early Cinerama films, to supplant the narrative entirely. As authentic locations became sellable production assets for films, ranging from the escapism of *Roman Holiday* (1953) to the realism of *On the Waterfront* (1954), settings became more than mere backgrounds. San Francisco lacked the financial incentives of foreign cities and the production facilities of New York, but it offered an urban grandeur and distinction lacking in Los Angeles' sprawl. Thus like tourists, Hollywood crews journeyed north for a week or two, capturing exterior landmarks to embellish studio interiors.

Hollywood's cine-tourist aesthetic authenticated color spectacles with the occasional use of semi-documentary techniques. Meanwhile, spartan black-and-white pictures by independent producers reinvigorated the semi-documentary realism of the late 1940s. For well-financed color films, scenic locations added production value akin to the opulent sets of the 1930s; by contrast, a black-and-white realist aesthetic offered production economy, lending style and gravity to lower-budget pictures while cutting major expenses for set-building and sound stage rentals. This bifurcation between location shooting as an element of color spectacle and an element of black-and-white realism would become less distinctive by 1958. While *Vertigo* and *The Lineup* largely followed these two trends in location cinematography, each film exploited San Francisco's famous sites as tourist fantasies masking real threats to urban citizens.

This chapter begins by establishing San Francisco's distinct place in the mediated geography of the United States in the 1950s. Next I discuss the economic and technological developments that drove Hollywood location shooting in the 1950s while dictating when and how this practice could be effectively employed for specific productions. A pair of case studies, beginning with *Vertigo* and ending with *The Lineup*, distinguish between location production practices for major Hollywood color films and moderate budget black-and-white films and television series. Each film both exploits San Francisco as a tourist capital and criticizes the tourist image as a dangerous distortion of urban culture.



Fig. 2.1. The Golden Gate Bridge in *This is Cinerama* (Cinerama, 1952).

On the 1951 debut CBS broadcast of *See It Now*, Edward R. Murrow asked for the East Coast and West Coast feeds. The West Coast monitor appeared first, offering images of the Golden Gate Bridge and the San Francisco Skyline. The East Coast feed

featured the Brooklyn Bridge and the New York Skyline. As Thomas Doherty describes in *Cold War/Cool Medium*, it was “America from sea to shining sea seen for the first time over the monitor in the living room.”³ This feat would be repeated, more spectacularly and more literally, at the close of *This is Cinerama* (1952). As aerial footage traversed the country to the music of “America the Beautiful,” the camera soared towards the Golden Gate Bridge, the visual accompaniment to “from sea to shining sea (Figure 2.1).” San Francisco appeared again in *Cinerama Holiday* (1955), featuring images of trolley cars and Chinatown street performers.⁴ As a center of population and industry, Los Angeles was New York’s West Coast rival. As a city image symbolizing the Western edge of the country, San Francisco was New York’s Pacific rhyme.

A science fiction film, *It Came From Beneath the Sea* (1955), offers the simplest explanation for San Francisco’s visual status. Here a giant octopus, the product of nuclear testing, attacks both the Golden Gate Bridge and downtown San Francisco. Clearly the plot called for a coastal city and a naval presence, which Los Angeles could easily provide. Yet what would the octopus attack? The docks of San Pedro? The Santa Monica Pier? Could it even reach the increasingly neglected downtown?⁵ San Francisco was not only a striking city, but also one that could be captured in a single poster image, whether in the synecdoche of the Golden Gate Bridge or in the hilly skyline rising above the marina. In a later science fiction film, *On The Beach* (1959), the survivors of a nuclear war travel by submarine to investigate a distress beacon in San Francisco. As they approach the coast, the crew can already see they are too late, as the camera tracks across wide shots of a deserted city. In hopeless delirium, a sailor leaps in the water, saying, “I have a date on Market Street, Captain. I’m going home.” As he swims to shore, an extreme wide shot captures the haunting spectacle of an entire city emptied of any sign of life.

Ed Dimendberg observes how the growing sprawl of Los Angeles imbued film noirs with centrifugal movement, where doomed characters in automobiles attempted to flee the bounds of the city. Here the dramatic crisis portends an aesthetic crisis of how to represent this new, dispersed form of urban space.⁶ While San Francisco, like all American cities of the 1950s, struggled with automotive sprawl, it preserved its appearance as a centralized city in several ways. The first was natural: San Francisco's peninsular site encapsulated the central business district, displacing the image of sprawl beyond the bay. Secondly, San Francisco citizens' groups were tenacious preservationists. They saved the trolley cars in the 1940s, and became the first American city to halt freeway expansion, leaving the Embarcadero Freeway "literally hanging in mid-air" across from the Ferry Building. *The Lineup* staged its climax on this readymade set piece.⁷

Lastly, and in keeping with its onscreen image for most of the 1950s, San Francisco was well aware of its own tourist potential. In 1956, prominent businessman Charles Blyth asked the new mayor George Christopher how they might reduce the visual impact of the Embarcadero on the historic Ferry Building. Blyth, who would later form the powerful, private redevelopment group, the Blyth-Zellerbach Committee, saw the highway as a threat to the old-fashioned ambiance of the city, and thus a threat to future tourism and waterfront development.⁸ In the aftermath of World War II, San Francisco hosted one of the major conventions of the 20th Century, as dignitaries flocked to the city to sign the United Nations Charter. The San Francisco Convention and Tourist Bureau described the vision San Francisco would project to the world through the mid-1960s: "Paris, San Francisco, New York, New Orleans—these are story towns... you will not leave this city without experiencing the thrill of its mixture of beauty, old and new."⁹ A decade removed, this text could serve as a tagline for *Vertigo*.

THE BUSINESS OF CINE-TOURISM

While *Vertigo* remains a key object of ideological film criticism, particularly for its manipulation of gender roles and spectatorship, contemporary critics universally regard the film as a masterpiece of cinematic technique.¹⁰ However, upon the film's release, *Variety* offered a trenchant critique of the film's execution. The first half was too slow, and Hitchcock's striking location photography of San Francisco was likely to blame. Location scenes were "absolutely authentic and breathtaking. But these also tended to intrude on storyline too heavily, giving a travelogueish effect at times."¹¹ In a recent anthology specifically dedicated to *Vertigo*'s relationship to San Francisco, two scholars address and deflect this criticism, justifying Hitchcock's incessant attention to San Francisco backdrops. Ana Salzberg ties Hitchcock's scenic interludes to his specific approach to the VistaVision format, while Diane Borden relates the emotional pathology of tourism to the traumatic plot.¹² These analyses focus on *Vertigo*'s unique resolution of the tourist impulse in 1950s Hollywood, relying on detailed readings of the film itself. Shifts in Hollywood location shooting practice in the 1950s, as well as the production history of *Vertigo*, suggest that the travelogue problem was never fully resolved, and remained a fundamental challenge for many Hollywood A pictures.

While distant location shooting took advantage of new exhibition technologies and financial incentives, it could not simply overhaul established production and storytelling practices. Rather, the spectacle of exotic cities had to find an appropriate place within well-established economic and narrative constraints. In this sense, the *Variety* review is sharply accurate. *Vertigo* unforgettably captured San Francisco. It also went over-budget and failed to earn as much as Hitchcock's recent European thrillers, *To Catch A Thief* (1955) and *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956).¹³ Location shooting

simulated the experience of luxurious travel as an ancillary production value to narrative features; but in films like *Vertigo*, this tourist aesthetic threatened to overwhelm the production budget as well as the film narrative. Without moderation, location shooting threatened to do as much harm as good, inflating production budgets while disengaging viewers from the onscreen drama.

By 1948, the Motion Picture Export Association (MPEA) effectively negotiated trade pacts with England, France, and Italy that overcame strict quota restrictions for distributing American films abroad. The key caveat in each agreement would be the withholding of a large share of box office profits in frozen accounts; for instance in Britain, the largest foreign market for Hollywood films, over 70% of Hollywood's 1948 box office profits remained frozen in England. Foreign countries allowed American studios to spend blocked funds on production facilities and expenses since these investments benefited the local economy.¹⁴ Yet Hollywood's limited capability for location shooting and tight production budgets of the early 1950s delayed the full exploitation of this powerful exception to foreign protectionism.

As Shandley details in *Runaway Romances*, the mid-1950s boom in Hollywood production in Europe began as an overt attempt to free frozen box-office profits by employing elements of the semi-documentary style. *Roman Holiday* (1953) would serve as an influential and successful experiment in foreign location shooting. Paramount accepted shooting in Rome as a *deficit* to production value. Wyler would employ inexpensive semi-documentary techniques on location, including concealed cameras and post-synchronous sound, to capture his stars against famous Roman landmarks. Production correspondence revealed major difficulties with Italian laborers and technicians, as well as a lack of police assistance. Whether at Cinecittà or on the streets, the conditions were deemed inappropriate for a Hollywood film. This attempt to recoup

box office profits held by the Italian government through production became a bona fide box office hit. Meanwhile, critics gushed over the use of locations; the excitement of seeing real actors in actual exotic locations outweighed the rough cinematography of ad-hoc location shooting.¹⁵ Following early successes like *Roman Holiday*, Hollywood productions shot abroad boomed for much of the 1950s and 1960s.

In a 1956 *Variety* piece on runaway production, a studio executive emphasized that, “the keynote in today’s films is realism.” Another executive asked, “Can you imagine a ‘Three Coins in a Fountain’ produced on a backlot?”¹⁶ A perceived audience demand for photographic realism justified runaway production, despite any clear evidence of audience preference. In fact critics faulted the overabundance of real locations in *Three Coins in the Fountain* (1954), a film that sacrificed the dramatic story to tourist travel in CinemaScope.¹⁷ This intangible realism served the tangible goal of quelling union complaints against runaway production. In 1953, amid threats of investigations by IATSE and SAG, producers claimed the need to capture actual locales and frozen funds abroad.¹⁸ While by 1954, unemployment for production workers grew relatively high, IATSE tentatively accepted Hollywood’s financial need to shoot overseas but only when the story demanded it. For instance, IATSE VP Carl Cooper guarded North American borders, railing against a film set in the Dakotas but shot in Mexico to save on labor.¹⁹ The compromise between IATSE and the studios checked the present form of runaway production, where a foreign city often doubles for New York to save on expenses, but the implicit agreement always remained fraught. For instance, the cameraman’s local chapter of IATSE publicly complained in 1958 that their workers were left home too often on foreign productions.²⁰

While films shooting in foreign locations increasingly became an integral production strategy for Hollywood, the European honeymoon did not last. In 1956,

Darryl Zanuck left the Fox lot to work as an independent producer based in Paris, mounting major foreign productions such as the successful *Island in the Sun* (1957) and the expensive failure, *The Roots of Heaven* (1958).²¹ By 1956, he observed that Hollywood filmmakers hated working with inferior production facilities abroad, potentially driving production back to the Los Angeles studios.²² Independent producers, largely shooting in the United States, realized similar false economies in the mid-1950s; hoping to save money by avoiding studio sound stages and shooting on location, weather and inadequate facilities often made location productions more expensive than films shot in Hollywood studios.²³

Shooting abroad offered the fiscal incentive of unlocking frozen funds rather than a cost-effective form of production. Production spending on lavish epics effectively transformed blocked currency into surplus production values, including equipment, costumes and scenery that could be exported back to Hollywood. Such endeavors grew as epic as the films themselves. The sets for *Ben Hur* (1959) took eight months to build at Cinecitta, and cost \$125,000 just to dismantle. Metro shipped 100 tons of equipment to Italy. Like Cortez, they razed the galley and pirate ships, preventing Italian producers from exploiting these elaborate set pieces for “lesser productions.” They sold the donkeys and camels to European zoos and circuses.²⁴ The success of *Ben Hur* kept struggling MGM afloat, but also exemplified the complex, expensive productions that eventually sunk the studio.

New York became the domestic capital of runaway production in the 1950s. While it lacked the financial incentives offered by foreign cities like Rome, it offered a similar combination of arresting urban locations and existing studio facilities. Broadway and the booming TV industry provided fresh talent and trained technicians for location crews. Between 1951 and 1956, feature film production in New York rose from 13% to

63% of total film production in the city. Producers like Hecht-Lancaster and Elia Kazan shot multiple features in the city, renewing its association with the gritty, black-and-white realism of *Naked City*.²⁵ As in Europe, location shooting in New York proved less cost-effective than anticipated. Despite open encouragement from the mayor's office to shoot in New York, producers faced a slew of payoffs for local businessmen and officials. Robert Altman decried this "let's take 'em attitude" after shooting an episode of Alfred Hitchcock's hour-long *Suspense* in 1957, where "hold-ups by landlords, city officials and police" doubled production costs.²⁶ Frequent precipitation between mid-winter and May also hurt productions, particularly television series, where one lost day could immediately put an episode over its shoestring budget.²⁷ Figures like Mayor Wagner and Kazan fought to keep production booming in New York. Nonetheless, in 1958, the city remained uncooperative to filmmakers and 25% more expensive per episode than Los Angeles, the rising new center for telefilm.²⁸ Hollywood's telefilm Westerns, shooting in the controlled climate of Los Angeles sound stages and backlots, proved more cost-effective and popular than New York television dramas, which steadily disappeared from television schedules in the later 1950s.²⁹

The cost vs. reward of shooting on location largely depended on the scale of the production. In television, budgets were inflexible and negative costs represented nearly two-thirds of total series costs in the late 1950s.³⁰ Thus the increased cost of shooting in a distant location pushed more television series onto Hollywood lots. For a major Hollywood feature, location costs could be insignificant compared to the above-the-line costs for major stars and directors. "Semi-independent" producers like Alfred Hitchcock, whose use of the Paramount lot was factored into his multi-picture deal with the studio, could choose to shoot certain locations for aesthetic purposes and complete the rest of the picture under the technical control of a sound stage.³¹ For example, the first-unit shooting

schedule for *Vertigo* called for 11 shooting days on location and 29 days in studio.³² Independent producers unaffiliated with a studio, who by 1957 produced 40% of Hollywood features, largely preferred shooting on location to the often exorbitant rental rates for studio space.³³

These per-picture decisions had larger ramifications for each studio's bottom line as the economies of overhead and real estate shifted. Variety summarized the dilemma in 1956: "Shooting of product abroad means that only a small charge, if any at all, can be made against the studio upkeep expense, which basically remains constant."³⁴ The more the studio shot on location, the higher the overhead costs for the pictures shot on the lot, since the cost of running the studio would be largely amortized across this smaller number of productions. Conversely, shooting every picture on the lot was unfeasible during an era when the biggest hits, such as *The Ten Commandments* (1956) and *Ben Hur*, featured foreign backdrops. Struggling RKO took a drastic approach, halting sound stage production on the main lot in 1957 in favor of location shooting.³⁵ Whether this strategy failed or simply masked plans to disband the company, RKO all but disappeared by the end of 1958.³⁶

A less drastic solution for studios was to rent studio facilities and technicians to television and independent producers. The nascent telefilm industry set off a studio real estate boom in 1952 when most of the independent studios sold their lots to television or rented unused stages. Hal Roach, whose studio sound stages nearly reached capacity with telepix productions, now valued his lot at \$4 million. Major studios sold or rented their ancillary lots, such as Warner's Gower studios, valued at close to \$1 million. By 1955, Republic shot half of its films on location, while earning \$1 million per year in rentals from MCA television shows.³⁷

Despite the meteoric growth of television, studios built for mass production often had room to spare as the previous decade's fifty to sixty pictures per year shrank to twenty by 1956. *Variety* reported that an unnamed major studio was shooting pictures on only four of its thirty sound stages.³⁸ However, rising real estate prices in the fast-growing Los Angeles of the 1950s delayed a massive shift to location filming. Despite pressure to streamline overhead, Joe Vogel hesitated to sell off MGM's backlot due to its ever-rising property value, hoping to rent it to independent producers in the meantime.³⁹ Oil found on the Fox lot made it far more valuable as a property than a production plant. This spurred a creative solution, whereby Fox planned to sell its lot for \$25 million and become co-tenants on the Warners' lot. Thus each studio could split the overhead and fill the lot's vacant stages.⁴⁰ Fox instead opted for a more ambitious \$50 million plan to build Century City, the still standing skyscraper hub on the former Fox backlot.⁴¹

Warners instead filled the lot with in-house television production. Seen as the model for a serious studio investment in television as of 1958, it would collapse by the mid-1960s.⁴² Columbia's subsidiary, Screen Gems, would have greater long-term success, and in 1958 managed to shoot eight of its ten shows on the lot. Robust in-house production attracted more independent television producers, likely because these studios could offer crews with experience in telefilm production.⁴³ A full rental (including crew) for a standard 39-episode series brought in roughly \$800,000 a year, while just renting space brought in \$150,000. Thus MGM's hesitation to produce independent films and television proved costly, with only one series in production in 1958 while the studio lost close to \$10 million a year. Owning Hollywood's biggest back lot, MGM proved least adaptable to the new overhead economies.⁴⁴

Increased location shooting, whether domestically or abroad, facilitated the studio transition from production centers to rental facilities. But the glut of available stages from

the mass-production era left plenty of room for film productions needing the technical advantages of a professional studio, like the meticulous art direction and camera effects for *Vertigo* or the sprawling sets and casts for MGM's musicals. Meanwhile, independent lots fully converted for rental offered cheaper alternatives for independent producers. Often one studio financed a picture to be shot on another studio's lot, creating far greater flexibility than an earlier era of star and facility loan-outs. For instance, *The Lineup* was an independently produced feature, adapted from a CBS television series based on the Desilu lot, distributed by Columbia, and shot largely in San Francisco. In this new environment, the need to balance overhead and the expense of location shooting created a hybrid lot funded by in-house and rental productions. The technological demands of widescreen, rear-projection, and color cinematography would further shape and limit location shooting in San Francisco and elsewhere.

TECHNOLOGIES FOR AND AGAINST LOCATION SHOOTING

The development of widescreen processes in the mid-1950s exacerbated the runaway production trend. As John Belton argues in *Widescreen Cinema*, new technologies briefly restore the novelty phase of film spectatorship.⁴⁵ Cinerama confirmed this thesis, relying on outdoor travelogues of spectacular European and American locations for its earliest hits, such as *This is Cinerama* and *Cinerama Holiday*. Cinerama embodied cine-tourism in two key ways. First, it transformed movie going into a leisure event analogous to a tourist vacation. Secondly, the enormous triptych screen offered the embodied sensation of traveling through space, whether as a rider on a rollercoaster or as a site-seer on vacation.⁴⁶ Just as location shooting sacrificed production concerns to financial concerns, Cinerama favored exhibition value over production logistics. Shooting in Cinerama created major challenges for filmmakers,

including lens distortion, high intensity lighting requirements, and difficulty moving the three cameras during production without causing image distortion across the three screens in exhibition.⁴⁷

While less cumbersome for filmmakers than Cinerama, CinemaScope similarly favored exhibitors over filmmakers. Fox President Spyros Skouras formerly worked in exhibition, and he successfully pushed a process with lower conversion costs to exhibitors, whose major purchase would be anamorphic projector lenses rather than the three-projectors and three screens required for Cinerama.⁴⁸ Producers shouldered greater conversion costs, such as lens distortion problems that plagued Cinerama films until a new Bausch and Lomb lens appeared in 1954.⁴⁹ Existing setups for process photography were incompatible with the new screen dimensions, requiring Fox engineers to develop an entirely new rear projection system.⁵⁰ As widescreen processes, especially CinemaScope, became the industry standard, their incompatibility with sound stage production fueled runaway production. In a 1956 *Variety* article on runaway production, one executive noted how widescreen processes “so cruelly show up any artificial note,” pushing productions to shoot more scenes and backgrounds on location.⁵¹

The shift to widescreen created additional challenges for independent producers. *American Cinematographer* detailed Cornel Wilde’s widescreen decision for *Storm Fear*, a 1955 independent feature shot on location in Idaho. While a cast of seven made for an economical picture, Wilde and Joseph LaShelle, a veteran Fox cinematographer, worried the small cast could barely fill the larger frame. On the other hand, widescreen complimented their greatest production value, location footage of mountain landscapes. They compromised on a 1:1.85 aspect ratio, offering a wider format without the daunting 1:2.35 width of CinemaScope. The wider frame promoted location shooting for

independent producers but also challenged them to find stories that could adequately and affordably fill the frame.⁵²

According to *Variety* and *American Cinematographer*, the growing emphasis on realistic backgrounds and runaway production in the 1950s did not limit the use of rear-projection and other matte processes; it encouraged them. There is no evidence that these special-effects processes appeared artificial to viewers, technicians, or producers; backgrounds shot on location and incorporated on special-effects stages replaced sets, which had to be bigger and more realistic—thus more expensive—to meet the larger screen dimensions.⁵³ In 1953, *American Cinematographer* reprinted a 1946 article on exterior photography without noticeable changes; despite appearing after the postwar boom in location shooting, the article still maintained that in professional photography, many exteriors were captured inside the studio for technical control.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, Fox's commitment to a full color CinemaScope program in the early 1950s exposed the limitations of existing processes, spurring the development and adoption of blue-screen processes between 1954 and 1958.⁵⁵

Postwar Hollywood studios seamlessly integrated new backgrounds into scenes shot on a process stage. For the non-moving sections of the background, matte technicians could superimpose other images, such as ceilings to cover the overhead lights or extra stories of a building, as in *The House on Telegraph Hill*. For moving backgrounds, rear projection produced a moving image behind the actors and props on the soundstage, frequently used to film actors in a car on the sound stage with background footage appearing behind them. For scenes involving a more precise coordination between foreground and background, a travelling matte process combined negative and positive prints of black-and-white film over several phases of development and photography, artfully integrating multiple moving image planes into a single shot.

The advent of widescreen in the mid-1950s required new equipment to accommodate the larger frame, while color required an entirely different travelling matte technique since the previous one inherently relied on negative film. Like the contemporary green screen process, the blue screen process selectively removed a blue backdrop from the process stage, and after running several film development processes, the blue area could be replaced with a new moving image.⁵⁶

In a February 1954 memo to nearly all production personal, including directors, producers, and unit managers, Fox's R.A. Klune detailed the new blue-screen process. After experimental use on the 1954 release *Hell and High Water*, the technology was ready for all pictures. Not only did this process solve the difficulty with traveling mattes in widescreen, but offered three major advantages: No size limitations, a composite image superior to rear-projection, and a quicker shooting time.⁵⁷ The disadvantages were minor: the inability to pan the camera from a composite background to a set and the elimination of the color blue and semitransparent materials from the foreground. Klune ended the memo with a clear directive: "A vast amount of money has been spent by us on engineering, equipment and testing in order to bring these new processes to the current point of development and everyone should endeavor to make the most valuable use of them."⁵⁸ In other words, to offset research and development costs, process photography would be emphasized over other solutions, such as shooting actors on location.

Paramount would also invest in rear-projection technology that complimented its own large format process, VistaVision. In 1952, they purchased a 50% stake in Vistascope, a process that, unlike blue-screen, could work with black and white or color. The new technology offered "huge budget savings" by eliminating matte shots and expensive foreground sets.⁵⁹ Paramount also won Science and Technical Oscars in 1955 and 1956 for a new background projector and a rear projection screen.⁶⁰ Thus *Vertigo*

could take advantage of San Francisco backgrounds in the studio more efficiently and precisely than on location.

Fox technicians gave a detailed description of state of the art in matte photography in 1954 to the S.M.P.T.E, later reprinted in *American Cinematographer* in 1957. For each process, they emphasized economics over aesthetics. For instance, stationary mattes saved not only on transportation and housing, but also on building the top floors of buildings. Such a process would come in handy for *Vertigo*'s pivotal bell tower scenes.⁶¹ Composite mattes could turn a crowd of two hundred extras into a crowd of two thousand. Meanwhile, the new blue-screen traveling matte process allowed any background to be embedded behind the foreground action, even before that background was shot. Rather than matching set lighting to location lighting, as in *Dark Passage*, cinematographers could capture or recapture backgrounds to better fit the key dramatic action in the foreground.⁶²

In a 1958 *American Cinematographer* article, Joe Henry summarized the advances in process photography: "One of the most highly perfected of cinematic sciences is that of background projection and process photography, which is employed in nearly every major feature film production today."⁶³ While backgrounds shot on location remained the norm after the semi-documentary boom of the late-1940s, they could now be easily combined with foreground action shot at the studio. Widescreen and color increased the cost and complexity of location shooting at the same time that new technology lowered the cost of process photography. Improved process techniques blurred the previous line between location and studio photography. Commenting on *Gigi* (1958), Arthur Gavin wrote, "You are scarcely aware that it was photographed for the most part on actual locales in France."⁶⁴ The aesthetics of location shooting were no longer strongly distinguished from studio process photography. The final sequence of *Pal*

Joey (1957) exemplified just how interchangeably studio and location footage could be interspersed by the late 1950s. In three successive shots, director George Sidney cuts from a body double of Vera (Kim Novak) on location in San Francisco to a process shot of Joey (Frank Sinatra) to a sweeping crane shot of Joey and Vera captured on a studio set (Figure 2.2).

Unaffiliated independent producers rarely shared in these technical innovations. Studio process stages and technicians were highly expensive to rent, but independent companies lacked the personnel, physical plant and capital reserves to build or purchase their own process stages. By 1958, independent process specialists, such as Bob Hansard, began to cater to those excluded companies, such as independents, television producers, and industrial filmmakers.⁶⁵ But independent producers had already found successful ways to profit without process. While Hollywood shot color spectacles abroad, indies more often succeeded with realist black-and-white dramas shot on location in the U.S.

Black-and-white offered several technical advantages over color for independent producers. Studio lights, particularly outside the studio set, created fluctuating color temperatures that had to be carefully monitored shooting in color.⁶⁶ The combination of widescreen and color film required significantly higher-intensity lights, limiting which locations could be captured effectively.⁶⁷ More light also required more equipment, including generators, whereas smaller lights could run off of household power.⁶⁸ The debut of the high-speed, Eastman Tri-X black-and-white stock in 1953 further distinguished monochrome stock from color. At twice the speed of Eastman's previous high-speed stock, Tri-X was only slightly grainier than the black-and-white standard, Plus-X.⁶⁹ With the introduction of the wide-angle Angénieux lens in the late 1950s, which also required less light, black-and-white film could reach exposure under almost any conditions.⁷⁰



Fig. 2.2. Shots captured through location shooting, rear projection, and backlot staging cut together in direct succession in *Pal Joey* (Columbia, 1957).

Black and white film offered “pictorial and economic advantages,” according to cinematographer, Stanley Cortez, who felt his darkly lit location footage (shot on Tri-X) set the tone for *Black Tuesday* (1954), “a tense melodrama about a killer condemned to die in the chair.”⁷¹ Filmmakers, who in the 1940s pushed the association between low-key lighting and dark, realistic subject matter, extended this association to black-and-white film as a whole. For instance, cinematographer Joseph LaShelle suggested that, “color doesn’t lend itself to strong dramatic action,” while producers Mike Ripps and Ed Fessler argued that, “human conflict is best expressed in terms of subtle shadings of black, gray and white.”⁷² The new emphasis on black and white in contradistinction to color arose during Hollywood’s brief color boom of the mid-1950s. Between 1952 and 1954, the number of color films releases rose from roughly a third of all films to half of all films. Color fit Hollywood’s strategy of selling widescreen processes to exhibitors and widescreen spectacles to the audience. And as RCA trumpeted color television, the potential network conversion to color programming promised to boost the value of color film sales to television while dropping the price for existing black-and-white films. This is exactly what happened when the networks switched to color programming in the mid-1960s, and Hollywood responded by virtually ceasing to produce black-and-white films by the end of the 1960s. In the 1950s, the studios color strategy proved premature as consumers proved slow to convert to color TV sets while black-and-white films remained commercially valuable for theatrical and, particularly, network sales. The Hollywood studio’s color output dropped to less than a quarter of all films by 1958.⁷³

As the major studios produced more color features, independent producers often distinguished their products by promoting dramatic realism while taking full advantage of the economies of black-and-white location shooting. A husband and wife production team, Andrew and Virginia Stone, made headlines when *The Night that Holds Terror*,

produced for \$76,000, became a sleeper hit in 1955. The Stones shot and recorded sound entirely on location, never building a set or using a process shot. The success of their first film gained the interest of Doris Day and her husband, producer Marty Melcher; Day starred in their next feature, *Julie*, set in San Francisco. *Julie* shows less the dramatic value of locations than the ability of dramatize generic, suburban California locations with shadowy black-and-white cinematography. Other than dialogue references, the only visual indicator of San Francisco is a small hotel room and a steep hill, likely captured elsewhere.⁷⁴ The next year, the Stones produced *Cry Terror* for MGM. Their style of quick location filmmaking now appeared common for many low to medium budget films, although it was not without jarring disadvantages. While shooting in the Holland Tunnel demonstrated the sensitivity of black-and-white film, the fumes from generators running the lights sent the lead actress, Inger Stevens, along with several crew members, to the hospital for exhaust inhalation. Undeterred, the Stones kept shooting with Rod Steiger; as they emerged to a clutter of emergency vehicles attending to the crew, they shot the chaos to use for the film's closing image.⁷⁵

Clearly, "the Stone Method" was not suitable for most productions, but certain lower budget, black-and-white techniques would appear in more prestigious fare. *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) would earn four Oscar nominations, including ones for Best Black and White Cinematography and Best Black and White Art Direction. Director Richard Brooks chose to shoot almost entirely in Tri-X in order to achieve maximum depth of field without high levels of light. Thus he could keep multiple rows of students in focus, allowing dialogue between front and back rows in a single shot. Meanwhile night sequences on location could be captured with available streetlights. Less lighting also made for quicker setups. Cinematographer Russell Harlan managed to shoot 600 students in an auditorium in a little over an hour; with slower film, he estimated it would

have taken a day or more. Ironically, low-key lighting and fast film stock could create a sense of real place without location shooting. *Blackboard Jungle* was shot almost entirely on the studio lot, yet the stark, low-key cinematography set the tone for the tough inner city. The aesthetic of black-and-white realism, strengthened in comparison to color, could effectively sell sets as actual locations.⁷⁶

Despite a deepening distinction between studio color spectacles and independent black-and-white thrillers, both methods of filmmaking privileged shooting actual places over set building. Runaway production, widescreen exhibition, and advances in process photography placed greater emphasis on real settings as production assets. Meanwhile, exciting locations offered attractions for independents who lacked the means for process photography or major sets. San Francisco effectively served both aesthetics. While offering impressive tourist vistas, it also provided a dense urban core, whose shadowy hills and rooftops further dramatized crime dramas.

VERTIGO: EVEN BETTER THAN THE REAL CITY

As early as 1950, San Francisco seemed overexposed in Hollywood cinema, as Robert Wise struggled to find previously unfilmed locations for *The House on Telegraph Hill*.⁷⁷ By 1953 widescreen processes, particularly in color, helped revive San Francisco's well-worn backdrops. As Zanuck shared with his directors in a confidential memo, "CinemaScope demonstrations reveal that familiar monuments such as the Statue of Liberty and the Arc d'Triumph look entirely new and different in CinemaScope than any other medium. We have therefore tried to load these pictures with these plus values."⁷⁸ The same could be said of Coit Tower and the Golden Gate Bridge.

As Merrill Schleier details in her essay on *Niagara* (1953), staged at famed tourist attraction Niagara Falls, touristic Hollywood films of the 1950s faced a conflict between

two genres: in the case of *Niagara* (and *Vertigo*), the simulated travelogue and the noir-influenced melodrama.⁷⁹ In his essay, “Cities: Real and Imagined,” Geoffrey Nowell-Smith uses *Vertigo* as an example of a specific type of city film, which offers touristic attraction as “personal dramas are played against attractive backdrops.”⁸⁰ Such close attention to backgrounds marks a key departure from previous standards for art direction, where the sets and backdrops functioned to enhance the drama rather than draw attention to themselves.⁸¹ The “plus values” of location monuments and vistas always ran the risk of overpowering the drama. For contemporary reviewers, Hitchcock made precisely this error. As one critic put it, *Vertigo* was a “thrillorama,” a mix of thriller and panorama, and in the end, the scenery outpaced the thrills.⁸²

Vertigo followed several other mid-1950s color films that to varying degrees staged San Francisco as a tourist destination. The first two Cinerama films, *This is Cinerama* (1953) and *Cinerama Holiday* (1955), were travelogues; thus San Francisco could appear as pure visual spectacle without any dramatic interference. *Kiss Them For Me* (1957), set in the recent past of World War II, was a loose remake of *On the Town* (1951). Instead of New York, Crewson (Cary Grant) and two sailors on shore leave toured San Francisco, from the scenic Top of the Mark bar at the Mark Hopkins Hotel to the trolley cars and nightlife districts. *Pal Joey* (1957), the most successful San Francisco film of the 1950s, focused on San Francisco’s racier tourist attraction, the Barbary Coast, a waterfront entertainment district famed for burlesque houses. As proven by the successful Broadway play, this risqué setting could be successfully staged rather than shot on location. After a scenic ferry ride to San Francisco, the film largely relied on studio interiors. Like the rest of the city, *Pal Joey* depicted San Francisco’s vice district as a brightly colored, escapist setting for a musical comedy, a far cry from the dim, seedy depiction of San Francisco’s red light district in *Dirty Harry* (1971).

Hell on Frisco Bay (1955), a crime drama starring Edward G. Robinson and Allan Ladd, whose Jaguar Productions produced the film for Warners, is perhaps the oddest and most telling location thriller of this period. At the height of the color film boom, John Seitz shot the film in color CinemaScope, despite casting and story that suggested 30s gangster films and early 40s noir. While the film attempted to cash in on the success of both the Kefauver crime hearings and *On the Waterfront* (1955), Warners' legal department struggled to find a plot and a waterfront city where allegations of corruption would not provoke lawsuits. Along with its Academy Awards, *On the Waterfront* (1955) drew a \$750,000 libel claim from a Chicago Longshormen's union.⁸³ San Francisco was chosen over New Orleans, and a mixture of rear projection, matte paintings, and sporadic location shooting offered myriad bay views, including a climactic motorboat chase through the bay. These "plus values" proved worthwhile. *Variety* faulted the film's "routine and contradictory melodramatics," but praised the views of San Francisco.⁸⁴

While *Vertigo* was a less routine picture than the largely forgotten *Hell on Frisco Bay*, it faced two similar challenges. A comedy like *Kiss Them For Me* could flit from scenic location to location, letting the upbeat sights complement the comedic episodes. Thrillers needed to sustain suspense and character across scenic interludes. Secondly, by abandoning the association between tense drama and black and white, wide-format color thrillers had to recode tourist attractions into sinister objects. The weak association between color travelogue and dark thriller helped Hitchcock to mask his intentions from the viewer. In a letter to screenwriter Maxwell Anderson, Hitchcock emphasized that the audience should feel unaware that this was a murder story; instead, he sought the tone of "a strange mood love story."⁸⁵ At the same time, Scottie's perverse, voyeuristic pursuit of Madeleine is effectively softened by the socially acceptable pleasure of sightseeing.

In *The Tourist* (1976), Dean MacCannell repeatedly references San Francisco, virtually the only U.S. city touched upon in a theory devoted to international travel by Americans. In the same sense, the San Francisco of *Vertigo* has much in common with the European travelogue dramas of the 1950s. Even contemporary American urbanists, like Austrian émigré Victor Gruen writing in the 1960s, found San Francisco more similar to Continental cities than American ones.⁸⁶ McCannell writes, “Sightseers do not, in any empirical sense, *see* San Francisco. They see Fisherman’s Wharf, a cable car, the Golden Gate Bridge, Union Square, Coit Tower, the Presidio...”⁸⁷ The same is true of *Vertigo*, which features all of these sites but Fisherman’s Wharf. More generally, McCannell writes, “The act of sightseeing...helps the person to construct totalities from his disparate experiences. Thus, his life and his society can appear to him as an orderly series of formal representations...”⁸⁸ Hitchcock’s formal construction of *Vertigo* provides such a totality, shattered for Scottie and the viewer with Madeleine’s reappearance. Yet similarly, an overwhelming sense of San Francisco comes with a minimum of location shooting. As with other touristic films, well-placed drives, landmarks, and backgrounds create the tourist’s sense of knowing a city through its scenic fragments.

Hitchcock spent eight first-unit days in downtown San Francisco, and like filmmakers in the 1940s, captured almost exclusively exterior shots. The most extensive interior work came in the art gallery scenes shot at the Palace of Legion of Honor. The only other location interiors would be the lobby of the McKittrick Hotel and the interior of the flower shop. As for the exterior shots, they consisted overwhelmingly of entrances and exits. For instance, “EXT Mission Dolores... Scottie watches Madeleine enter Mission – Scottie exits car, enters Mission;” similarly, “Ext Brockleback Apt... Madeleine exits bldg., drives off in jaguar – Scottie follows in car.” These establishing shots establish not only a narrative sense of place, but also a physical sense of place for

the leading actors in San Francisco (Figure 2.3). Each entrance and exit can cut away to studio interiors, carrying this sense of real place across the threshold of location and studio work.⁸⁹



Fig. 2.3. Entrances and exits from cars and buildings efficiently establish the lead actors in scenic San Francisco locations in Vertigo (Paramount, 1958).

Some background plates were also be shot along with the first unit work, such as the moving background plate for Scottie walking through the graveyard in the dream sequence and stationary exteriors of cars on the street. These scenes, which perhaps required more specific coordination for the process shot, could be matched on location with principal photography. Infrequently, when the schedule permitted, the filmmakers could capture pure backgrounds, such as a “scenic shot of foggy city,” captured at the end of a day filming actors by the Golden Gate Bridge and downtown. Yet overwhelming, the location work in San Francisco concentrated on two segments of the film: Scottie’s investigative pursuit of Madeleine, and his wandering after her death. Thus the

audience's movement through San Francisco is entirely bound to Scottie, a tour guide through the winding streets and scenic buildings. Like the scenery, Madeleine is another object to gaze at and presume to understand.⁹⁰



Fig. 2.4A & B. *Vertigo*. Left: Rear-projection; Right: Matte painting.

As in *Pal Joey*, location footage and studio work was regularly combined and intercut. For instance, Madeleine and Scottie's dramatic kiss by the waves would be shot only partially at Big Basin State Park. As the couple pause against a tree, a transparency would be filmed on location while the foreground tree would be added on the studio set. Wide shots of Scottie chasing Madeleine down the rocky coast used body doubles on location. Finally, for the climactic moment, where Scottie and Madeleine kiss, location footage of the waves would be shot on transparency, ensuring the background to be exactly timed to the foreground (Figure 2.4A).⁹¹ Even static exterior shots might be filmed on location to be completed later on the lot. The Mission San Juan was the perfect setting, except for not having a bell tower. This key architectural element would instead be painted on a glass matte for exteriors, while interiors would be shot on a set (Figure 2.4B).⁹²

How did Hitchcock spend only eleven days shooting in San Francisco and the surrounding region? He planned ahead, from the writing stage through second unit production. By 1956, Hitchcock already wanted to adapt *From Among the Dead*, a novel

set in World War II Paris and Marseilles, to a modern day setting in San Francisco. He informed screenwriter Maxwell Anderson that he wanted to use the Mission Dolores and San Juan Bautista, already planning to add the bell tower through a matte process. After touring the city, Anderson returned with the early structure of the film, although this time, the heroine's falls would be from a more recognizable set piece, the Golden Gate Bridge.⁹³

The plan to shoot San Francisco came well before principal photography began. The first location survey was a five-day trip to San Francisco in October of 1956 by Herbert Coleman (2nd Unit Director), Sid Street (Location manager), Danny McCauley (Assistant Director), Henry Bumstead (Art Director), and Robert Burks (D.P.). In November, they would take a second trip, now joined by Hitchcock and Doc Erickson, the Unit Production Manager, as well as the script supervisor and chief electrician. They set off with a list of fifteen locations, including several that would never be shot, such as the Sutro Gardens and the Opera House. The result would be pages of notes that would specify each shot to be filmed in San Francisco.⁹⁴

The location notes, compiled by Herb Coleman, are meticulous. For instance, as Scottie pulls up to the flower shop, Coleman notes, "Remove NO PARKING signs on Claude Lane. Scene 42 In Claude Lane – shooting at an angle to building but missing the street (bush) at the end of alley." At the location of Scottie's apartment, the door would be repainted and a streetlight added. Even state parks would need to be properly adjusted, with the note for Big Basin, "Obtain permission to cut two wax myrtles that now obscure the shot." Finally, for the scene where Scottie finds Judy among two friends, Hitchcock requested Judy's double, along with a Chinese girl with glasses and a second Caucasian girl, to be personally selected by Hitchcock himself. This brief street scene would require

a camera hidden in a truck, still a necessary device to keep downtown passersby from disrupting the shot.⁹⁵

While the need to sometimes hide cameras from the public remained, a helpful figure, retired police Lieutenant Morrie Reardon, brought some order to ad hoc shooting practices. Reardon gained only one screen credit, as the technical advisor for *No Escape* (1953), a noir shot in San Francisco.⁹⁶ But his name appears elsewhere, such as in Doc Erickson's oral history of shooting *Vertigo*. Beyond working as the primary police contact, Reardon could assist with finding locations. One night, he took Erickson and Burks on a location tour of eight or nine restaurants, including Ernie's. This was perfect for the "old-world restaurant" that Hitchcock suggested, and while the production never shot there, art director Henry Bumstead would replicate the restaurant exactly on the studio lot.⁹⁷ Erickson recalled no difficulties on location, as well as "terrific help from the police and mayor. Experienced location men succeeded through finding local point people like Reardon, particularly since they were often new to the location. Erickson had never even visited San Francisco, and claimed Hitchcock hired him so that he could enjoy working in a new city."⁹⁸ In fact the Unit Production Managers Guild, which published credit bulletins for the major studios beginning in 1952, earned their reputation working in unfamiliar surroundings. Thus in the prologue to a list of members credits, they boasted, "These men have pioneered trails into new and colorful territories and have acquired the know how and practical experience to best serve our industry on foreign locations."⁹⁹

Police contacts like Reardon did not guarantee a smooth shoot, particularly when local citizens felt disenfranchised by location crews. *Pal Joey* drew ire when weather delays pushed production onto Easter Sunday. Nearly a thousand local cars were turned away from their holiday excursion to the scenic hilltop. One citizen asked, "Who's

paying the taxes on that property up there, us or the movie company?”¹⁰⁰ A week later, Reardon made the front page of *Variety* when *Kiss Them For Me* ran into trouble on its four-day trip to San Francisco. Local station KOBV, likely incensed when the police department rebuffed their request for an officer to read court headlines, aired an editorial attacking the misuse of police resources for the shoot. Beginning with “Attention taxpayers,” the frank editorial featured lines like, “True, San Francisco people were able to view minks and bosoms, but in the meantime, traffic was completely snarled around Nob Hill.” The *Variety* article revealed Reardon’s role of blocking streets and guarding property, assisted by off-duty cops for hire. The defense by Fox and the police was fittingly, the tourist benefits of location shooting for San Francisco.¹⁰¹ Mayor Alioto would offer a similar refrain when citizens complained about location production in the 1970s.

Animosity between locals and crews underscored not only the typical friction between San Francisco and Los Angeles, but also the high potential for negative publicity on location, particularly in a dense city full of media outlets. As *Variety* put it in a 1956 headline, “Location Crews and Casts Good Hollywood Ambassadors Barring Tactlessness or Turpitude.”¹⁰² These concerns help explain Paramount’s months-long correspondence with Rev. Michael Sullivan, custodian of the Old Mission in San Juan Bautista. In October of 1956, Herb Coleman, serving as Associate Producer, sent a synopsis to Rev. Sullivan, as well as an odd assurance that he would contact Leo McCarey. In his reply, Rev. Sullivan thanks Coleman for Paramount’s \$2000 offer, and reserved the right to discuss the sanctimony of any interior scenes shot in the Mission. He also revealed his plans for a film about the Mission; he likely thought of McCarey based on his successful film, *The Bells of St. Mary* (1945). By February of 1957, Rev. Sullivan was corresponding with Farciout Edouart, Paramount’s Special Effects head, about some

type of visual effects display to attract visitors to the Mission. Sullivan wrote, “I certainly enjoyed my visit to Paramount. Now I know big corporations have souls – if you meet the right people. You made me feel like the King of Siam.”¹⁰³ This letter shows the people skills that kept *Vertigo* running smoothly on location, as well as secured the key set piece well before the start of production.

Months before principal photography, second-unit crews shot most of the background plates for *Vertigo*. As early as February of 1957, a small unit led by Herb Coleman, Dan McCauley, and Doc Erickson, captured key backgrounds, such as Scottie’s window view of Coit Tower and the exterior of the Golden Gate Bridge. Second unit crews, shooting with doubles rather than actors, remained far more flexible and inexpensive than first unit crews; by comparison, the 40 person first unit on location for *Pal Joey* was described as a “skeleton crew.”¹⁰⁴ Principal photography began on September 30, and the first unit crew left San Francisco and surrounding areas by October 15, falling four days behind due to the inevitable bad weather around San Francisco. Yet as Hitchcock and Burks worked on interiors in the studio, the second-unit remained on location for another week, as Coleman directed scenes such as the vertigo-camera effect for Midge’s apartment. As first-unit shooting revealed the need for additional pick-up shots on location, the second-unit travelled to San Francisco four more times between November 1957 and February 1958, during which they captured the haunting drive through the tall trees approaching the Mission near the climax of the film.¹⁰⁵

As in the 1940s, the director’s role, even for an independent producer like Hitchcock, was to work with the actors, not the scenery, regardless of the increased importance of location shooting as a source of production value. Thus Hitchcock’s control of the majority of San Francisco footage was remote control. Detailed

descriptions, from storyboards to written notes, guided trusted second-unit crews while Hitchcock remained in Hollywood. Hitchcock even suggested weather conditions for each shot, something he could never afford to wait for the second unit could within reason. The low cost of second-unit work let Hitchcock regularly dispatch the 2nd unit for additional or improved San Francisco backgrounds. With Paramount's state of the art rear projection technology, Hitchcock could change backgrounds before and after principal photography, finalizing images on the process stage at the end of production, mid-December of 1957.¹⁰⁶

The production history of *Vertigo* reveals greater collaboration than Hitchcock typically acknowledged.¹⁰⁷ Yet it also shows how collaboration, particularly with his second-unit, allowed Hitchcock to extend his control of the image beyond his physical presence. In the same regard, Hitchcock's fidelity was not to San Francisco itself but to his sense of the ideal San Francisco for the film. Ernie's would be faithfully reconstructed only because it so perfectly fit the desired setting; if the real setting did not match the desired image, it would be altered, like the matted Mission Tower. Like Judy, San Francisco had to conform to a mind's image, half imagined and half remembered. McCannell saw in tourism a "modern form of alienation," where the model is preferred over the life it represents.¹⁰⁸ *Vertigo* devastatingly proves this in the denouement of Scottie and Judy's tortured relationship, yet the harsh light of the Empire Hotel sign never clearly shines on San Francisco itself.

A recent atlas provides a map plotting all of *Vertigo*'s San Francisco locations (Figure 2.5). Few of them stray from the picturesque neighborhoods of Downtown, Telegraph Hill, Nob Hill, and Russian Hill. The exceptions are mainly landmarks, like the Golden Gate Bridge, the Palace of the Legion of Art, and the Mission Dolores. Two shabbier locations, the McKittrick Hotel, where Madeline mysteriously goes during her

trances, and the Empire Hotel, where Judy lives, stand further west of downtown. The McKittrick's faded paint and sign suggests Madeline's movement into Carlotta's past, while the Empire's cheap veranda suggests how working-class Judy pales in comparison to heiress Madeleine.¹⁰⁹ As in *Dark Passage*, the plot dictates a move to a seedier location that could be readily avoided in less dire straits. The world of the tourist district lies inaccessible due to the characters' downward spiral, not the city's decline.



Fig. 2.5. *Vertigo* shooting locations (pink dots) largely concentrated in Downtown San Francisco. (Sonint, *Infinite Atlas*, map 3)

In this geography, *Vertigo* is no different than San Francisco's national image in the 1950s. In 1958, the editors of *Fortune* published a book of essays titled *The Exploding Metropolis* that sought relief from what William Whyte saw as a growing alienation between the city and the American way of life, now largely defined by suburbia. Nearly every author, including soon-to-be famous urbanist Jane Jacobs, cites

San Francisco or certain of its streets as shining examples of urban vitality. Yet as Daniel Seligman mentions, despite being “widely acclaimed as the best place in the country to live,” slums persisted in San Francisco, like all other cities.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, San Francisco would maintain an image of wealth and beauty. For example, the two *Life* magazine articles about the city in the 1950s covered a debutante ball and the opening of an Opera House.¹¹¹ *The Lineup*, released the same year as *Vertigo*, provided a rather different cityscape, one in which criminals navigate between San Francisco’s ugly interstices and working-class scenic districts. Like the production itself, this city fell in the shadow of *Vertigo*.

THE LINEUP: EXCEPTIONAL STANDARD FARE

After years of losses, 20th Century Fox finally turned a profit from motion pictures in 1957. Fox’s decision to step back from its all-color, A-picture policy and finance Regal Films to produce inexpensive (\$125,000) black-and-white CinemaScope pictures, mostly westerns and crime pictures, brought in handsome profits. The sales department backed this policy, after suffering from a lack of “standard, routine fare” to supply to theaters.¹¹² Despite an erratic shift from mass production to package production, Hollywood studios continued to produce a relatively stable number of pictures per year for most of the 1950s. The steepest decline came in 1954, when releases by the 8 majors dropped by about 33%, but by 1957 they had returned to 83% of their highest yearly output for the 1950s. A more precipitous decline in output and profits would begin in 1958, on the heels of RKO’s collapse and the closing of over 3000 movie theaters.¹¹³ In short, while the market for studio B-pictures collapsed in the late 1940s, the market for cheaper A-pictures between blockbusters remained vital.

The Lineup exemplified this production strategy, which emphasized a rather different location practice than *Vertigo*. By shooting many scenes in daylight exteriors, filmmakers exploited more San Francisco locations than *Vertigo*, not only for their scenic beauty but for their economic and dramatic potential. Building action and suspense sequences around San Francisco sites such as freeway structures and tourist centers not only saved days of expensive sound stage work, but provided dramatic settings that the independent producers could never afford to build on a small budget. Like *Vertigo*, *The Lineup* featured urban site-seeing as both a spectacle and as a potential threat. Unlike the dangerous mystification with the image that destroys Scotty, the tourist culture of San Francisco threatens the city itself, making dangerous outsiders nearly indistinguishable from the crowds of sightseers.

As detailed in the previous chapter, San Francisco provided a dramatic, accessible city for second-unit filming and brief, first-unit location jaunts. An independent producer could capture a lot of atmosphere in a short amount of time. For instance, in 1952, Stanley Kramer spent 6 days shooting *The Sniper* in San Francisco. On just the first day, the crew captured exteriors for twelve different scenes. The location footage covered nearly all of the action scenes, where a sniper and police in pursuit prowl the rooftops of the city day and night. The verticality of the setting revealed several views of the bay, while vantage points between the roof and hilled streets created dynamic compositions, particularly paired with low-key noir lighting. The footage shot in San Francisco added a sense of real but extraordinary place to the semi-documentary crime story, based a recent series of shootings in Los Angeles.¹¹⁴ Yet it also accounted for only 20% of the script. The remaining exteriors would be economically captured in Los Angeles and at the Columbia Ranch, while the interiors would all be shot on the Columbia lot.¹¹⁵ Kramer

could not afford distinctive sets or process shots under his 1952 Columbia contract, which paid \$25 million for thirty pictures over five years.¹¹⁶

Other inexpensive black-and-white productions would briefly touch base in San Francisco. *The Rack* (1956) featured one exterior scene on the Presidio grounds. *Crime of Passion* (1957) opened with a trolley descent towards the bay and an exterior of the San Francisco Police Department before the story moved into interiors and soon, to Los Angeles. *The Midnight Story* (1957) made more extensive use of location shooting, taking advantage of San Francisco backgrounds in CinemaScope, but the production largely limited itself to one area of the city, North Beach, an ethnic Italian neighborhood that shaped the film's story.

The Lineup was standard fare following a different precedent in San Francisco: the successful CBS police procedural of the same name, which ran from 1954-1960. While never as popular as *Dragnet*, *The Lineup* was a top 20 rated show from October 1954 through April 1958.¹¹⁷ The show distinguished itself from the largely set-bound *Dragnet* by shooting extensively on location in San Francisco, becoming one of the only a handful of Hollywood-produced series shooting outside of Los Angeles in the 1950s. By 1958, Nick Musuraca, A.S.C., the cinematographer for the series, had captured more footage in San Francisco than any Hollywood cameraman before him.¹¹⁸ While shooting almost every exterior shot in San Francisco, all the interiors were shot on a sound stage at Desilu Studios.¹¹⁹

The crew captured footage for up to four different episodes in a single day. Working six-day weeks, they typically finished exteriors for 8 half-hour episodes in 11 days. Such a schedule left no time for weather delays. Neither an entire week of rain, regular fog, nor high winds halted production. Instead, a mixture of filters, camera angles, and exposure changes would compensate for shifting light and weather patterns.

Musuraca would adjust the variable shutter with one hand while checking the light meter in his other hand. The tight budget and schedule precluded any process shots or the use of dailies. As Musuraca said, “By the time rushes reached us from the lab we would already be shooting scenes on a new script.”¹²⁰

Early in his career, Musuraca shot nine-day Westerns for FBO Studios and its eventual buyer, RKO, during the late 1920s. Thus the pace and adaptability of B-production set the tone for shooting the series. Smart improvisation with existing conditions could add production values instead of poor cinematography. Rather than waiting for scattered fog to clear, Musuraca once sent an actress wandering through the fog banks, heightening the suspense of a foot chase by an assailant. Overcast days provided a sinister mood for crime stories. Similarly, location sound might be incorporated into the script on the spot. The fast schedule already prevented the use of a sound blimp on the camera, since its cumbersome size and installation between reels might slow down production. Beyond the noise of the camera, actual urban locations were rarely quiet. It proved quicker and more effective to write a siren or a pile driver into the script than to negotiate with the workers or officers creating the sound.¹²¹

In sharp contrast to *Vertigo*, where Hitchcock could afford to shape San Francisco sites into his predetermined images, local conditions actively shaped the look of *The Lineup*. Musuraca rarely shot close-ups on location. Tighter shots of actors could be easily captured in the studio and left little room in the frame to exploit the location backgrounds. Whenever a landmark or architectural element was available on location, the crew worked it into a medium or two shot of the cast members.¹²² Throughout the series, cars almost exclusively parked uphill rather than downhill, allowing the camera to capture the city receding deeply into the background towards the scenic bay. The climax of many episodes featured dramatic, distinctive places, such as the Cliff House, where a

woman attempts suicide on the wave-battered rocks. In syndication, the show further exploited its location with a new title, *San Francisco Beat*. A two-page *Variety* ad for syndication sales touted San Francisco places that Los Angeles could not replicate, such as Chinatown and the urban waterfront. The image, which covered the top two-thirds of the ad, placed lead detectives posed at the top of a hill, flanked by Victorian row houses receding towards a picturesque view of the bay.¹²³

If San Francisco's sites already seemed exhausted by *The House on Telegraph Hill* (1951), *The Lineup*'s 35 new episodes a year left even fewer sites unphotographed for the 1958 feature length film. Series producers Frank Cooper and Jaime Del Valle hired Don Siegel, who had shot the series pilot, to direct. In his autobiography, Siegel claims he and writer Sterling Silliphant hated keeping the same title as the series, a strategy that had already failed for *Dragnet*'s 1954 feature film.¹²⁴ He accurately summarized the script as a chilling story of two criminals, and in the finished film, the television detectives became largely superfluous to the criminals, Dancer (Eli Wallach) and Julian (Robert Keith), who overtake the police story once they arrive via airplane. Siegel and Silliphant's suggested title, *The Chase*, points to the "impossibly scary chase" at the climax of the film.¹²⁵ Here the filmmakers found the rare exception, an ignored downtown San Francisco sight: the newly constructed Embarcadero Freeway. Rising unfinished above the waterfront, this road to nowhere was tailor-made for the criminals' failed escape. This location previously had remained offscreen for one good reason: it was San Francisco's most famous eyesore.¹²⁶

The Embarcadero freeway was a structure not even a technician could love, described by San Francisco consulting engineer William Lathrop, Jr. as "so unnecessarily ugly that its appearance has been almost universally condemned."¹²⁷ Builders attempted to minimize the freeway's footprint with a double-decker structure that could fit enough

traffic lanes within the limits of the industrial zones of the waterfront.¹²⁸ The result was a far greater visual impact, ruining downtown views of the Ferry Building, the historic entrance to San Francisco by water and rail. This particularly enraged wealthy neighborhood groups such as the Telegraph Hill Dwellers' Association, whose scenic hilltop views and property values were threatened by any further highway expansion.¹²⁹ Joined by groups of civic clubs and merchants, they helped push the board of supervisors to all but cease downtown freeway construction.¹³⁰

Impassioned protests against the construction of San Francisco's freeways echoed the fears of Don Siegel's earlier film, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. As Joseph Rodriguez describes, "Critics portrayed the attempt to build freeways in the city as the invasion of an alien suburban culture that conflicted with the urbanism of San Francisco."¹³¹ And by connecting San Francisco more explicitly to the booming suburbs surrounding it, the freeways challenged the centrality of the city, as if "the city had become a throughway and not a destination."¹³² Nothing could have punctured the dreamy landscape of *Vertigo* quicker than if Scottie had turned onto Market Street and confronted this concrete monolith. Hitchcock harnessed San Francisco's touristic beauty to Scottie's fatal enchantment with the past, keeping modern structures out of the frame. Instead of this fatal tourism, *The Lineup* focused on fatal tourists, a pair of killers on a murderous day trip through the city. Like the freeway, they are ugly consequences of a changing city, outsiders who infiltrate the city and lurk beneath its tourist façade.

The Lineup opens on a taxi racing across the cable car tracked streets near Pier 43, as quick camera pans heighten the sense of speed for the police cars and bikes in pursuit. The cab driver crashes to his death after stealing a Chinese statue from a businessman, which contained enough heroin "to fix every addict in San Francisco for two weeks." Police soon realize that an international network of drug dealers has sold souvenirs

loaded with heroin to tourists, who unsuspectingly carry these items into San Francisco. Thus within the first twenty minutes of the film, San Francisco's vitality as an urban center marks the city as uniquely vulnerable to crime. The film suggests that as "the busiest port on the coast," the glut of visitors make it impossible to catch every shipment of narcotics. Criminals appear indistinguishable from ordinary residents, such as the corrupt cab driver. While automobiles serve as the primary mode of transportation and policing, the waterfront, where recreational and cargo ships both land, provides a front and back entrance to the city, available to disembarking tourists and criminals alike.

In contrast to these older forms of transportation, Dancer and Julian arrive in modern comfort via a commercial airline. Dancer's reads a grammar book in his first screen appearance, a tool to blend in with local residents by abandoning his street vernacular under Julian's instruction. Like the cab driver, these well-dressed criminals seek to better blend into the crowd, a theme that will play out throughout the film. Julian and Dancer criticize their local accomplice, Sandy McLain (Richard Jaeckel), for a flashy car that might draw extra attention. Later Julian crows, "We can walk down the streets... stand on heavy intersections at high noon." But like all tourists, the criminals cannot help but stand out from the local population, and eventually their Miami tans alert police to their non-resident status.

A related theme, the power to see without being seen, became central to the film's narrative, mise-en-scene, and urban topography of San Francisco. The pair of criminals move to a secluded hotel high on the hilly outskirts of the city, revealing a panoramic view of the city that suggests a covert mastery of the city. Observing the crowd unaware from a high vantage point served as both a method of shooting crowds unaware on location and a persistent motif of urban anxiety. Disguised surveillance of San Francisco would define later screen villains, such as Red Lynch in *Experiment in Terror* (1962) and

Scorpio in *Dirty Harry* (1971), as well as protagonists like Harry Caul in *The Conversation* (1974). In *The Lineup*, the public surveillance of the police force, such as the mounted officer who peers into a car to identify the villains, counters the criminals' efforts to anonymously navigate and observe the city. The public finally realizes Dancer is a killer in a scene shot at Sutro's, a popular tourist destination where the practice of site-seeing unites clandestine killers and innocent spectators (Figure 2.6).

As Dancer enters the tourist entertainment complex, a sign reads, "You haven't seen Sutro's... you haven't seen San Francisco." Sutro's offers an ice skating rink, nautical exhibits, and oversized binoculars and telescopes to look out at the ocean. Unlike the stately museums and enchanting missions of *Vertigo*, it is a mass attraction, coupling nautical vistas with Coney Island amusements. Schoolgirls gleefully run through the arcade on a class trip while Dancer waits for his boss (Vaughn Taylor), infamous for never allowing himself to be seen by his accomplices. A schoolgirl innocently asks Dancer to help her work the binoculars, a disturbing interaction for viewers who have already seen him murder without hesitation. Rotating the binoculars from the ocean view towards the boss, appearing in a wheelchair, Dancer subverts sightseeing into surveillance. Yet when Dancer confronts his boss, seeing him in person seals his fate. The boss says, "You're dead," takes an excruciatingly long pause, and then explains, "Nobody ever sees me." The ability to see and not be seen, reinforced by the mise en scene of telescopes and binoculars, serves as the fatal logic of the criminal hidden in the crowd. A frustrated Dancer pushes the boss off of the balcony and onto the ice below, revealing his own criminality to the surrounding public, and flees for the car. Vision played a key role in *Vertigo*, where Judy never lived up to Scottie's image of Madeleine in enchanted San Francisco. Dancer faced the opposite problem, a small reassurance to

the audience. Despite nearly blending into the tourist spectacle of San Francisco, a moment of public violence makes the killers immediately visible to authorities.



Fig. 2.6. Surveillance in *The Lineup* (Columbia, 1958).

Sutro's is the culmination of a murderous tourist trip for Julian and Dancer, where the villains infiltrate both the high and low, public and private places of the city. They visit the Steinhart Aquarium, which features a symbolic pan from a shark to the approaching Dancer reminiscent of the scene set in the same location for *The Lady From Shanghai*. Here Dancer convince a woman and child that he is a fellow tourist in a ploy to find his missing heroin. Dancer kills a man in the steam room of the Sailor's Club, a men's club where no one locks their doors. Between Julian and Dancer's intimate relationship, and a murder in a semi-nude steam room, homosexuality appears as a vaguely implied threat to a changing San Francisco. Dancer also kills a Chinese servant at a hilltop estate, showing an ability to talk his way into any social echelon. McLain drives Dancer and Julian from murder scene to murder scene on an automotive tour of the city. After each killing, Dancer tells Julian the victim's last words; Julian treasures each line before writing them in his diary, building a morbid travelogue of a savage tourist trip.

For urban designer Victor Gruen, one of the great pleasures of the city threatened by urban sprawl was the chance encounter between pedestrians in "more concentrated and urbane cities."¹³³ *The Lineup* adds a tourist dimension to the anxiety lingering beneath the pleasure of the chance encounter, dramatized in earlier film noirs like *Scarlet Street* (1945). Here tourist attractions like Sutro's and the aquarium draw distracted strangers from distant points of origin together; like the port, the sights of San Francisco draw not just paying visitors but stalking criminals. Dancer's ability to alternatively act like a local or act like a tourist offered casts a pall on the city and the faceless tourists who stream into the city's popular tourist districts. *The Lineup* cleverly dramatizes San Francisco's dilemma as a tourist beacon, where curious visitors threaten to overwhelm the thriving urban districts. A closer external threat appears in the film's climax in the

form of the newly constructed section of the Embarcadero freeway ramp, linking the booming Bay Area suburbs to downtown. This new infrastructure defeats the criminals but suggests another monumental challenge to San Francisco's urban form that dangles over the city.

Once Dancer flees Sutro's, the climax of the film is a high-speed car chase where the twisting curves of the San Francisco coast provide the dramatic setting that *Bullitt* (1968) would famously exploit a decade later. Unlike *Bullitt* the sequence must rely on rear-projection for the lead actors, a technique that proved too expensive for *The Lineup* as a television series. While Hitchcock used rear-projection in *Vertigo* to carefully control the background, *The Lineup* uses it largely as a logistical and safety measure, allowing the lead actors to appear in the fleeing car without danger. By intercutting these process shots with location footage of stunt drivers swerving around the hills of the city, the film efficiently exploits the exciting location without losing track of the central characters. Local police supervised the final stunt, where the criminals' car skids to the edge of the unfinished freeway ramp, but there was no room for error, with no obstacle to prevent the stunt driver from plummeting off the highway.¹³⁴ While resulting in a thrilling image at little expense, the stunt also suggested lax supervision of location shooting in 1950s San Francisco. This laissez-faire attitude toward filmmaking caused few problems for the city for the short, infrequent location shoots of the 1950s, but became a major concern when myriad Hollywood filmmakers seemed to run rampant in San Francisco in the early 1970s.

When a roadblock cuts off access to the Golden Gate Bridge, the villains and their hostages, the woman and child from the aquarium, careen up the ramp of the Embarcadero Freeway. A long, overhead shot shows the car braking hard just before the road ends midair, skidding just short of the precipice (Figure 2.7). Panoramic views

reveal the car hovering above the center of the city, yet completely disconnected from the grid below. The driver speeds backwards, but chooses the wrong lane, leaving the car wedged between two narrowing guardrails. Frustrated by his conspirators and the failure of the automobile, Dancer walks onto the highway, shoots Julian, and takes the child hostage. Wide shots reveal the gnarled concrete ramps of the highway juxtaposed with the Bay Bridge majestically receding into the hills. A pedestrian on an empty highway, Dancer stands trapped between the walking city below and the aerial highway. Dancer releases the child and climbs astride two ramps, peering down the narrow corridor between them at a car below. Before he can make a desperate leap, the police shoot him, and his body tumbles down between the lanes.

As the police survey the scene of the crime, the camera pans right from the police walking down the jumbled freeway towards an unimpeded view of the bridge and the bay; a waving flag and words thanking the San Francisco Police Department half dissolve over the image. The death of the villain allows the camera to abandon the disjunctive image of the highway slashing across the city for the postcard beauty denied by the criminal presence. Siegel would similarly employ lateral pans towards and away from



Fig. 2.7. End of the Embarcadero Freeway in *The Lineup*.

urban concentration and criminality in *Coogan's Bluff* (1968) and *Dirty Harry* (1971). A police honorarium, which became notorious in *Dirty Harry*, combines with the reclaimed pastoral view of the bridge spanning the bay. Yet this nod to police authority is redundant with the plot; it pragmatically serves as an acknowledgement of the police on location, who allowed the producers free reign for a dangerous series of driving stunts.

The Lineup depicts the most frightening tourists possible, a pair of amoral killers who almost pass as ordinary citizens. Yet as in Scottie's pathological behavior, the viewer can identify with their struggle as a tourist. They provide not only the vicarious thrill of sightseeing, but another powerful fantasy of travel, the ability to blend into new surroundings and leaves one's identity behind. Yet there is also a hint of contemporary tragedy in the killers' inability to navigate the highway system. The logic of modern urban form breaks down on the ramp, as the city appears all around them but entirely inaccessible. Forced to walk on a space designed only for driving, the terrain becomes even more dangerous and confusing. The elevated freeway appears as foreign and

incomprehensible as the villains, denying San Francisco its splendid isolation from the key urban anxiety of the time, the highway sprawl into and out of the city.

Vertigo and *The Lineup* suggest two critical poles of location production in late 1950s Hollywood. The star-driven A-picture could afford lavish color cinematography in the city, but required far more studio work to ensure its professional polish. Black-and-white standard fare like *The Lineup* instead grabbed every possible location asset because dramatic locations proved far cheaper than elaborate sets. Thus while *Vertigo* adapted San Francisco to the demands of its story, *The Lineup* adapted its narrative to San Francisco locations. The semi-documentary style of the procedural offered an economical practice for exploiting locations but forced filmmakers to cede the total control of the image that Hitchcock wielded during the production of *Vertigo*.

The cinema tourist image of San Francisco would extend well beyond the 1950s. So would the debates over runaway production, which sharpened in the first half of the 1960s. The pure spectacle of San Francisco's cityscape would inevitably fade, as even Cinerama shifted to narrative films by the late 1950s. But the escapist image of a wealthy, buoyant city would persist, particularly in color film comedies of the 1960s.

While San Francisco persisted onscreen as a scenic urban playground, a critical new urban aesthetic would emerge in black and white, exemplified by Blake Edwards' stark depiction of San Francisco in two 1962 films, *Experiment in Terror* and *Days of Wine and Roses*. While *The Lineup* could only effectively shoot daylight scenes on location, improvements in black-and-white film stock and location production allowed Edwards and his cinematographer, Philip Lathrop, to capture San Francisco at night with a subtlety of lighting that in the 1950s, could only be achieved on the studio lot. Like other black-and-white films shot domestically throughout the United States in the first half of the 1960s, incisive depictions of American social decay reached beyond the

criminal containment of 1950s film noir. A loosening Production Code and the growth of domestic location shooting brought a wave of tortured characters to the screen, and bleak, distinctly American settings underlay their plights. Black-and-white location shooting became a critical component of a production trend in sordid, realist dramas, and San Francisco's scenic beauty took on a tragic tone.

Notes:

¹ The film was only released on DVD in 2009, and unavailable on VHS.

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³ Thomas Patrick Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 165-166.

⁴ *Cinerama Holiday* shot-by-shot continuity, Folder 29, Technicolor collection, Herrick Library.

⁵ For the decline of retail shopping in downtown Los Angeles, see Richard Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1997).

⁶ Edward Dimendberg, *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004), 166-170.

⁷ Richard Walker, "Landscape and City Life: Four Ecologies of Residence in the San Francisco Bay Area," *Ecumene*, 2, 1 (1995): 39.

⁸ William Issel, "'Land Values, Human Values, and the Preservation of the City's Treasured Appearance': Environmentalism, Politics, and the San Francisco Freeway Revolt," *The Pacific Historical Review*, 68, no. 4 (November 1999): 624; for the impact of the Blyth-Zellerbach Committee, see Chester Hartman with Sarah Carnochan, *City for Sale: The Transformation of San Francisco* (U. of California Press: Berkeley, 2002), 8-10.

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- ¹⁶ “Hollywood Bigness on the Wane: ‘Runaway’ Fears All Too Real,” *Variety*, October 10 1956, 3.
- ¹⁷ Shandley, 80.
- ¹⁸ “‘Runaway’ Overseas Pix Prod. May Be Probed by 2 Coast Union Groups,” *Variety*, June 24, 1953, 4.
- ¹⁹ “85% IATSE Jobs Highest Since ‘48; Cheap Pix Rapped,” *Variety*, September 1, 1954, 4, 85.
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- ²² “Hollywood Bigness on the Wane,” *Variety*, October 10 1956, 3.
- ²³ “RKO, Newly Buzzing, Electing Authentic Locales Over Studio,” *Variety*, October 31, 1956, 17.
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- ²⁵ “Producers: Can They Beat Overhead?,” *Variety*, May 30, 1956, 5.
- ²⁶ Mike Kaplan, “Pictures: N.Y. Payola on Location?,” *Variety*, September 11 1957, 3, 12.
- ²⁷ “Rain Big Factor on Thumbs-Down Shooting in NY,” *Variety*, May 21, 1958, 30.
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- ²⁹ William Boddy, *Fifties Television: The Industry and Its Critics* (Urbana: U. of Illinois Press, 1990), 187-213
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Chapter 3: “Sick Tales of A Healthy Land”: Blake Edwards in San Francisco



Fig. 3.1: “Sick” content in a poster ad for *Experiment in Terror* (Columbia, 1962).

Sickness became a multivalent description of Hollywood by the early 1960s. The most visible malady appeared onscreen. In a 1961 article titled “Sick Tales of A Healthy Land,” *Variety* criticized “a rash of diseased characters, bankrupts, weaklings with rampant vices,” whose sordid behavior prompted a stinging critique of Hollywood in

Reader's Digest.¹ These characters ranged from disturbed killers like Norman Bates in *Psycho* (1960), addicts like Mary Tyrone in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1962), corrupt religious and secular leaders in *Elmer Gantry* (1960) and *Advise and Consent* (1963), to any number of depraved Southerners from Tennessee Williams and his imitators. Blake Edwards followed the trend with two 1962 films set in San Francisco, *Experiment in Terror*, which featured a perverse killer manipulating a pair of sisters, and *Days of Wine and Roses*, a bleak depiction of the depths of alcoholism (Figure 3.1). Hollywood's weakened enforcement of the Production Code enabled such films, but this was only one symptom of an increasingly fragmented Hollywood production system.

Runaway production cast a sickly pall across the Los Angeles film industry. The major companies had survived the postwar transition out of vertical integration and mass production, but as middlemen increasingly dependent on Wall Street capital, high-priced stars, and producers. As top talent found financial incentives to shoot independent productions away from the studio, the major companies sold unused lots to real estate developers while the remaining lots remained half-full with television series occupying most of the active sound stages. As backlot employment dwindled, several observers felt a creeping malaise. In "Hollywood Come Home," a public affairs special for Los Angeles television station KNXT, narrator Ray Milland compared runaway production to "moving the Vatican out of Rome."² *Variety* covered the special under the headline "Hollywood's Self-Diagnosis: 'Doc, Why Do We Feel So Weak?'"³ The vacant, fading movie workshops bred nostalgia, as Milland lamented, "fewer stars, fewer Rolls Royces and fewer camera-calls...the dream factories of the motion picture business are oddly quiet."⁴ The decentralization of Hollywood production across the globe eroded Hollywood's ability to self-regulate not only its content but also its production process, labor practices, and creative workers.

These ailments both masked and facilitated a tremendous surge of creativity and innovation in American filmmaking. A wellspring of new talent migrated from television to feature-filmmaking in the late 1950s and early 1960s, including directors Blake Edwards, Sidney Lumet, John Frankenheimer, Sam Peckinpah, and Martin Ritt. As television's Golden Age of live drama collapsed, these filmmakers transplanted stark social dramas of the American landscape from television onto the bigger screen. Television taught them how to shoot quickly and cheaply, often with limited production facilities or on location. Dark films such as *Birdman of Alcatraz* (1962), *Days of Wine and Roses*, and *Hud* (1963) both exploited salacious content and won Oscar nominations.

Technological improvements, from faster film stocks and lenses to portable lighting and camera equipment, responded to the higher demand for location shooting by independent producers and runaway production. While color filmmaking still required a flood of high-intensity lighting, black-and-white film no longer had to sacrifice image quality shooting on location, even in places lacking the perpetual sunshine of Los Angeles. These changes set off another boom in New York filmmaking, while promoting location shooting for stories set in cities like Washington, D.C. and San Francisco. The photographic challenges of filming in American cities decreased although major logistical challenges still remained.

Film depictions of social problems largely focused on rural and inner-city locations, aberrations from the growing concentration of suburban commuters. In 1961, *Variety* cautioned against the overuse of "sick-sick-sick-types out of the Southern swamplands or the city slums."⁵ Both the central city and the rural hinterlands suggested isolated pockets of cultural deviance existing in dubious opposition to suburban culture. Blake Edwards' depictions of San Francisco offered sharp glimpses of urban decadence falling into urban decay, although like earlier film noirs, he delineated crime and

depravity into districts rather than indicting the city itself. From the quasi-San Francisco of *Peter Gunn* (1958-1961), to the lurid noir of *Experiment in Terror*, to the human tragedy of *Days of Wine and Roses*, Edwards darkened but never dispelled San Francisco's beautiful image.

This chapter explores a trend in stark black-and-white realism that expanded location shooting in the United States in the early 1960s. Several contributing factors shaped these films, including major changes in production code enforcement, runaway production, and black-and-white filmmaking technology. In particular, experience shooting fast and cheap for television trained filmmakers like Blake Edwards to work efficiently on location, proving that location shooting for certain features could viably compete with the cost and aesthetics of sound stage production. Edwards' built a more incisive image of San Francisco with each successive depiction, from the stylish violence in the San Francisco-inspired setting of *Peter Gunn* to the dark sexuality of *Experiment in Terror* and the desolate personal tragedy of *Days of Wine and Roses*.

Edwards readily transformed San Francisco's vibrant urban scenery into a nightmare realm to suit his bleaker narratives. The city appeared like an inky shadow of the melancholic but exhilarating New York of his more famous film, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961). Edwards, who worked almost exclusively as a comedy director before and after 1962, launched his career as an independent producer-director with a pair of dark, challenging films, indicative of the tremendous impact a wave of disturbing black-and-white pictures had on Hollywood filmmaking in the early 1960s. While *Vertigo* and *The Lineup* carefully chose locations, faster film stock allowed Edwards to more carefully control the tone of location footage, day or night, creating a low-key aesthetic on location that a few years earlier, could only be achieved on the sound stage. While San Francisco maintained an image of urban splendor for city planners and many Hollywood

filmmakers, Edwards demonstrated how readily the city's appearance could be manipulated on location. Edwards' improvisation on location, as well as his depiction of a dark, lurid city, set a precedent for San Francisco films of the early 1970s, but Hollywood's rapid shift to color in the mid-1960s abruptly ended the trend of downbeat black-and-white films. Once color film approached the speed of black and white in the early 1970s, location filming in San Francisco followed a similar course, degrading the image of San Francisco to suit another wave of bleak urban cinematography.

DOWNBEAT PICTURES AND INDEPENDENT PRODUCERS

Jack Warner had reason to worry about *Days of Wine and Roses* based on several newspaper clippings filed with the film's production documents and specified for his attention. In January 1962, roughly two months before principal photography, the Los Angeles Times ran an article with the headline, "Parade of Downbeat Pictures Continues." Adult content threatened not only taste but also business, as "all too often shock or bitterness takes precedence over either entertainment or art... Among the new outpouring on the decidedly downbeat and often flagrant side are such pictures as 'Tender is the Night,' 'A Walk on the Wild Side,' 'A View from The Bridge,' 'Sweet Bird of Youth,' and 'Too Late Blues.'" ⁶ Another clipping worried about the effect of "low-key, downbeat subject matter" on the increasingly important youth audience. "Who wants to take his best girl to see people suffer to the bitter end?" was a representative question from a survey of college and high school students. Middle-aged screen characters appeared far more delinquent than the youth. ⁷

Edwards' gloomy depictions of San Francisco in *Experiment in Terror* and *Days of Wine and Roses* took part in an early 1960s wave of pictures with darker themes and more explicit content. While less restrictive self-regulation fit a liberal shift in American

culture and politics, the Production Code Authority (PCA) proved unable to rein in the independent production companies that now produced most Hollywood films. As studios competed for projects with proven stars and producers, creative workers increasingly dictated which films would reach the screen, including a wave of theatrical properties with taboo subjects previously restricted by the PCA. As with runaway production, which benefited individual productions but in excess threatened industry stability, Hollywood leaders failed to stem an excess of downbeat and salacious features by independent producers. Edwards' depicted San Francisco in a sinister light despite his success with dark but droll narratives for *Peter Gunn* and *Breakfast At Tiffany's*. The disturbing plot of *Experiment in Terror* and the bleak realism of *Days of Wine and Roses* promoted night-for-night shooting in seedy locations, offering hard shadows and sordid places largely absent from *Vertigo* and *The Lineup*.

The liberal Kennedy administration soon distinguished itself from the conservative culture of the Eisenhower era, which facilitated Hollywood's laxer censorship. For instance in 1958, the Department of Justice refused cooperation on *Birdman of Alcatraz*, effectively scuttling the planned production; in 1962, a new production of the film premiered, mounting a harsh critique of the prison system without government interference.⁸ The same year, *Lolita* represented the United States at the Venice Film Festival, marking a decisive break with the "niceness" of previous American entries. *Variety* observed, "It's quite in harmony with the New Frontier and the film's sophisticated tone would indeed seem to fit snugly under the White House culture umbrella."⁹ Tellingly, every major studio but Fox bid on *Lolita*, a property that only a few years earlier, would have been inconceivable as a film property.¹⁰ Even the Legion of Decency shifted emphasis toward promoting moral films over threatening to boycott

immoral ones, as the largest pressure group relinquished its strongest tactic for policing Hollywood content.¹¹

A looser and more loosely enforced Production Code allowed previously unmentionable topics to reach the screen. Faced with the challenge of high profile, controversial releases such as *The Man with The Golden Arm* (1955) and *Baby Doll* (1956), the Production Code Administration made its first major revision to the 1930 Code in December of 1956.¹² While on paper the revision replaced bans on specific topics such as abortion and childbirth, Geoffrey Shurlock's less strict interpretation of the code had a greater impact. He implied in 1959 that any subject but homosexuality could be presented, if properly handled.¹³

Regardless of intention, the PCA had already lost the authority to strictly enforce the code. *Variety* described "the new anarchy of the independents" as "a rampage of rival-self interests." Dozens of director-producers and actor-producers created the lion's share of films, and stood to profit directly from exploitative hits.¹⁴ In 1958, independent companies produced half of American films; by 1960, it was two-thirds.¹⁵ With so many different entities involved, the MPPDA struggled to enforce industry-wide measures. Call for censorship, union pacts, and rules to curb runaway production all proved difficult to implement among a constellation of independent companies rather than among a handful of studio heads.

By 1959, competition grew fierce between major studios to sign a handful of top-flight independent producers. Studios like MGM and Paramount could offer large backlots and foreign facilities; lacking a physical plant, United Artists effectively wooed many of the top producers with creative freedom.¹⁶ After *On the Beach*, a thoroughly downbeat picture, Stanley Kramer lauded United Artists, who "weren't afraid of the offbeat."¹⁷ Along with conventional pictures, the company was credited with bringing "a

new awareness” to the screen that “ranges from shock values to adult material.” Upcoming pictures such as *The Apartment* (1960) and *Elmer Gantry* (1960) confirmed United Artists’ boldness.¹⁸ In 1960, *Variety* would christen the company as “the protagonist in the entire industry’s modus operandi,”¹⁹ but the practice of giving talent creative leeway led to more shocking pictures. Meanwhile, UAs success without a physical production plant highlighted the waning importance of the sound stage as location shooting became more efficient and prevalent.

European films made major gains in the American market in the early 1960s, buoyed by sexual themes and content beyond the limits of Hollywood productions.²⁰ They also helped sustain Hollywood distributors through product shortages. For instance, MGM stockpiled six foreign films as a hedge against a release gap caused by the 1960 Screen Actors Guild strike.²¹ In 1962, foreign films were “much more controversial,” full of “inversions, abnormalities, and strange sex histories.”²² Hollywood responded with violence, as *The Birds* (1963) and *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* (1963) joined “films of mayhem from many lands” at Cannes.²³

Sex and brutality in Hollywood films grew more audacious and more frequent. While films like *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959) tweaked the code, *Psycho* eviscerated it with graphic violence and psychosexual perversion.²⁴ Popular theatrical properties with taboo subjects also abounded. While only four Tennessee Williams dramas reached the screen between 1950 and 1957, *Seven* appeared between 1958 and 1962, including lavish, star productions of *Cat on A Hot Tin Roof* (1958), *Suddenly Last Summer* (1959), and *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1962).²⁵ Old and new works by major literary and dramatic provocateurs hit theaters; the authors included: William Faulkner (*The Sound and the Fury*, 1959; *The Long Hot Summer*, 1959), Norman Mailer (*The Naked and The Dead*, 1958), Vladimir Nabokov (*Lolita*, 1962), Lillian Hellman (*The Children’s Hour*, 1961;

Toys in the Attic, 1963), William Inge (*Splendor in the Grass*, 1961; *All Fall Down*, 1962), and Eugene O’Neil (*Desire Under the Elms*, 1958; *Long Day’s Journey into Night*). These downbeat stories and wretched characters threatened to dampen audience enthusiasm for controversial subjects.

As one industry observer noted, “It’s not the license but the flood which causes the trouble.”²⁶ As in the 1930s, a glut of offensive pictures brought public calls for censorship, and in the early 1960s, the MPAA made an early attempt at establishing a ratings system new form of censorship, with at least two-tiers separating child and adult appropriate films. MPAA head Eric Johnston floated the idea of a voluntary ratings system in 1961, but theater owners balked, again revealing the challenge of regulating a vertically disintegrated industry.²⁷ Independent producers like Blake Edwards continued to push the boundaries of explicit content without consequence. For instance, the PCA asked Edwards to remove sexual innuendo and images in *Days of Wine in Roses*, including racy milkmaid costumes for the servers at a wild company party.²⁸ Edwards ignored all of these suggestions and chose particularly scanty milkmaid outfits. Greater license also extended to Edwards’ choice of San Francisco locations, such as The Roaring Twenties, a topless club where girls ride swings over the crowd featured in *Experiment in Terror*.

Despite reservations over indecent content, the industry had a compelling reason to welcome a great many of these downbeat films: they were set and shot in the United States. As runaway production abroad threatened to permanently dislocate U.S. filmmaking, a wave of medium-budget black-and-white films offered a potential alternative, saving both money and jobs for Hollywood. In 1963, Fox revealed a \$20 million loss filming *Cleopatra* in Italy and temporarily shut down all film production; less than a year earlier, *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* earned back its production

cost in just eleven days.²⁹ While unions praised pictures that stayed home, home was no longer limited to Los Angeles. Independent producers shooting realist dramas overwhelmingly favored authentic locations, shooting extensively throughout the country. Nonetheless all but a handful films shooting on location needed to return to Hollywood sound stages in order to finish production.

RUNAWAY CRISIS

As discussed in Chapter 2, runaway production was common practice for many major studio productions by the mid-1950s, but the practice exploded into an industry crisis by the early 1960s. While the unions' targeted foreign production as the critical threat to their workers, the struggle would have clear implications for domestic location shooting as well. The unions failed to limit the number of Hollywood productions shooting abroad, but union pressure helped close the tax loopholes that made foreign production so desirable for major stars and producers. The need for realistic locations remained the studios' best defense for shooting away from Los Angeles, solidifying location shooting as a key component of foreign productions and reinforcing an association between location shooting and cinematic realism. When filmmakers returned from foreign locations to shoot in the United States, they frequently continued to shoot extensively on location, but the unions largely ignored moderate-budget pictures shot in domestic locations, which represented fewer work opportunities than expensive epics shooting abroad.

Lower budget films and television productions remained the critical exception to foreign runaway production. Both took advantage of the abandoned facilities, workers, and even sets during Hollywood's surge in filming abroad. For the police procedural, location shooting still proved less expensive than set building, while for exploitation

horror films, Hollywood's disused sets added production value. By 1960, television location shooting developed domestically to reinvigorate a largely set-bound medium. Telefilm producers learned to shoot fast and imperfectly under small budgets and tight schedules, skills that helped television talent like Blake Edwards develop more efficient ways to shoot on location when they became Hollywood filmmakers.

By 1957, the rise of telefilm production in Hollywood provided enough jobs to temporarily damper union protests against runaway production.³⁰ But studio facilities continued to shrink as the prevalence of foreign production made it easier for major studios to sell off physical facilities. With Los Angeles real estate prices still booming, selling land could not only offset losses but boost earnings reports to Wall Street, lifting stock prices and building liquid assets. Fox's 260-acre lot in Westwood sold for \$56 million.³¹ In fact the studio sold so much studio space that in 1961, they had to consider renting stages on the Goldwyn lot to keep up with production.³² Tax laws favored this odd development: rent could be deducted as an operating expense if a company was willing to forgo potential profits as a landlord and real estate holder.³³

The other shoe dropped before the Screen Actors Guild strike commenced in March 1960. Anticipating the work stoppage, Fox, Columbia, MGM, and Warners all began downsizing. At MGM, most of the layoffs were construction workers; set building, the former backbone of the world's biggest backlot, had withered under the dual threats of runaway production and location shooting. Regardless of the outcome of SAG negotiations, Warners warned employees that the layoffs might be permanent.³⁴ The "industry-wide strike" appeared to be the first of its kind, a testament to the new power of non-contract talent.³⁵ Other workers proved less essential, as the studios discharged nearly 5000 studio employees by the start of the strike.³⁶ Paramount began its first wave of firings in May, the start of a "wholesale overhaul of personnel."³⁷ Despite the

company's strong earnings and assets, studio head Barney Balaban challenged every employee to justify their position.³⁸

Downsizing quickly paid off for the studios. By 1961, *Variety* saw signs that “the worst was over” for the industry. Stocks rallied, theater closings subsided, and companies found “a new kind of surer economy” through diversified holdings and less capital expenditure.³⁹ For first time in over a decade, the crippling overhead was in check, balanced by fewer employees and more rentals to television productions.⁴⁰ These improved conditions removed a key obstacle to location production, particularly domestically. For Sidney Lumet's production manager, George Justin, it was “the old overhead that dictated production on the Coast.”⁴¹ As long as producers could shoot economically in New York, both in studio and on location, they need not head to Los Angeles to contribute to the cost of studio operations.

Conditions grew tenuous for union workers. As studios focused on a handful of lavish pictures like *Cleopatra* (1963) and *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), the total number of pictures released approached a historic low. Meanwhile, the demand for a handful of top stars and directors to anchor major pictures further retarded production as studios waited for talent to finish the lengthy shoots required for spectacles.⁴² A trend towards hour-long television series left fewer productions for television crews. In April of 1962, once the television season wrapped, 40% of teamsters and 30% of cameramen sat unemployed.⁴³ While all of these factors affected American production workers, foreign production remained the unifying grievance for Hollywood labor in the early 1960s. IATSE coined the term “runaway” by the 1950s and they would adamantly push the studios to finally take action.⁴⁴

In June of 1960, the AFL-CIO vowed to “reactivate” a five year old plan to urge Congress to address runaway production.⁴⁵ The pugnacious cameraman's union, led by

Herb Aller, went further. They demanded dislocation benefits, in the form of higher weekly unemployment pay, from pictures shooting abroad.⁴⁶ Aller also threatened to boycott the pictures of stars living abroad to avoid U.S. income tax, which *Variety* noted as the first direct action against runaways. Targeting the star tax loophole proved a clever strategy; the exception seemed to benefit only a handful of wealthy actors and matched the popular industry argument that stars largely dictated foreign shooting.⁴⁷ In fact, Elizabeth Taylor only agreed to star in *Cleopatra* if the film would be shot abroad, which saved her from paying personal income taxes on her high salary.⁴⁸ The cameramen's opening salvo attacked William Holden for filming two pictures abroad, *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960) and *Counterfeit Traitor* (1962), as if Holden was a traitor to the country and industry that made him a star.⁴⁹

Realism remained a popular explanation for shooting abroad. William Holden countered that the rubble of Berlin, not tax benefits, dictated the decision to shoot *Counterfeit Traitor* abroad.⁵⁰ Yet by shooting abroad, *Ben-Hur* (1959) gained no more realism than *Spartacus*. Director William Wyler conceded that the only reason to shoot *Ben-Hur* in Rome was financial.⁵¹ Leading up to a 1962 Congressional probe, Paramount's Y. Frank Freeman defended the industry shooting abroad when either foreign locales were essential or the cost of shooting in Hollywood would be "prohibitive."⁵²

By focusing on production expenses and realism, the industry sidestepped the other financial incentives available shooting abroad. In 1960, *Variety* identified a third phase in overseas filmmaking. Phase One relied on post-war fascination with Europe, exemplified by *The Third Man* (1949) and *Three Coins in The Fountain*. During Phase Two, shooting in certain European cities actually became cheaper than Hollywood and offered spectacles to compete with television. Phase Three revealed no clear economic benefits derived from shooting abroad or featuring foreign locales.⁵³ Studios could

cleverly argue that for a given picture, cost savings were no longer a factor in shooting abroad. Studios maintained the excuse of pursuing realism to placate the unions, which ensured that location shooting remained a significant part of foreign production, driving the continued development of location shooting practices. The question remained: if the costs were equal, why was Hollywood making so many pictures abroad?

Despite rising production costs in Europe and other locations, financial incentives had a much clearer impact on foreign production than realism. William Morris Agency President Abe Lastfogel cited tax exemptions as the top reason for shooting abroad; his agency had sold talent packages for 35 recent films, with every incentive to provide tax relief to their clients. He predicted that a proposed tax amendment would stem runaway, and mentioned *Days of Wine and Roses*, shot entirely California, as a recent package deal.⁵⁴ However stars could still benefit from having their living costs funded as a production expense during months shooting away from Los Angeles, a benefit gained in domestic cities like San Francisco as well. And hidden beneath the public outcry over tax-subsidies was a fairly new development: co-financing deals with foreign production companies, which according to one guild leader were “the most insidious form of runaway in Hollywood.”⁵⁵ Britain’s Eady Plan allowed Hollywood to finance major pictures like *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Dr. Strangelove* (1964) abroad while qualifying for financial assistance from the English government.⁵⁶

Unlike Europe, shooting large budget pictures on location in the United States could prove prohibitively expensive. For instance, Otto Preminger claimed Hollywood was kidding itself about the cost of shooting domestically, which remained one-third more expensive than Europe due to union restrictions. While shooting *The Cardinal* in Boston, union “blackmail” restricted Preminger from hiring local workers and forced him to pay standbys in Hollywood; no such demands occurred in Italy.⁵⁷ These union

practices help explain why the unions aggressively fought foreign runaway without addressing domestic runaways; they also pushed location productions to return to the studio, with the key exception of New York productions, where union labor, including New York's industrial and commercial film workers, could be tapped.⁵⁸ These expenses helped limit location shooting in cities like San Francisco, particularly in color, which caused additional expenses and difficulties on location. The four major color productions set in San Francisco in the first half of the 1960s—*The Pleasure of Her Company* (1961), *Flower Drum Song* (1961), *The Birds* (1963), and *Good Neighbor Sam* (1964)—all returned to the studio after capturing backgrounds and a few exterior scenes.

The maturation of Hollywood studios into diversified corporations backed by stock prices also pushed global productions. Producer Charles Schneer argued, “You can’t confine the industry to Hollywood. It’s a world industry now.”⁵⁹ Investors pressured Hollywood to tighten budgets and foreign savings could do that on paper, although the final cost rarely would.⁶⁰ As one *Variety* writer wryly stated, “Foreign shooting skeds are estimated at a minimum with maximum up to gods,” highlighting the continued uncertainty of foreign location shooting, where logistical problems like weather, inexperienced crews, and local governments could add months to production schedules.⁶¹ Investors favored lower approved costs while failing to understand the murky production difficulties that caused frequent overages abroad. The expensive failures of *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1962) and *Cleopatra* called this strategy into question. Some local IATSE members who owned stock in MGM spoke out at a 1963 shareholders meeting in New York and blamed MGM’s dramatic decline in profits on a woeful neglect of its Hollywood facilities. Years of runaway production not only kept studio facilities underutilized but degraded their value, promoting further location shooting at home and abroad.⁶²

By 1961, Hollywood labor had the federal government's ear. In an April speech to Congress, Kennedy asked for a repeal of the "total tax exemption" for citizens living abroad, a position publicly endorsed by SAG.⁶³ A House sub-committee scheduled a probe of runaway production for November.⁶⁴ The investigation, led by Democrat John Dent, failed to gain Kennedy's support and folded in April of 1962.⁶⁵ Kennedy finally signed away the tax exemption by January of 1963, but the government took no further action to curb runaway filmmaking.

The slow process of fighting runaway production weakened Hollywood unions who struggled through years of underemployment only to achieve a partial victory through the federal repeal of tax exemptions. The threat of moving more productions abroad served as a weapon for the studios and top independent producers to wrest concessions from unions. For example, for the first time in its history, SAG asked for no upgrades in pay or working conditions for a 1962 pact, citing "realism in light of 'runaway.'"⁶⁶ Craft unions had to press IATSE for action, an indication of the umbrella group's alleged coziness with the studios.⁶⁷ Still, IATSE's public statements remained timid. They praised *Spartacus* for staying in Hollywood (with the exception of a major battle shot in Spain), and promoted it as a turning point against the runaway tide.⁶⁸ The declining power of the Hollywood unions would be a crucial factor in the spread of domestic location shooting in the later 1960s. As with foreign location shooting, when union workers faced high unemployment and had to regulate practices among independent producers, they failed to slow location shooting outside of Los Angeles in cities like San Francisco and New York.

Ironically, the unions' reduced bargaining power in the wake of rampant foreign production helped make shooting domestically more attractive. A turning point came in May 1962, following a series of secret negotiations between labor and management.

Talks centered on George Stevens' mega-production, *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965). At stake would be over 20,000 man-days of work for actors and craftsmen, but Stevens threatened to take those jobs abroad.⁶⁹ According to Stevens, costumes for 1000 soldiers would cost \$145,300 in California but only \$7500 to rent abroad. Similarly, 1000 extras cost \$115,000 a day, compared to \$5,000 (at a \$5 per day rate) in Spain.⁷⁰ Despite Stevens' bold accusations of featherbedding, the unions caved, beginning with the extras guild granting the production a special waiver. *Variety* crowed with the front-page headline, "Action on 'Runaway' at Last."⁷¹

The celebration would be short-lived. By August, the pace of runaway had only quickened, with 25 of 36 new pictures slated to film abroad, amounting to \$75 million invested outside Hollywood.⁷² By May of 1963, only eight of twenty-five features were currently in Hollywood; ten would be shot entirely overseas while seven would eventually return from Europe and New York.⁷³ Crafts unions lobbied specific studios urging some runaway restraint.⁷⁴ *Variety* asked, "If [runaway] Tide Turns, When is it Due?"⁷⁵

Union concessions encouraged petty grievances, particularly when location shooting interfered with the strict following of guidelines, as evidenced by two 1963 union arbitrations. After a flight to San Francisco to shoot for the "Sam Benedict" television series, IATSE claimed that MGM owed their members a meal penalty. While breakfast was served, the workers could only eat, clearly unable to leave the plane to attend to other business. In another case, union members asked for an extra day's pay after refusing to board a plane that appeared dangerously overcrowded, delaying their return home by a day. In his decision, the arbitrator cited, "the reasonable changes and allowances" that kept the film in the United States, which included location conditions, and sided with producer George Stevens.⁷⁶ The irregular schedule and unexpected

changes in location production not only risked union penalties but also created regular conflicts for crew members forced to accept less favorable contracts. While production workers lamented jobs lost overseas, location shooting domestically remained a source of conflict for beleaguered workers asked to make further accommodations for producers.

Despite declining union power, Hollywood crews cost as much \$5,000 a day in 1962, causing labor complaints to fall on deaf ears.⁷⁷ Certain studio heads showed no sympathy, such as Fox's Spyros Skouras, who blamed runaway production on a 1959 pact for a five-day workweek. Columbia's Frankovich gave *Variety* the front-page headline, "Don't Film to Please Unions."⁷⁸ Public fights over the causes of runaway production between studio representatives and union leaders created a tense production climate that encouraged some producers to keep shooting in other countries. Yet as demonstrated by George Stevens and Elizabeth Taylor, star producers and actors largely dictated whether pictures would shoot domestically or internationally. Runaway production reflected the atomization of Hollywood production, no longer anchored to the physical studio or the dictates of studio management. Unions and major studios failed to find adequate solutions to the phenomenon primarily because a fragmented production system and inconsistent box office strategies made it difficult to institute industry-wide regulations.

One devastating casualty of runaway production was Hollywood's self-image as a creative capitol. Howard Koch, producer of *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), declared Hollywood dead and wrote a stinging epitaph: "Today it is a dead place where people are being wedged ever more tightly into their own little corners too preoccupied with themselves even to want to know what anybody else is doing." By contrast, European film artists were "still unfettered by box office tentacles."⁷⁹ Columnist Sheila Graham

found far more energy among the American actors abroad, writing, “Hollywood has become stale for creative people.”⁸⁰

Such indictments inspired filmmakers working extensively on location, who relished, “the breakdown of the old monarchies that ruled production.”⁸¹ The growing clout of independent producers and stars not only allowed them to pursue lucrative productions in Europe, but also to produce dozens of dark, challenging story properties, the vast majority shot in black and white in American locations. A wave of early 1960s films shot in and around New York City, including *Butterfield 8* (1960), *The Hustler* (1960), and *Long Day’s Journey Into Night*, paired real locations with realist dramas that sought to challenge Hollywood “make-believe” in both aesthetics and theme.⁸² While such films were rarely more than modest hits, they often brought critical acclaim to established talent. In similar fashion, *Days of Wine and Roses* garnered nominations for Jack Lemmon, Lee Remick, and Blake Edwards; both Lemmon and Edwards earned far more money on their comedies but less artistic recognition.

Producer Carl Foreman lamented, “No thought has been given to developing the people who will make the pictures 10 years from now.” He added, “The only new people the industry today come from television,” a sad irony to a Hollywood veteran.⁸³ In an article titled, “Make Way for Youth,” producer-director Mervyn LeRoy wondered why Hollywood did not recruit bright young minds from colleges like other industries, such as Detroit automakers. He noted the increasingly gray-haired backlotters, but not the likely cause: a decade of downsizing that left few new positions available.⁸⁴ It would take a TV executive, ABC’s Lee Goldenson, to offer the obvious solution: television workers were talented, particularly when working with a limited budget, but were underused in feature film. *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* proved the potential success for pictures budgeted under \$1 million. Like other industries, Hollywood needed streamlining and

new thinkers; he named Blake Edwards, Arthur Penn, George Roy Hill, and John Frankenheimer as examples, all of who would thrive in feature filmmaking in the 1960s and 1970s.⁸⁵

Lower budget filmmaking offered an important exception to runaway production. Roger Corman noted that for his “medium-budget” pictures, the savings abroad would be minimal compared to a major studio epic.⁸⁶ In fact, Corman gained production value by scouring the neglected resources of the major studios. The impressive set for *The Pit and the Pendulum* would be a Frankenstein-like creation, patched together from architectural set pieces lying around various studio warehouses.⁸⁷ The same logic operated for studio producer-directors. William Wyler assured runaway critics that his next project would be shot in America; but the black-and-white drama, *The Children’s Hour*, would cost a fraction of *Ben-Hur*’s budget.⁸⁸ Similarly, Robert Aldrich followed up the epic *Sodom and Gomorrah* (1962), shot in color abroad, with the low budget, black-and-white sensation, *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* Domestic filmmaking increasingly relied on an economy of smaller scale and greater controversy.

Television faced similar budget constraints and even greater time constraints. Even by 1962, shooting television abroad remained largely unfeasible for American series, other than occasional location shoots with a few principal actors. Another constraint would be the casting demands for a full season, which could only be reasonably met in New York, Hollywood, London, or Sidney.⁸⁹ Domestic location shooting did become an integral part of telefilm, particularly in an era dominated by Westerns and a growing crop of police series. By 1959, “it became passé to have the cops and robbers shoot it out between narrow walls of a Hollywood set.”⁹⁰ Cops and robbers still spent most of their time indoors, however, such as at the nightclub set and ubiquitous warehouses featured in *Peter Gunn*. Only rare series, such as *Sea Hunt* (1958-1961) and

Route 66 (1960-1964), would push beyond the limited, Southern California location work favored by 1940s features.

In fact television's demand for studio space gave birth a different *modus operandi* than United Artists, exemplified by MCA-Universal. Like United Artists, Universal only used independent producers; unlike United Artists, they had an entire lot entirely rented out.⁹¹ As share prices soared, Universal embarked on a \$10 million reconstruction of Universal City, phase one of modernizing the physical studio.⁹² By 1963, their Revue television lot employed fifty-three hundred workers on thirty-two stages and six backlot locations, and they still needed to rent additional space at Paramount's Sunset lot. This was "a bonanza to the industry's crafts and guilds"; but the new production facilities would lure feature filmmakers back to the lot as well.⁹³ Instead of shooting in Southeast Asia, *The Ugly American* (1962) built a 35-acre exterior set on Universal's lot; coupled with a massive interior set, construction cost \$420,000.⁹⁴ Harold Hecht brought *Wild and Wonderful* (1964), set in France, to the Universal lot, and bragged of saving \$500,000. "Why runaway to Europe for authentic locations when for \$350,000 one can be duplicated in Hollywood?"⁹⁵ Meanwhile, Universal reaped both the distribution and rental fees for these pictures.

Without the financial incentives of Europe or the production facilities of New York, San Francisco would for the most part appear serve the same role as a location as it had in the 1950s. Several productions still staged San Francisco almost entirely on the studio lot. For example, other than early establishing shots, *Flower Drum Song* built Chinatown at Universal City. The same would be true at MGM for features such as *Go Naked Into the World* (1961) and *The Subterraneans* (1960), which staged a bobby-sox rendition of Kerouac's North Beach on the Fifth Avenue standing set.⁹⁶ For other films, the location aesthetics of cinema tourism persisted. In *Pleasure of His Company* (1962), a

color Fred Astaire and Debby Reynolds comedy, the pair tours Fisherman's Wharf and other San Francisco sites through a rear-projected montage. Like the *Lineup*, *Man-Trap* (1961) augmented black-and-white standard fare with an extensive car chase down the Embarcadero past the Ferry Building and Fisherman's Wharf.

Blake Edwards' two 1962 films, *Experiment in Terror* and *Days of Wine and Roses*, were important exceptions, approaching San Francisco with the dark themes and crisp, low-key cinematography associated with New York filmmakers like Lumet and Frankenheimer.⁹⁷ Both productions shot extensively in San Francisco, even capturing key interiors on location. Crews also readily improvised to minimize the inevitable delays caused by unpredictable location conditions. San Francisco's noir shadows looked far blacker than *Dark Passage*, and for good reason: location technology had improved, and black-and-white film had reached its apex.

SHOOTING ANYWHERE BUT "THE DARK CAVE IN CANDLELIGHT"⁹⁸

Much like *The Lineup*, *Experiment in Terror* shot extensively on location in San Francisco, but there was a day-and-night difference in the depiction of city, *Experiment* opened an image entirely absent from *The Lineup*: a night exterior. As Kelly (Lee Remick) drives home to face a terrifying encounter with a murderous extortionist, Red Lynch (Ross Marin), both the action and each point of light in the surrounding city appear crisp and clear, including helicopter footage relying only on the available light of city buildings, headlights, and the Bay Bridge (Figure 3.2A). The establishing shot of Kelly's car pulling into her driveway in Twin Peaks appears lit by a single streetlight, while the San Francisco background looms as a constellation of lights (Figure 3.2B). *American Cinematographer* described it as "one of the most striking exterior night shots ever seen."⁹⁹ Cinematographer Phil Lathrop benefited from major improvements in film

stock and lighting equipment that by the early 1960s, allowed black-and-white location shooting in dark conditions and interior spaces that were previously exorbitant or impossible to adequately light.

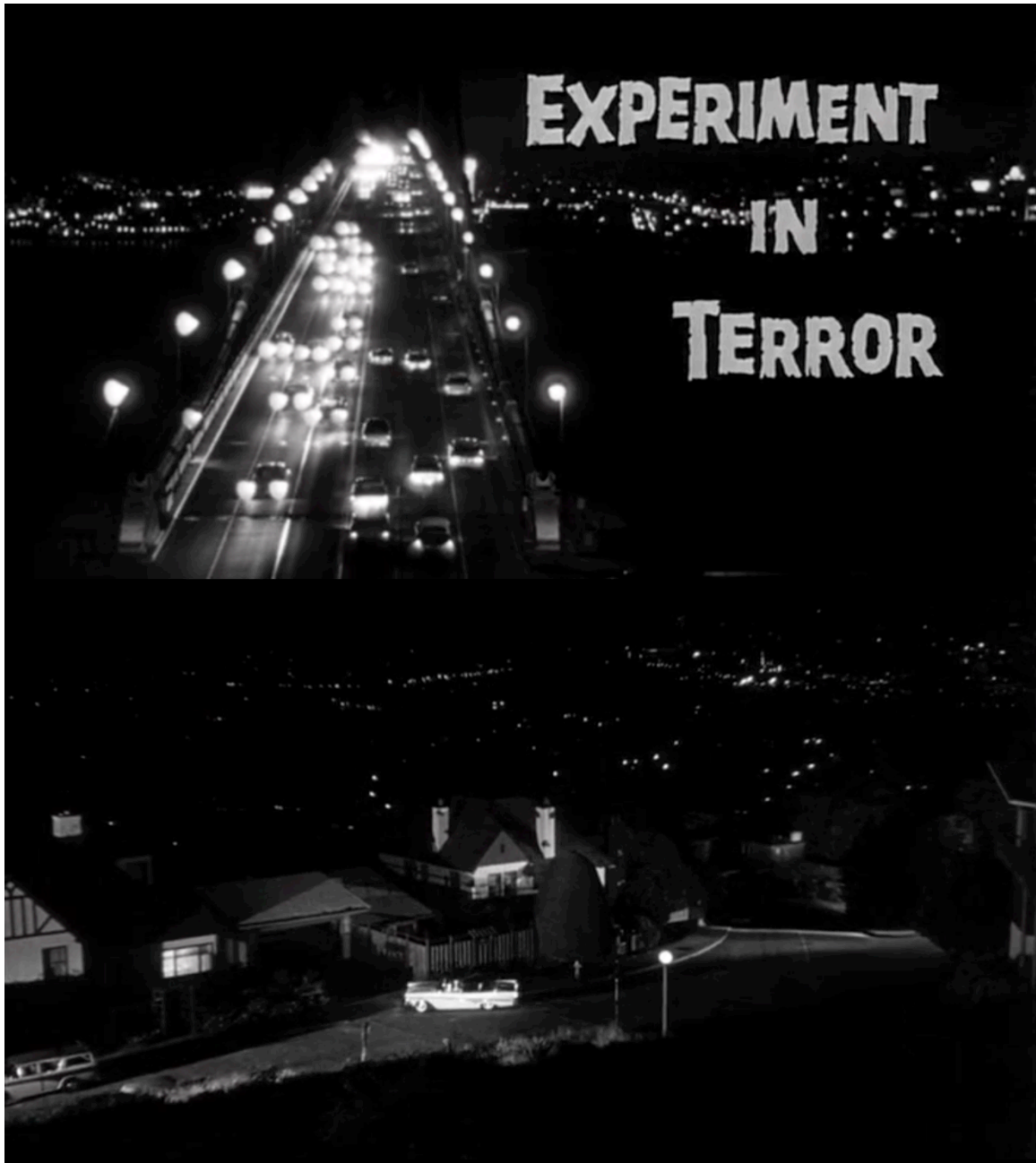


Fig. 3.2A & B. Night location exteriors in *Experiment in Terror*.

These technological developments facilitated more extensive location shooting with subtler lighting, evidenced by Edwards' two San Francisco films and myriad productions shot throughout the United States, particularly New York City. A realist black-and-white aesthetic complimented real locations, as well as the myriad bleak dramas premiering in the early 1960s. Meanwhile, color film, particularly in widescreen and with wider formats like 70mm, required too much light to convey a similar aesthetic. *American Cinematographer* revealed a deepening aesthetic distinction between most color productions and low-key, black-and-white films shot on location and praised for realistic cinematography.

By the early 1960s, improved film stock not only reduced the advantage of shooting at the studio but also of shooting in Southern California. According to Director Jack Garfein, who shot *Something Wild* (1961) on location in New York, frequent sunlight, a fundamental reason why Los Angeles became the center of the American film industry, was no longer an asset. This was no consequence of smog, but a result of faster film stock. For black-and-white filmmakers, the Southern California sun sometimes shined too bright to optimally shoot more light-sensitive film stock.¹⁰⁰ Such technology clearly facilitated domestic location shooting, but this was merely a consequence of the production practices that drove this development, television and foreign location shooting.

In 1961, Eastman Kodak's Film Department Director, Don Hyndman, reflected on the rapid improvement in black-and-white stock over the past decade. The introduction of Tri-X in 1954 greatly facilitated night for night shooting "a tremendous boost toward ultimate realism."¹⁰¹ Only six years later, Kodak's Double-X rendered it obsolete. Double-X would be twice as fast as Plus-X, the industry standard, yet with almost identical sharpness and far less grain than Tri-X. Industry-wide evaluation

suggested that Double-X could become the standard stock for indoor and low-light shooting. Pan-X permitted shooting in conditions previously deemed inadequate for proper exposure.¹⁰² Tri-X would only be necessary in almost total darkness, such as “Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn sneaking up on Injun Joe in the dark cave by candlelight.”¹⁰³

The target market for Double-X was television, and not for aesthetic reasons. More sensitive film allowed for smaller and fewer lights, reducing power consumption as well as setup time. These seemingly modest budget reductions could have a major impact, since TV films worked with, “tight budgets and tight shooting schedules.”¹⁰⁴ *The Jack Benny Show* immediately switched to Double-X, which had the added advantage of facilitating camera pans to the audience. Yet even less stage-bound shows, such as Warners’ *Maverick*, became early adopters. Lower light levels also offered greater comfort to crews and actors working under hot lamps; television had far less tolerance for low-key lighting than theatrical projection.¹⁰⁵

Historically black-and-white film quality steadily improved to facilitate shooting with less light and less grain, but by the 1960s, still remained at a relatively stable cost. *Anatomy of a Murder*, shot and edited entirely on location in Michigan, suggested that, “light and speed problems were no longer a detriment in photographing a motion picture.”¹⁰⁶ More sensitive stock also favored more portable equipment. Like its 1948 namesake, the television series *Naked City* (1958-1963) relied on photoflood lights and handheld cameras to capture roughly 60% of the series in New York exterior locations. Unlike Mark Hellinger’s expensive noir, high-speed negatives and lightweight equipment allowed the show to film in “almost any location,” with 3-4 day schedules for each half-hour episode.¹⁰⁷

As shooting on location became less of a technological challenge for black-and-white films, filmmakers learned to better exploit unexpected situations arising on location. Gerry O'Hara, Preminger's Assistant director on *The Cardinal*, which shot extensively in Boston, praised the improvisation required to shoot on location; not merely capturing, but adapting to real site conditions added distinct realism.¹⁰⁸ Shooting *Raisin in The Sun* (1961) in Chicago brought "happy little accidents," from the details of an African-American liquor store to the unexpected sight of a man pushing a baby buggy.¹⁰⁹ Quicker setups and faster film stock gave filmmakers the opportunity to effectively observe and capture local eccentricities, rather than smooth them away, as Jerry Wald insisted during the difficult shooting of *Dark Passage*.

New lights opened further opportunities to shoot scenes on location that previously necessitated sound stage shooting. Hollywood quickly adopted a powerful new halogen light, the sun-gun, debuting in 1962. The 3lb, 1000 watt light provided 5000 watts of exposure, and joined an array of photo lights as a staple of black-and-white location production. *The Lineup* series cinematographer Hal Mohr called it the greatest improvement in lighting equipment in 30 years. Once again, the immediate application was television, where the small size proved ideal for lighting location interiors for Screen Gems series'; television alum John Frankenheimer used sun-guns to light the Madison Square Garden catwalks for *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962). On the television series *Shannon, D.P.* Phil Tannura found another important application for the Sun Gun; using two lights with a car-mounted 35mm Arriflex, he captured two characters driving without using a process shot.¹¹⁰ The familiar, through-the-windshield process shot still relied on a blue-screen process for color film in 1964; by 1962, black and white could accomplish the same on location.¹¹¹

While color film stock did not keep pace with black and white, it improved dramatically in the late-1950s and early 1960s. In 1959, Eastman Color 5251 effectively eliminated 3-strip Technicolor from the industry.¹¹² Following its debut in 1953, Eastman's 1-strip process steadily gained on the cumbersome 3-strip process, becoming the industry standard by 1958. Yet the single strip process came at a cost, necessitating large, high-intensity tungsten lights; these behemoth units made sets unbearably hot and production costs even higher. Eastman 5251 doubled in speed without quality loss, and established Eastman Kodak as the dominant film stock provider in Hollywood.¹¹³ As with black and white, color technologies responded to industry trends. Eastman 4251 was "expected to solve the numerous lighting problems encountered overseas in such underpowered areas as the Far East."¹¹⁴ Faster stock also allowed longer shooting days at higher Northern latitudes, and could open new areas to color filmmaking that had only been feasible in black and white. The new color film primarily responded to and facilitated runaway production, not aesthetic demands.

A host of new lenses and cameras developed by Panavision also made an impact on color cinematography, although the company's entry into the field followed exhibition needs over production needs. M-G-M's *Ben Hur* was too expensive to release only in theaters with the same widescreen format. Panavision, at work on an anamorphic projection lens for Cinemascope, offered MGM an unheralded versatility. Testing on the MGM lot, they worked to develop a 70mm camera that not only fixed widescreen curved-distortion problems, but also produced a negative capable of high-quality printing in 70mm, 35mm, and 3-Strip Cinerama.¹¹⁵ Despite its 300 lb. weight, the Camera 65 worked, Robert Surtees won best Color Cinematography for the extraordinarily successful *Ben Hur*, and Panavision won a Scientific and Technical Oscar for production and exhibition technology.¹¹⁶ Panavision continued to research and develop new

technologies on major Hollywood productions, such as *Exodus* (1961) and *West Side Story* (1961).¹¹⁷

Panavision's anamorphic process streamlined widescreen production, where producers had gone so far as experimenting with curved sets to compensate for distortion. By 1960, they had also minimized the camera size, creating the first handheld 70mm camera. Many of these improvements stemmed from new lenses developed to match existing cameras. One of these, the Ultra-Speed Panatar, promised to revolutionize 35mm filmmaking in color. During camera tests, cinematographers captured night scenes with only a lighted store window as the key light. William Daniels, who innovated low-intensity lighting on *Naked City* (1948), raved about the new lens, capable of shooting long shots with light levels as low as forty foot-candles.¹¹⁸

Despite faster film stock and lenses, color cinematography retained much of its familiar high-key aesthetic throughout the era. The Hollywood that fostered Panavision's innovations also relegated their use. Rather than pushing low-key color filmmaking, Panavision compensated for the excessive lighting demands of shooting large-negative (70mm) color film for ultra-widescreen exhibition, often in less sunny locations abroad or in New York. Particularly with the debut of *Double-X* in 1960, color film remained well behind black and white's light sensitivity. Meanwhile, Panavision lenses worked just as well in black and white, aiding the low-key cinematography of *Lonely Are the Brave*, shot on location in the mountains of New Mexico. As Eastman Kodak's Don Hyndman noted, "at a time when color motion picture film seems to be growing into maturity, its black-and-white older brother is moving forward at a faster pace than ever."¹¹⁹ *Experiment in Terror* and *Days of Wine and Roses* both depended on low-key scenes shot on location that not only remained beyond the reach of color cinematography but fit the continued association between black and white and dramatic realism.

The technical limitations of color compared to black and white reinforced formal associations between the two formats. *The Nun's Story* (1959) provided a telling conundrum for director Fred Zinnemann and cinematographer Franz Planer. The moody and repressive convent scenes favored black and white, but Zinnemann feared that the vibrant African locations for latter parts of the film would lose their appeal without color. The solution would be creating a severe monotone palette for the convent through costume and set design, essentially “shooting black-and-white in color.”¹²⁰ Not only did color limit Planer’s creative options, but largely worked against his dramatic goals. He noted that it was, “more difficult in color to make something *unbeautiful* than to make it beautiful. The object here was effectively to *destroy color*.”¹²¹ By the early 1970s, gritty films like *Dirty Harry* (1971) and *The French Connection* (1971) would systematically destroy color; a decade earlier, most filmmakers decided to shoot tough stories in black and white rather than work against color’s perceived strength.

The standards for realism in color also remained below black and white, due to both technical difficulties and generic associations. The color Western *They Came to Cordura* (1959) gained praise from *American Cinematographer* for never using an interior; yet while the film strived for “stark realism,” it had to rely on the stylized process of day-for-night for one-third of the picture.¹²² *The F.B.I. Story* (1959) shot in some actual interiors of FBI headquarters, but these were limited by “seemingly insurmountable lighting problems for color photography.”¹²³ *West Side Story* (1961) adopted a “hybrid stylization” between the realist gang plot and fantasy musical numbers; yet the film’s darkest moments remain brighter than almost a single image in John Frankenheimer’s black-in-white gang drama, *Young Savages* (1961). Sick tales would invariably favor black-in-white, except for a powerful gender determination. Murderous and salacious melodramas with female leads tended towards color. Despite the title,

Portrait in Black (1961) would show Lana Turner and San Francisco in color; *Where Love Has Gone* (1964) flaunted sexual deviance, but with Susan Hayward as the lead, the lurid San Francisco story played out in producer Ross Hunter's lurid color scheme.

Meanwhile, black-and-white films reveled in low-key, location shooting. *The Defiant Ones* (1958) won the Academy Award for best black-and-white cinematography. A frigid, rainy Southern California February was the background for 80 percent of the myriad location exteriors, contributing to a "stark, cold and unfriendly atmosphere."¹²⁴ For, *The World, The Flesh and The Devil* (1959), black-and-white Cinemascope allowed, "a mood of grim desolation that could never have been achieved in color."¹²⁵ Often straining to get exposure even on fast stock, the film captured New York City as a desolate, post-apocalyptic wasteland.¹²⁶¹²⁷ *Experiment in Terror* gained similar acclaim for its frightening, low-key San Francisco atmosphere.¹²⁸

American Cinematographer closely followed two filmmakers, Otto Preminger and John Frankenheimer, who pushed the boundaries of American location filmmaking in the late 1950s and early 1960s through improvisation; Edwards would employ similar techniques in San Francisco. For *Anatomy of a Murder*, Preminger experimented with near-total location filmmaking in a remote location with a remarkably tight schedule. He planned to capture the best-selling book where it actually took place, in the home and courthouse of the author, Judge John Vockler, located in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.¹²⁹ He also hoped to rush the film for a July 4th release to quickly capitalize on the book's popularity; this required the unprecedented feat of editing the film and trailers on location in a three-room suite. The only production task performed in Hollywood would be lab processing.¹³⁰

According to D.P. Sam Leavitt, the location demands were daunting. Preminger's crew could not drive nails into the plaster walls of the judge's 80 year-old house, in

which the largest room was 10 by 12 feet. The jury box took over most of the courtroom, which required upwards of six actors and 200 extras; naturally, Preminger, famous for long takes featuring camera movement, called for fifteen different camera moves despite the cramped quarters. A script change made on location called for the always challenging through-the-windshield shot, with dialogue and without process photography or a camera car. A “Rube-Goldberg” rig of lights and camera on a low bed truck sufficed for the scene.¹³¹ While Leavitt revealed only a handful of his techniques, the film’s seven Oscar nominations, including Best Cinematography demonstrated how far portable equipment and black-and-white film had advanced for location shooting. Both exteriors and interiors could be effectively captured on location, although Preminger wisely avoided the additional handicap of low-key lighting.

Although New York offered better production facilities away from Hollywood, less-photographed locations offered greater local support. The production bragged of spending \$500,000 in a depressed region while hiring 1000 local extras; for its efforts, Michigan named *Anatomy of A Murder* its Product of the Year.¹³² Cooperative locales also helped raise the production value of locations. Locals supplied a locomotive, loading crane, and seventeen cars to enliven the background for a brief scene of Jimmy Stewart and Arthur O’Connell lunching by the waterfront. An authentic absence of seagulls appeared inauthentic on camera, so the crew spread thirty pounds of fish around to attract birds and complete the mise-en-scene.¹³³ Edwards would similarly gain cooperation in San Francisco from hotels and night clubs eager to associate themselves with Hollywood stars.

John Frankenheimer and writer J.P. Miller collaborated on the original television production of *Days of Wine and Roses*, which aired on *Playhouse 90* in October 1958. They reteamed on *The Young Savages*, Frankenheimer’s first feature film, as well as his

first of four films starring actor-producer Burt Lancaster (*Birdman of Alcatraz*, 1962; *Seven Days in May*, 1964; *The Train*, 1964). Another black-and-white “sick tale,” the film opened with a Hispanic youth gang stabbing a blind boy to death. Like *Sweet Smell of Success* (1957), Lancaster and producer Harold Hecht mounted an incisive critique of urban culture captured in low-key black and white.¹³⁴ Yet portable equipment and improvised, multi-camera shooting revealed a far different city: Spanish Harlem. Frankenheimer exemplified how improvisational techniques honed in television production could be applied to urban location shooting to reveal parts of the city rarely entered by Hollywood filmmakers.

American Cinematographer lauded Frankenheimer’s bravery working in a neighborhood where “even the police tread lightly,” described as “a jungle loaded with ominously restless “natives.”¹³⁵ This hyperbolic description reflected cinema’s popular association between violent, ethnic youth gangs and New York City (like *Asphalt Jungle* and *West Side Story*). Frankenheimer deeply infiltrated actual tenement neighborhoods with both offscreen and onscreen strategies. Local actors cast as gang members helped negotiate a payment to two youth gang leaders, who controlled their turf to facilitate shooting. The dynamic opening sequence, where several actors rushed through the streets towards the scene of the stabbing, spread across several unbarricaded city blocks. Using battery-powered handheld cameras on luggage trucks, one cameraman trailed the actors; once a crowd of onlookers formed around the camera, a second camera wheeled after the actors while the initial camera served as a decoy. Frankenheimer would continue to steal shots with handheld cameras in difficult situations, particularly in *Seven Days in May* (1963). He managed to capture a staged protest and fight in front of the White House, while grabbing a shot of Kirk Douglas entering the Pentagon without a permit.¹³⁶

This emergent semi-documentary style offered fluid camerawork and jarring compositions absent from the semi-documentaries of the 1940s and 1950s. Rather than the film newsreel, this style mimicked the run-and-gun technique of the television news expose.¹³⁷ Shooting interiors on location also revealed urban destitution beyond Hollywood's darkest fantasy of the slums. After shooting inside an actual railroad-style tenement, "sets which had heretofore been considered sufficiently squalid were found to be vastly understated when compared to the real thing."¹³⁸ The experience of crossing the threshold of location facades not only produced realistic location footage, but augmented the realism of the sound stage sets. While New York ghettos gained increasing visibility, urban poverty and gang violence would remain largely ghettoed in New York settings. In 1960, a group of white youths attacked black patrons at a San Francisco first-run theater. The closing of every movie theater in the African-American Fillmore District forced black moviegoers to cross racial lines.¹³⁹ Onscreen, San Francisco's urban problems would remain virtually deracinated; rather than impoverished minorities, white deviants roamed the dark alleyways beyond the city lights.

Among the myriad early 1960s films combining dark themes with low-key black-and-white location shooting, Blake Edwards produced the only ones set in San Francisco. Edwards' provocative series, *Peter Gunn* (1958-1961), brought the style and violence of film noir to television, combined with the hip jazz culture of San Francisco. Moving from television production to feature filmmaking, Edwards gained enough time and funding to shoot extensively in San Francisco for *Experiment in Terror*. In this dark thriller, he transformed San Francisco sites into a shadowy criminal landscape reminiscent of *Peter Gunn* but featured themes and settings too perverse for television broadcast. *Days of Wine and Roses* showed how effectively Edwards used his television experience to efficiently exploit locations. The bleak drama of an alcoholic couple revealed the tragic

undercurrents of San Francisco's celebrated nightlife. Edwards' San Francisco appeared more civilized than Frankenheimer's New York and featured clearly articulated districts and regions. Nonetheless the city's cine-tourist beauty proved tragic and haunting as headlights and bar signs punctuated a deep black night.

BLAKE EDWARDS' SAN FRANCISCO

In the following case studies, I explore how Blake Edwards' work in television, location shooting practices, and urban aesthetics dramatically changed the depiction of San Francisco from the standards of 1950s cinema-tourism. *Peter Gunn* adopted the style of San Francisco culture while Edwards exemplified the new wave of creative talent from television moving into feature film production. For both *Experiment in Terror* and *Days of Wine and Roses*, Edwards found techniques to efficiently shoot low-key cinematography on location and take advantage of local support in San Francisco. In the final section, I analyze the urban structure suggested by Blake Edwards two San Francisco films, which appeared increasingly bleak in the tragic denouement of *Days of Wine and Roses*.

a. Peter Gunn: TV Noir and San Francisco Style

Peter Gunn, a detective series produced by Blake Edwards, was a breakout hit for NBC in its first season (1958-1959), drawing praise for its style and occasional condemnation for its violent content. *Peter Gunn* offered a more vibrant television image of San Francisco culture than CBS' *The Lineup* except for two details: the production never left Southern California and never mentioned the name of its city setting. However the series fundamentally shaped Edwards feature productions set in San Francisco, while providing a clear precedent for the hip detective of *Bullitt* (1968). Edwards actually wrote

San Francisco crime dramas for *The Line-up* when it was a radio series (1950-1953).¹⁴⁰ Henry Mancini's theme song and score for *Peter Gunn* proved even more memorable than the show itself; it also brought West-Coast jazz to television, including on-screen performances by Shelly Manne.¹⁴¹ The series so thoroughly revolved around Henry Mancini's jazz score that Peter Gunn (Craig Stevens) forewent an office, instead conducting business at Mother's nightclub, where most episodes featured musical performances (Figure 3.3).



Fig. 3.3. Film noir establishing shot of Mother's jazz club in *Peter Gunn* (NBC, 1958).

Peter Gunn frequently relied on San Francisco imagery, such as the waterfront location of Mother's, shadowy warehouse piers, and multiple episodes set in Chinatown, largely constructed on Hollywood studio lots. Moreover the title character embodied the Beat ethic of the urban traveler, knowingly frequenting the hippest African-American jazz clubs or the best nightclubs in Chinatown. Peter Gunn was closer to Humphrey Bogart as Rick in *Casablanca* (1942) than as Sam Spade in *The Maltese Falcon*, equally at home in police, criminal, and nightlife settings. Steve McQueen similarly bridged San Francisco's eclectic urban culture and the tough world of police work.

Along with its jazz score and San Francisco setting, *Peter Gunn* distinguished itself from other hip detective series like *77 Sunset Strip* (1958-1964) through a combination of violence and stylization. In September, *Variety* saw little hope for the apparently formulaic show, with a script, “reminiscent of TV seven to 10 years ago.”¹⁴² The series became a top-20 hit in its first season, pushing *Variety* to reassess the show’s slickness and brutality in a November review: “That the murder and mayhem was done with finesse was indisputable. But each climactic moment in the half-hour hinged on a shooting, a death house visit, slugging, a hypodermic needle and a novel, detailed electrocution scene of the non-prison variety.”¹⁴³ In essence, *Peter Gunn* was a compendium of noir violence, peppered with dry, witty banter. The novelty of *Peter Gunn* and the crime shows that followed it, particularly *The Untouchables* (1959-1963), would not be the detective plots but as NBC described it, “the change in mood and accent—the difference between ‘Martin Kane’ and ‘Peter Gunn.’”¹⁴⁴

Peter Gunn’s popularity was far more fleeting than its impact on television geography. While its style was forward, it relied on the fading model of advertising agency sponsorship. After changing time slots and networks (from NBC to ABC), Bristol Meyers dropped the show in 1961.¹⁴⁵ Despite its short network run, *Peter Gunn* sold quickly in syndication, billed as “the show that started it all,” with its “sophisticated approach to danger--urbane story lines and some of the most fabulous jazz of our time.”¹⁴⁶ In 1960, *Variety* observed, “The crime suspense program category is rapidly displacing the western as the staple of network programming.”¹⁴⁷ Shows such as *Peter Gunn* and the highly popular *The Untouchables* (1959-1963) capitalized on the fading appeal of the television Western.¹⁴⁸ The urban present overtook the rural past as television’s dominant violent setting. The growing alienation of suburbanites from the city, observed by contemporary scholars such as Walter Whyte and Lewis Mumford,

made its impact on television: for suburban Americans, the city faded as a place of daily experience and blossomed as a fictional realm of action.¹⁴⁹

Variety credited Blake Edwards with “something of a revolution” in both television style and production organization. With the initial success of *Peter Gunn*, he became one of the earliest acclaimed television writer-producers. Such a hyphenate, commonplace among Hollywood filmmakers, became increasingly prominent in television by 1959, including writer-producers such as Rod Serling for *The Twilight Zone* and Norman Retchin for *The Untouchables*.¹⁵⁰ Writer-producers helped fill a talent gap in Hollywood, where major studios struggled to find competent production executives to run their growing television departments. For instance, Fox hired former television producer Martin Manulis to work on feature films, but lacking other producers with TV experience, Spyros Skouras soon switched Manulis to work on their 1959-1960 pilots. While Manulis’ contract guaranteed his return to feature-filmmaking, he would leave in 1961 and bring his feature project, *Days of Wine and Roses*, from Fox to Warners.¹⁵¹ Edwards’ success getting *Peter Gunn* and a second series, *Mr. Lucky*, on the air, earned him a six-series deal with MGM’s television unit in 1961.¹⁵²

b. *Experiment in Terror* and *Days of Wine and Roses*: The Logistics of Location Shooting in San Francisco

Edwards sought to use *Peter Gunn* as a springboard to expand his role as a producer of Hollywood features. In October of 1959, he announced plans to write, produce and direct a feature film version of the series.¹⁵³ Edwards continued to work as a director for hire, completing another famed collaboration with Henry Mancini on the hugely successful *Breakfast At Tiffany’s* (1961). After finishing *Breakfast*, Edwards planned to write, direct, and produce *Experiment in Terror*, followed by producing and

directing *Days of Wine and Roses*.¹⁵⁴ While he would not receive screenplay credit for *Experiment* or producer's credit for *Days*, he oversaw both projects through their completion. Edwards made his aspirations clear after partnering with Jack Lemmon on yet another company, a creative talent development firm. Despite never working with them, Edwards praised UA's Mirisch Brothers for their free hand with producer-directors such as William Wyler, Billy Wilder, Robert Wise, and Fred Zinneman. He noted, "These men are left to their creative designs without anyone looking down their throats."¹⁵⁵

Well before the young filmmakers of the Hollywood Renaissance, Edwards clearly advocated for an auteur-director's cinema. Rather than citing European filmmakers, he lauded the most independent of the independents, UA's star producer-directors. Like Wilder, Edwards worked his way up through his writing; unlike the studio-trained Wilder, he gained his autonomy under the shoestring budgets and manic schedules of live and scripted television, from *Four-Star Playhouse* (1952-1956) to *Peter Gunn*. Edwards would bring along his *Peter Gunn* cinematographer, Phil Lathrop, to shoot both of his early 1960s San Francisco features. The regular noir flourishes on the series could now be pushed beyond the dimmer, narrower frame of the television. Meanwhile, in shooting and planning, Edwards' pictures hinged on the ability to improvise and economize on location, skills honed through television production.

In *Experiment in Terror*, Red Lynch forces Kelly to steal money from the bank she works at, while FBI Agent Ripley (Glenn Ford) tries to protect her and uncover Lynch, who effectively hides his identity through telephone threats and disguises. Lynch leads Kelly and investigators into seedier districts of San Francisco before Ripley learns his identity through his Chinese girlfriend (Anita Loo). Hoping to pick up the money from Kelly during a baseball game at Candlestick Park, FBI agents and police surround

and kill Lynch on the pitcher's mound of the emptied stadium. Sensitive black-and-white film stock helped cinematographer Philip Lathrop create low-key lighting that fit the crime suspense film, including several darkly lit scenes shot in San Francisco locations.

The night-for-night cinematography for the opening scene of *Experiment in Terror* required careful pre-planning. Shooting almost entirely on Plus-X, Lathrop captured Kelly driving through a pitch-black night on her way home, where Lynch surprised her in the garage.¹⁵⁶ Beginning in the afternoon, Lathrop employed three generators (strategically concealed) to power several Big Brute arc lights, establishing three planes of light. Smaller units hid throughout the location added effects lighting. Shooting at only fifty foot-candles, Lathrop captured staggering depth and sharpness in a vast wide shot that left few places to hang lights.¹⁵⁷ The requisite equipment would remain effectively masked by the ink black shadows. After hours of preparation, San Francisco fog rolled in after only a few takes. Yet the early establishing shot was worth the difficult setup. Paired with ominous Mancini riffs, these foreboding night images set the tone for the subsequent assault by the villain, Red Lynch, and the frightening world of the film. This shot also showcased the full capability of early 1960s black-and-white filmmaking, combining the naturalness and subtlety of studio lighting with the striking, real backgrounds provided on location.¹⁵⁸



Fig. 3.4. Bank location for *Experiment in Terror*.

Double-X also opened the door to shooting location exteriors, particularly Crocker Bank (Figure 3.4). Red Lynch intimidates Kelly into stealing money from the bank, transforming her workplace into a tense trap. The high-key, evenly lit interior shows no trace of the difficult shooting conditions. The vast building with large windows forced Lathrop to balance and regularly rebalance the interior with the changing exterior light; meanwhile the bright white walls of the bank could exaggerate any increased grain or overexposure. The easiest solution, placing arc lights outside the windows, not only proved inadequate, but also drew large crowds that interfered with the shoot. Instead, Lathrop gradually increased the interior lighting with the waning daylight. While Plus-X offered lower grain, Double-X proved necessary, likely to allow a smaller aperture to handle the bright lights.¹⁵⁹

Why not build a bank set on the Columbia lot instead? Edwards answers this question with his camera placements and movements. A high angle crane shot pans across the large bank foyer, taking advantage of the high ceilings to capture a vast plane

of activity. In another wide shot, the camera pans with Kelly walking towards the teller area, before tracking left as she turns the corner and walks past the teller windows. Thus the full height of the bank, along with all four walls, appear on screen. What would have required a massive set on the lot was captured on location over a weekend. Meanwhile, the camera angles and movements trace Kelly's every move, a visual reminder of Red Lynch's constant surveillance and threat. Aided by the latitude of black-and-white stock, an actual San Francisco bank simultaneously provides economic, aesthetic and narrative advantages.

Smaller lights and cameras also compensated for the continued logistical problems that plagued urban location shooting. One scene called for Kelly to meet Red Lynch on a cable car, but not knowing his appearance, she allows a lascivious man whom she believes is Lynch to pick her up. As had been the case since the 1940s, cameras and lights attracted crowds like moths to a flame; Lathrop estimated nearly 5,000 people arrived and made shooting impossible. Yet unlike the 1940s, the production would hardly be set back a day, and the result would improve upon the "prosaic" cable car setting. The night before, Edwards visited the Roaring Twenties, a wild San Francisco nightclub with scantily clad women on swings and an arcade shooting range (Figure 3.5). Determined to exploit the unique location, Edwards revised the script, and the production team searched for small lights suited for a low-key night club; Lathrop further improvised, obstructing the large arc lights with flags to create multiple, narrower rays of light. The club's evening hours left the crew ample time to shoot during the day.¹⁶⁰



Fig. 3.5: The Roaring Twenties nightclub in *Experiment in Terror*.

The improvised nightclub scene effectively replaced the colloquial image of San Francisco (the trolley car) with a place that exemplified the city's actual eccentricity.

Equipped with a handheld Arriflex, Lathrop grabbed effects shots, including one from the seat of a swing, where the pendulum motion augments Kelly's disorientation within the club.¹⁶¹ While Preminger and Frankenheimer improvised on location to capture specific features of real locales, Edwards instead used the features of actual places as a springboard for his imagination. Trained in television, where only ingenuity could squeeze production value out of tight budgets and schedules, Edwards wrung every potential visual flourish out of a location. In fact *Variety's* major criticism of the finished film would be its "experiment in cinematography that emphasizes 'artistic' camera technique that is cute but does little to aid the story."¹⁶²



Fig. 3.6. Candlestick Park in *Experiment in Terror*.

Candlestick Park, the spectacular location for the finale, was no exception. As police scramble to locate Red Lynch during a Giants-Dodgers game, Edwards takes advantage of the massive scale of the stadium, from dark corridors to press boxes and aerial helicopter shots (with a mounted stabilized Arriflex) revealing the entire stadium

(Figure 3.6). Once again, the sensitive film stock allows the shadow play to range across the height and depth of the stadium surroundings. Yet *American Cinematographer* was just as impressed with the minor, improvised visual effects. Lathrop creatively employed a zoom lens to capture Red Lynch eyeing Kelly's sister (Stephanie Powers) through his rearview mirror.¹⁶³ What *Variety* found excessive, *American Cinematographer* deemed a 'must-see' for students of cinematography.¹⁶⁴ Lathrop himself provided a narrative logic for the bravura cinematography; they wanted the audience to fear the killer could be lurking in any shadow, and indeed, the unrestrained extension of noir effects across real locations encouraged such anxiety.

The 1962 *American Cinematographer* cover story on *Experiment in Terror* not only positioned Phil Lathrop as a promising newcomer recently admitted to the American Society of Cinematographers, but also validated the impact of television production on feature filmmaking. Lathrop had a classical Hollywood pedigree, working for a decade as a camera operator for Russell Metty at Universal.¹⁶⁵ He then "followed the general trend of cinematographers to TV filming." Lathrop lauded his TV experience, which gave him "unlimited opportunity to experiment with lighting effects and camera techniques."¹⁶⁶ Like John Alton, who famously experimented with noir lighting on B crime thrillers like *T-Men* (1947) and *Raw Deal* (1948), Lathrop honed his craft on 1960s television noirs like *Peter Gunn*, where creative lighting provided one of the only inexpensive methods to add production value.

Reviewers emphasized *Experiment in Terror*'s effective use of San Francisco settings. *The Motion Picture Herald* even argued that it used settings more imaginatively than any thriller since *North By Northwest* (1959).¹⁶⁷ *Variety* similarly praised the use of San Francisco landmarks, although with an important caveat: the story could take place anywhere.¹⁶⁸ Despite the actual locations and street names, local baseball teams, and

obligatory cable car shot, *Experiment in Terror* creatively photographed San Francisco locations with no attempt to depict specific elements of San Francisco city life, with the exception of wild nightclubs like *The Roaring Twenties*. Despite never mentioning the city's name, the hip, jazz club world of *Peter Gunn* took more away from San Francisco's urban culture than *Experiment in Terror*.

Days of Wine and Roses transposed a story from another setting onto the city, adapting a teleplay set in Manhattan to a film version set and shot in San Francisco. The film depicts Joe (Jack Lemmon) and Kirsten (Lee Remick), a couple who fall in love and wed but descend deeply into alcoholism, as Joe loses his career and Kirsten abandons their family. Joe recovers with the help of Alcoholic's Anonymous while Kirsten cannot bear to stop drinking, leaving Joe to raise their daughter as she flees into the San Francisco night at the close of the film. The downbeat story focused on a universal problem that eased the change in setting, while the realist dramatic tone and the downfall of the couple motivated another black-and-white film with low-key lighting. While *Experiment in Terror* used this shadowy aesthetic to provide suspense, *Days of Wine and Roses*, also shot by Lathrop, used a similar look to explore the bleak despair of the urban drunk.

While the San Francisco setting did not alter the plot of the film, it required careful location scouting and negotiation in order to economically realize the scenes shot on location. As of May 1961, *Days of Wine and Roses* was set in New York. By January 1962, the doomed couple's first romantic moment would be moved from the Hudson River banks of the Upper West Side to Fisherman's Wharf.¹⁶⁹ Unit manager Jack McEdwards laid the groundwork for shooting in San Francisco. Like Lathrop and Edwards, he moved fluidly between feature filmmaking and television. After serving as an Assistant Director in features throughout the 1950s, he became the production

manager for *Peter Gunn* and rejoined Edwards for *Days*. The same year he would also serve as a production manager for Otto Preminger's *Advise and Consent*, which shot extensively on location in Washington, D.C. Just after New Years of 1962, Edwards, Manulis, writer J.P. Miller and art director Joe Wright joined McEdwards for a three-day location scout of San Francisco. His survey report reveals the myriad negotiations between aesthetic and economic demands that shaped early 1960s location shooting.¹⁷⁰

San Francisco businesses and residents remained eager to participate in Hollywood filmmaking, and McEdwards exploited this interest to extend the budget. For the four-day location trip, the premier hotel, the Fairmont, offered their minimum rate. Yacht owners and club members were excited to provide their vessels for the film's wild boat party scene. Each night, the production team dined at a potential location. They settled on the Owl and the Turtle, whose manager was extremely interested in the publicity, over the Roaring Twenties, the club used in *Experiment*. Yet all the production promised was to use the restaurant as a cover set, available for a three and a half page scene during a bad weather day.¹⁷¹ The club Place Pigalle charged only a dollar a day if the production mentioned it by name. Ernie's restaurant, already well known and featured in *Vertigo*, instead required \$150 a day plus three employee salaries. The production paid no exorbitant rental fees, which peaked at \$250 a day to shoot at San Francisco's most famous location, the Golden Gate Bridge.¹⁷²

Greater savings could be realized in lower hotel rates, and McEdwards effectively leveraged the Jack Tar Hotel's need for publicity. McEdwards had already negotiated steep discounts for rooms, with \$85 a night suites rented at \$50 a night. He thought he could do even better, and shaved another \$5 off the suite rate and \$2- \$4 off each room. Considering the production would pay for over 900 nights at the hotel between February 8th and February 24th, each dollar off saved nearly a thousand dollars. Bob Holden, the

manager of the Jack Tar soon conceded in a letter reiterating his hopes and fears. Having Lee Remick and Jack Lemmon stay at his hotel would be fantastic publicity, while having them stay with a competitor could damage the hotel's image. For the sake of two star guests, the entire cast and crew stayed cheaply, and the strategy ultimately backfired for Mr. Holden. Likely unimpressed with their suites, "Jack and Lee, Blake Edwards and most of the more important people had moved to the Fairmont."¹⁷³

The police point-person, Bob Kane, had worked with Blake Edwards on *Experiment in Terror* the previous summer, and remained vital to securing locations. He now had an official title within the department, San Francisco Police Public Relations Officer. Kane not only accompanied the production team to locations such as the Yacht Club, but also contacted the Recreation and Parks Department to find out whether the pier could support the large camera boom. He personally introduced the filmmakers to the owner of the Telegraph Hill apartment chosen for exteriors of Kirsten's Apartment. Kane's cousin lived next door and vouched for the owner's cooperation. Kane knew to avoid shooting the popular Maiden Lane shopping district except for Sunday, as delivery trucks often clogged the street. He even helped secure a church for an A.A. meeting scene, because as a fellow Catholic, he knew the priest. Blake Edwards could not proceed regardless of local conditions like *Dark Passage*, or rely on reshoots and process shots to overcome local conditions like *Vertigo*. Instead, he followed the advice of local experts like Kane, who charted the path of least resistance for location shooting in a city still bound together by networks of personal relationships.¹⁷⁴

If potential locations fell short of narrative or pictorial demands, Edwards shot them in Southern California instead. Despite the willing club members, the San Francisco yachts were not "pretentious" enough to capture a debauch corporate party where Joe first meets Kirsten. Meanwhile, nearby Sausalito proved inadequate for the

cinematography due to logistical and aesthetic problems and potential bad weather. Aside from establishing shots at the San Francisco marina, the party scenes would be filmed in Balboa, an Orange County seaside town.¹⁷⁵ Another key sequence, in which Joe leaves a cheap motel, stumbles through the woods and robs a liquor store in a desperate alcoholic search, was filmed entirely (exteriors and interiors) on Warners' Jungle stage. With enough location footage to concretely establish San Francisco, Edwards could afford to shoot a few scenes closer to home, especially when actual San Francisco proved disadvantageous.

Securing locations proved less complicated than securing personnel on location. Production manager Charles Greenlaw had to negotiate both the involvement of local San Francisco IATSE workers, and whether their jurisdiction covered shooting at a racetrack outside the city. Using a still photographer on location required paying a standby salary to a union photographer in Los Angeles. The production needed the Coast Guard's oversight for the boat scenes, but a Rear Admiral wrote to reject any gratuities, which were against regulations (Whether the \$1200 "donation" to the Coast Guard on the final budget solved or created the impropriety remains unclear). Lee Remick's hairstylist negotiated every possible additional compensation in her contract before traveling to San Francisco. The freedom of independent production in 1960s Hollywood came with at the price of independent negotiations with dozens of involved parties and individuals.¹⁷⁶

Successful location shooting, particularly on mid-budget films like *Days of Wine and Roses*, depended on anticipating the unexpected. Bad weather always threatened to disrupt exterior shooting and rather than add shooting days, budget-strapped producers could be forced to scrap entire scenes. Warners hired the National Weather Institute to provide forecasts specific to movie shooting schedules, including the number of expected good shooting days and likely cloud cover for February through April of 1962. April

looked sunnier, but rather than save location shoots for after studio work, Edwards took his chances. Securing location interiors ensured that poor weather rarely ground production to a halt. The Golden Gate Park scene was scheduled for a Monday, but if it rained, they would move to the milkmaid party scene. The long night scene of the couple at Fisherman's Wharf relied on clear weather; yet as the beginning of the romance, it was also the most important exterior location in the film, worthy of postponement if necessary. Despite a major weather delay shooting exteriors at the Yacht Club, production returned to the studio on schedule after 10 days. The majority of the film was shot in the studio over 45 days, and Edwards finished 5 days ahead of schedule. A seasoned television producer used to ironclad time and money constraints, Edwards never came close to going over budget or over schedule.¹⁷⁷

Days of Wine and Roses quickly gained critical and financial success. Henry Mancini won an Oscar for the title song, Jack Lemmon and Lee Remick earned nominations for best actor and actress, and two more nominations came for black-and-white art direction and costume design. A *Variety* reviewer worried that "an almost intolerably depressing 117 minutes" might limit its box office potential.¹⁷⁸ Despite the difficult story, *Days* managed to earn nearly \$4 million (the same amount as *Hud*) on a \$1.7 million budget. Jack Warner wired Jack Lemmon, "[Kalmenson and I] feel we have hit every jackpot in Las Vegas without even pulling a handle."¹⁷⁹

Both of Edwards San Francisco films demonstrated how the speed and resourcefulness required for television production translated into more efficient production strategies on location. Aided by faster black-and-white stock, Edwards and Lathrop succeeded in capturing location footage without sacrificing aesthetic quality, lighting real locations with studio polish but without major expense. These improved location shooting practices opened new San Francisco locations to filmmaking while

casting familiar sites in a darker light. In both films, the city's sleazier districts and characters appeared to suit an explicit thriller and a bleak alcoholic drama. Nonetheless, the characters rather than the city itself descended into desperate conditions; San Francisco had its vices, but they remained part of a coherent image of the city.

c. San Francisco in *Days of Wine and Roses* and *Experiment in Terror*: Dark Lives in the Imageable City

“When a city begins to grow and spread outward from the edges, the center which was once its glory... goes into a period of desolation inhabited at night by the vague ruins of men, the lotus eaters who struggle daily toward unconsciousness by way of raw alcohol.... And then one day perhaps the city returns and rips out the sore and builds a monument to the past.”¹⁸⁰

In *The Heart of Our Cities*, Victor Gruen begins his proposed counterattack against urban decay with this quote from John Steinbeck's 1962 *Travels with Charley*. The alcoholics who roam downtowns at night are the symptoms of urban sickness, a cancer that must be removed before the city can be rebuilt. Edwards' bleak San Francisco films suggest the opposite. Early 1960s San Francisco, on and offscreen, lacked the formlessness of other cities. Instead, urban American misfits descend a clear path into the city's lower depths. Edwards elaborates the illicit side of the city, not as a sign of urban decline, but as a designated part of an imageable city.

Kevin Lynch's 1960 book *Image of the City* presented a new method of evaluation for urban studies. Rather than focusing on urban structure, he examined the urban perception of the city dweller. He selected pedestrians to draw maps of their urban environment, and found urban enjoyment derived from cities where residents could visually orient themselves: “A highly imageable (apparent, legible, or visible) city in this peculiar sense would seem well formed, distinct, remarkable... The sensuous grasp upon

such surroundings would not merely be simplified but also extended and deepened.”¹⁸¹ Parts of San Francisco, as well as New York, Boston, and the Chicago lakefront, exemplified a highly imageable environment.¹⁸²

Lynch identifies five useful components: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks, that distinguish the visual experience of the pedestrian moving through the city. Edward Dimendberg adapted Lynch’s concepts to the movements of film noir protagonists through urban neighborhoods, suggesting that characters fight the growing formlessness of a declining modern city through these “walking cures.”¹⁸³ The tools of Hollywood continuity editing provided a more effective cure, particularly establishing shots, which offered a ready formal solution to urban formlessness. Through establishing shots of San Francisco’s landmarks and distinctive districts, Edward reinforces a transparent orientation through the city in both *Experiment in Terror* and *Days of Wine and Roses*.

In *Experiment in Terror*, Red Lynch operates within the private cracks of an enforceable, legible public space. In the opening sequence of *Experiment in Terror*, Kelly drives into San Francisco across the Bay Bridge. The bright bridge stands in high contrast to the deep blackness of the bay at night. As she drives through her neighborhood, a sign clearly designates it as “Twin Peaks.” Landmarks such as the bridge and the sign, combined with details such as the affluent suburban architecture, demarcate cohesive spaces while eliding indefinite in-between spaces. When Red Lynch ambushes Kelly in her garage, he appears as an invader within an organized world. Lynch overpowers Kelly in a private domestic space rather than a public area. He continually invades private spaces both directly, such as dressing in drag and confronting Kelly in the ladies’ room, and indirectly, such as calling her at her home on the telephone.

The police and FBI, led by Agent Ripley display a remarkable visual mastery of the public space.¹⁸⁴ During several shots of vistas, like a hilltop view of the city against the bay and a wide shot of Fisherman's Wharf, the camera pulls back to reveal surveillance agents watching from their vehicle. The vast public realm falls within the omniscient "see" of authorities. Aside from the home invasion, criminal incidents occur in specific districts. Red Lynch's Asian mistress, Lisa (Anita Loo) lives in Chinatown; the stool pigeon inhabits a seedy movie theater and eventually dies in a dark back alley, a staple setting for noir violence. During the finale, the killer attempts to hide within the public chaos of a baseball crowd at Candlestick Park. Ripley eventually spots him and ferrets him out towards the brightly lit, empty field; the criminal inevitably protrudes from the crowd of spectators and must be exposed and corralled at the spectacular center of the stadium.¹⁸⁵

The finale begins at a tourist location, Fisherman's Wharf, as a helicopter appears to overlook Kelly speaking to Lynch at a phone booth. Here new law enforcement technology adds another layer of visual control over the city. Rear-projection within the frame of the helicopter allows for a controlled, panoramic view as the helicopter follows Kelly's car to Candlestick Park. In the final moments of the film, Agent Ripley shoots Red Lynch as the helicopter, FBI agents, and police swarm onto the empty baseball diamond of Candlestick Park. Lynch breathes his last asthmatic breath on the pitcher's mound under the bright stadium lights. The film's final two shots swoop backward, dissolving into an extreme wide shot showing the entire stadium, an island of light and activity within the night sky. Institutional authority has eliminated the insidious criminal and restored its command of this vast visual landscape. The fly in the affluent ointment of San Francisco has been lethally excised.

As William Luhr and Peter Lehman note in their analysis of *Experiment*, Ripley and his fellow FBI agents are inhumanly cold, robotically responding to Kelly's terror with unsympathetic instructions and procedures.¹⁸⁶ Meanwhile, the killer reveals greater character depth as the film progresses. Later in the film, Lisa reveals to Ripley that Lynch has paid for her son's hospital bills; Ripley merely sees this as an investigative opportunity, and badgers the son for information on Lynch's whereabouts. Lynch's face is revealed halfway through the film, as he wakes up to an asthma attack and clutches for his inhaler. His gasping breath now appears less lascivious and more painful. He similarly defies expectations when after kidnapping Kelly's sister and forcing her to undress, he makes no sexual advances toward her. By the time Lynch heaves his dying breaths, he is a far more sympathetic character than Ripley. Like Dancer in *The Lineup*, Lynch is a criminal outsider who despite incredible effort, can not disguise himself from police surveillance. While San Francisco looks far darker than this earlier noir, the overbearing civil order of the city remains.

Edwards' sympathetic portrayal of derelicts like Red Lynch extends to Joe and Kirsten in *Days of Wine and Roses*. Drinking offers an escape from the corrupt corporate culture of public relations, where the urban businessmen indulge in public bacchanalia that drive Joe's alcoholism away from work. Meanwhile, the bar districts of San Francisco call Kirsten away from an unfulfilling life as a housewife. John Frankenheimer was the obvious choice to direct the feature film version of *Days of Wine and Roses*, which he had shot so effectively for *Playhouse 90*. However Jack Lemmon wanted a director who could do comedy.¹⁸⁷ While *Days* marked a dramatic departure from Lemmon's broader comedies, his recent hit, *The Apartment* (1960), was a dark comedy that dealt seriously with corporate lechery and suicide, and like *Days*, earned him an Oscar nomination for best actor. Whereas the television version of *Days* is downbeat

throughout, Edwards amplifies the tragedy and character identification by capturing Lemmon as a laugh-out loud funny drunk. Like the doomed couple, carousing is fun for the viewer until the consequences are emotionally wrenching.

In one of the most effective scenes, Lemmon does a classic comedy routine, drunkenly picking flowers for Kirsten, walking into a glass door, and then closing the flowers in the elevator door. Yet moments later, he rages at Kirsten for not drinking with him while breastfeeding rather than using formula and wakes their sleeping child. As Lemmon mouths in disbelief, “How can I do this to a child,” he draws the viewer’s shattered sympathy back. Yet the moment he nearly takes responsibility, Edwards cuts to Kirsten sipping a drink, a dagger in the couple’s progress. Lemmon’s early comic behavior as a drunk at first lightens the depressing film, but also disarms the viewer to subsequent harrowing scenes of addiction.

San Francisco offers an outrageous, entertaining nightlife that only later reveals despair. The corporate yacht party brims with models and carousing executives. A later corporate party is even more audacious, featuring skimpy outfits and a POV of a businessman’s leer at a server’s backside (Figure 3.7A). These bacchanalia tie Joe’s alcoholism to a seedy world of public relations and corporate hedonism, the subject of sharp black-and-white critiques such as *Sweet Smell of Success* (1957) and *The Apartment* (1960), which also starred Lemmon. Similarly, Kirsten’s return to alcoholism follows her dissatisfaction as a housewife and mother. In a haunting scene, she watches cartoons on the couch, pleading for the baby in the other room to hush her crying (Figure 3.7B). Jim (Jack Klugman), Joe’s AA sponsor, will teach him that alcoholism is a disease. But Edwards suggests it may be a social as well as a physical disease, a refuge for men disenchanted with a sleazy business culture and women isolated in the domestic sphere.



Fig. 3.7A & B. Top: Corporate parties. Bottom: Maternal boredom. *Days of Wine and Roses* (Warner Bros., 1962).

As Joe and Kirsten drift further into alcoholism, their accommodations grow bleaker. They begin their marriage in a luxurious apartment. The next apartment set is far shabbier, taken after they fail to sober up at Kirsten's father's house away from the city. Later a sober Joe finds Kirsten in a dark, cheap motel, where another binge leads him to detox in a hospital. In *The Apartment Plot*, Pamela Wojcik suggests that 1960s films centered on apartments offer narratives of young urbanites reinventing themselves in a

buzzing city; unlike the nostalgia for modernity Dimenberg describes in noir, characters look towards the future in a new sphere of action in the city.¹⁸⁸ Holly Golightly (Audrey Hepburn) in Edwards' *Breakfast at Tiffany's* is an icon of this era's bohemian culture. *Days* ties the freedom of apartment life, as opposed to the suburban house, into the transience and collapsed boundaries of addiction. Joe's fight with Kirsten over not drinking while breastfeeding pits the contrasting demands of drunken nightlife and family life against each other within the limited space of the apartment. As in 1930s fallen women films, the ease of moving between apartments ties moral downfall to a progression of worsening living spaces.

As alcohol turns from pleasure to despair, the nightlife that defines a vibrant San Francisco sees its shadow. In *The Exploding Metropolis*, Jane Jacobs describes San Francisco's Maiden Lane as the exemplary street, where a group of stores crowded around a narrow alley off of Union Square.¹⁸⁹ Yet Maiden Lane also features bars, whose neon lights so often defined San Francisco's exciting urban light on film. In *Days*, gray daylight location footage of Maiden Lane suggest a shabby haven for drunks to drink away the day (Figure 3.8A). A haunting image at the close of the film casts the sad refuge of the bar against the beauty of San Francisco. At the climax of the film, a briefly sober Kirsten visits Joe in his new apartment, a spartanly furnished but roomy place where he cares for their child. She cannot bring herself to see her daughter or stop drinking; without a drink, she says, "I can't get over how dirty everything looks." She leaves, and Edwards closes the film with the same effective shot that Frankenheimer used years earlier: the camera slowly zooms on Joe staring out his window as the flashing bar sign reflects against the glass. Freed from the limitations of live television, Edwards inserts a penultimate wide shot with inky black location cinematography like the night shot in *Experiment*. Kirsten walks downhill into the distance on a deserted San Francisco street,

past the bar flashing in Joe's window. Distant streetlights and headlights establish the depth below under a black sky. The downhill panorama, the stock beauty shot of San Francisco, yawns as the dark empty path of the barfly (Figure 3.8B).

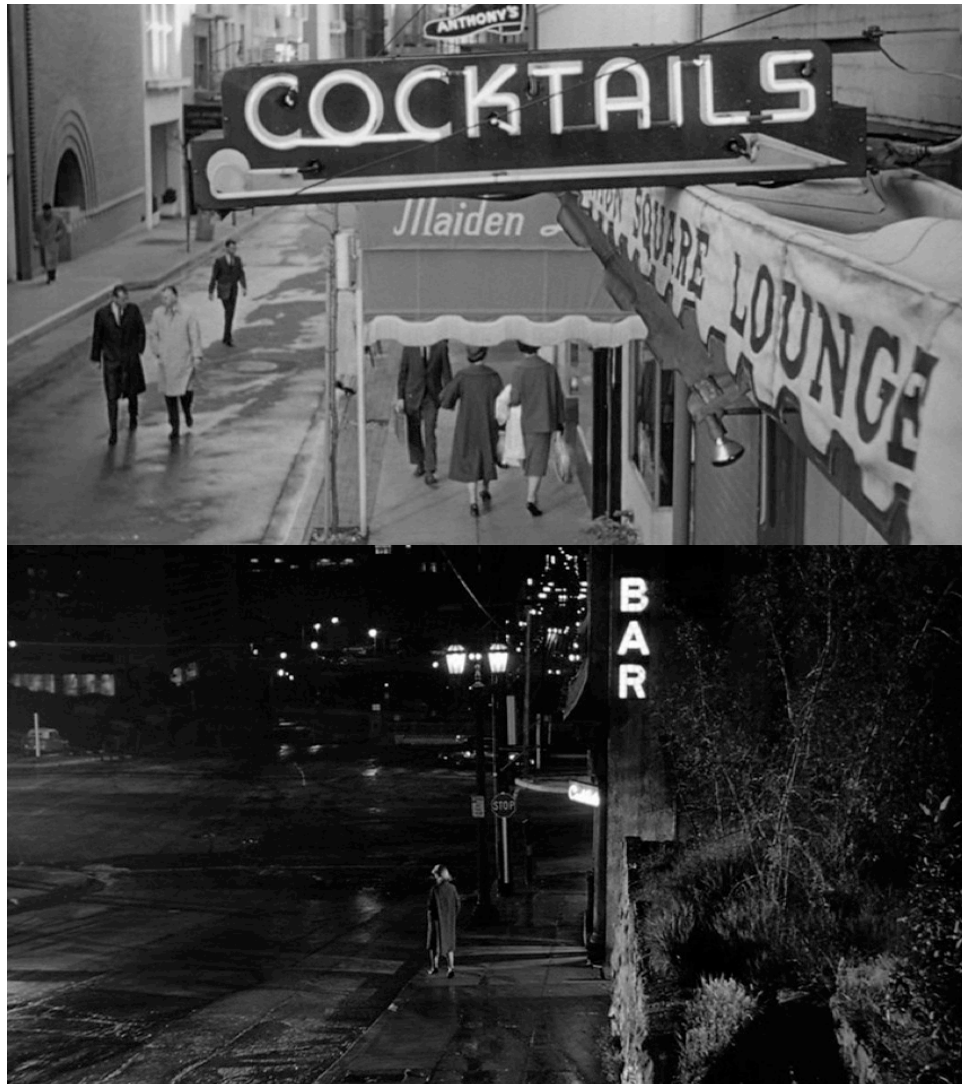


Fig. 3.8A & B. Alcoholic locations in *Days of Wine and Roses*. Top: Maiden Lane district; Bottom: Closing shot of the film.

Edwards' San Francisco films resonate with other critical, black-and-white films of their era, including their exploitation of adult content. The heavy-breathing killer in *Experiment* finds one victim undressing, while forcing Kelly's sister to slowly undress

for him and the audience. Edwards' clearly suggests profanity in his telephone calls, cutting to shots of Remick listening to eliminate the last word of lines like, "You're a lying little..." *Days* exploited not only the milkmaid outfits, but also the shocking depths of alcoholism. Lobby cards ignored the advice of *Variety's* reviewer, who cautioned against selling the picture on "superficial sordidness."¹⁹⁰ One ad featured a shirtless Lemmon strapped to a table during detox, with the tagline: "They will let him up soon and he will look for his wife and he may pray that he doesn't find her." Another featured no image, just white text on a black background with the quote: "It's your wife, Joe. In another motel. Come pick her up."¹⁹¹ Kirsten's infidelity was clearly implied in the film, when Jim warns Joe that she will find another playmate.

In both films, San Francisco appeared darker but still beautiful, particularly in the night for night location exteriors. Nor did Edwards avoid familiar landmarks, like Fisherman's Wharf. Familiar locations allowed the studio to still sell the familiar cinema-tourist publicity angle. Although *Days* shot less extensively in the city, the press book promoted the use of "some of the better-known San Francisco area sites." Notes for the trailer for *Experiment* list five strategies to sell the picture. These included "the locations involved," as well as exploitation elements such as "a beautiful girl in jeopardy" and "the shock scenes."¹⁹²

In the last sentence of *The Death and Life of American Cities*, Jane Jacobs writes, "lively, diverse, intense cities contain the seeds of their own regeneration."¹⁹³ Edwards' two 1962 films, particularly *Days*, suggests that paths to self-destruction are also central to vibrant cities like San Francisco. Like other "sick" urban films, such as *The Young Savages*, *The Hustler*, and *Butterfield 8*, *Days* explored troubled individuals disaffected by American culture and its institutions. While early 1960s urbanists like Jacobs and Gruen suggested that current American city was fading and structurally unsound, these

films offered personal stories of cultural decline in America's urban centers. The bleak *Days of Wine and Roses* did not suggest that San Francisco was declining as much as it revealed the city through the downcast eyes of outcasts struggling within American society.

Through 1968, San Francisco maintained its reputation as exceptionally immune to urban decay, but in just a few years the city would undergo its greatest image transformation. As the new American capital of the counterculture, San Francisco would cease to be an onscreen alternative to cities like Los Angeles, New York, and Los Angeles. No longer an urban or tourist backdrop, San Francisco would become the destination for films exploiting the youth revolution. Meanwhile, the critical, dramatic and aesthetic power of black-and-white filming would reach an abrupt end in Hollywood. After 1963, Hollywood would exclusively shoot San Francisco in color. As a wave of filmmakers descended on the city in the second half of the 1960s, filmmakers and city alike worked to extend and accommodate location filmmaking.

Notes:

¹ Robert Landry, "Sick Tales of a Healthy Land," *Variety* March 1, 1961, 1, 21.

² Whitney Williams, "Hollywood's Self-Diagnosis," *Variety*, April 3, 1963, 19, 20.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Robert Landry, "Film Myths not to Live By," *Variety*, January 4, 1961, 15.

⁶ Clipping, Dick Williams, "Parade of Downbeat Pictures Continues," *L.A. Times*, 28 January 1962, *Days of Wine and Roses* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.

⁷ "Lip Service Only to Young," newspaper clipping, *ibid.*

⁸ "Feds Veto Alcatraz Film," *Variety*, October 29, 1958, 3.

⁹ "'Lolita' as U.S. Choice for Venice Fest; It's a Switch from Previous 'Niceness,'" *Variety*, August 15, 1972, 4, 20.

¹⁰ "'Seven Arts Forecast Re 'Lolita,'" *Variety*, August 15, 1962, 4, 20.

¹¹ "Names that Rode High in 1958," *Variety*, January 7, 1959.

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- ¹² Thomas Doherty, *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration*, (New York: Columbia U. Press), 322-325.
- ¹³ Peter Lev, *The Fifties: Transforming the Screen, 1950-1959* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 2006), 93-94.
- ¹⁴ Robert Landry, "Film Myths Not to Live By," *Variety*, January 4, 1961, 15.
- ¹⁵ Paul Monaco, *The Sixties, 1960 – 1969* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 2001), 24.
- ¹⁶ "How Producers Minds Work Today: Inducements Go By Private Likes," *Variety*, June 10, 1959, 3, 28.
- ¹⁷ "At Home to 'New' Slants 'n' Ideas: Kramer Re UA," *Variety*, June 24, 1959, 12.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ "Major Film Companies: 1955-1960," *Variety*, May 18, 1960, 4.
- ²⁰ Monaco, 58.
- ²¹ "Metro's Six From Overseas: Hedge Coast Shutdown," *Variety*, March 9, 1960, 3.
- ²² Dora Albert, "Foreign Press in New Hard Look," February 21, 1962, 11.
- ²³ "Films of Mayhem from Many Lands Unreel at Cannes," *Variety*, May 8, 1963, 1, 172.
- ²⁴ Doherty, 327-330.
- ²⁵ R. Barton Palmer and William Bray, *Hollywood's Tennessee* (Austin: U. of Texas Press, 2009), 151-163.
- ²⁶ Robert Landry, "Film Myths Not to Live By," *Variety*, January 4, 1961, 15.
- ²⁷ Monaco, 58.
- ²⁸ MacEwan to Roy Obringer, 1 December 1961, *Days of Wine and Roses* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.
- ²⁹ Whitney Williams, "Hollywood's Self-Diagnosis," *Variety*, April 3, 1963, 19-20.
- ³⁰ "Studio Baklotters' Unemployment Down," *Variety*, July 31, 1957, 20.
- ³¹ "Studios Unload of Assets," *Variety*, June 3, 1959, 5, 13.
- ³² "Sold Its Acreage, Now 20th May Need Rental Space for Production," *Variety*, May 3, 1961, 2.
- ³³ "Studios Unload of Assets," *Variety*, June 3, 1959, 5
- ³⁴ "Layoffs Multiply: Warner's 'This May Be Permanent,'" *Variety*, March, 2, 1960, 3-22.
- ³⁵ "Studio's Bloodshot Dawn," *Variety*, March 9, 1960, 3, 26.
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ "Economy Axings Hit Paramount," *Variety*, May 18, 1960, 4.
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ "Many Omens Write a Warranty That 'Worst is Over' for Pictures," *Variety*, March 1, 1961, 1, 93.
- ⁴⁰ Gene Arneel, "Home is Where You Shoot: But O'Seas No Longer Cheap," *Variety*, June 15, 1960, 3, 16.
- ⁴¹ Jack Pitman, "New York Production: Helping & Hurting," *Variety*, January 11, 1961, 17.
- ⁴² "H'wood Job Mart Hit Hard By Over-the-Hill Pix, Video Hours," *Variety*, April 11, 1962, 3, 19.

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- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Robert Landry, "'Runaway': What They Say and Do," *Variety*, November 2, 1960, 4.
- ⁴⁵ "Fume again on 'Runaway' Films," *Variety*, June 1, 1960, 3, 6.
- ⁴⁶ "Cameramen Ask 'Dislocation' Benefits; New Moves Hit Runaway Trend," *Variety*, October 5, 1960, 17.
- ⁴⁷ Tom Pryor, "Competition & 'Runaway' as Twins in Hollywood, Once a 'Company Town,'" *Variety*, January 10, 1962, 5, 50.
- ⁴⁸ Matthew Bernstein, *Walter Wanger, Hollywood Independent* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1994), 352.
- ⁴⁹ "H'Wood—O'Seas Row Boils Up," *Variety*, August 24, 1960, 7, 20.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.
- ⁵¹ "Says Bill Wyler: 'Runaway as Term Makes Li'l Sense,'" *Variety*, December 14, 1960, 5.
- ⁵² "U.S. To Rein 'Runaway' Prod.?" *Variety*, September 13, 1961, 5.
- ⁵³ Gene Arneel, "Home is Where You Shoot: But O'Seas No Longer Cheap," *Variety*, June 15, 1960, 3, 16.
- ⁵⁴ Abel Green, "Talent Agencies Virtually Film Producers; Wm. Morris' Recent 35 Packages; Lastfogel Re 'Runaway,'" *Variety*, November 14, 1962, 3, 11.
- ⁵⁵ Thomas Pryor, "Competition & 'Runaway' as Twins in Hollywood, Once a 'Company Town,'" *Variety*, January 10, 1962, 5, 50.
- ⁵⁶ Monaco, 13-14.
- ⁵⁷ "Coast Kids Self; European Film Production Is Still Third Cheaper; Preminger Raps U.S. 'Standbys,'" *Variety*, January 30, 1963, 5, 24.
- ⁵⁸ Jack Pitman, "New York Production: Helping & Hurting," *Variety*, November 11, 1961, 17.
- ⁵⁹ "America's Film Industry Too Big for H'wood Alone: Charles Schneer," *Variety*, November 22, 1961, 5, 21.
- ⁶⁰ William Ornstein, "Hollywood Versus Other Places," *Variety*, January 10, 1962, 7.
- ⁶¹ William Ornstein, "Fox Filming in Many Lands," *Variety*, June 7, 1961, 5, 20.
- ⁶² "Proposes MGM Adopt Decision To Stay in U.S.," *Variety*, February 27, 1963, 13.
- ⁶³ "Screen Actors Guild Favors Kennedy's Plan to End Star O'Seas Tax Shelter," *Variety*, June 7, 1961, 16.
- ⁶⁴ "U.S. To Rein 'Runaway' Prod.?" *Variety*, September 13, 1961, 5.
- ⁶⁵ "Dent Subcommittee Gone, Unmourned," *Variety*, April 18, 1962, 7.
- ⁶⁶ "Screen Actors Asking No Pay Hike; Realism in Light of 'Runaway,'" *Variety*, November 14, 1962, 1, 18.
- ⁶⁷ "IATSE Dickering While Crafts Fret as Features Shy From Hollywood," *Variety*, October 19, 1960, 13.
- ⁶⁸ Kiss Ones that Don't Goodbye," *Variety*, November 23, 1960, 7.
- ⁶⁹ Thomas Pryor, "Action on 'Runaway' at Last," *Variety*, May 16, 1962; Thomas Pryor, "Competition & 'Runaway,'" *Variety*, January 10, 1962, 5, 50.
- ⁷⁰ Thomas Pryor, "Competition & 'Runaway,'" *Variety*, January 10, 1962, 5, 50.

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- ⁷¹ Thomas Pryor, "Action on Runaway"; *Variety* further towed the industry line by always placing "runaway" in quotations, leaving a trace of doubt on union accusations.
- ⁷² "Runaway Prod. Trend Quickens 25 Out of 36 Pix," *Variety*, August 15, 1962, 2, 52.
- ⁷³ Mike Fessier, "Runaways, Please Come Home," *Variety*, May 1, 1963, 5, 82.
- ⁷⁴ "Proposes MGM Adopt Decision To Stay in U.S.," *Variety*, February 27, 1963, 13; "Crafts Hear Zanuck Assurances of 20th Resumption in Hollywood: Costs No Longer Favor Overseas," *Variety*, January 30, 1963, 5.
- ⁷⁵ Mike Fessier, "Runaways, Please Come Home," *Variety*, May 1, 1963, 5, 82.
- ⁷⁶ Grievance and arbitration decisions, Charles Greenlaw to Arthur Schaefer, 11 July 1963, fol. 1031A, Arbitrations regulation, Warners Archive, USC.
- ⁷⁷ William Ornstein, "Hollywood Versus Other Places," *Variety*, January 10, 1962, 7.
- ⁷⁸ "5-Day Week Contributed to 'Runaway'—Skouras," *Variety*, December 13, 1961, 1; Gene Arneel, "Don't Film to Please Unions," *Variety*, October 17, 1962, 1, 13.
- ⁷⁹ "Howard Koch Says Runaway Prod. is Here to Stay, 'H'wood is Dead," *Variety*, December 26, 1962, 2, 47.
- ⁸⁰ "Hollywood's Everywhere But in Calif.," *Variety*, August 15, 1962, 4.
- ⁸¹ Jack Pitman, "New York Production: Helping & Hurting," *Variety*, November 11, 1961, 17.
- ⁸² *Ibid.*
- ⁸³ "Make-Way-For-Tomorrow Thought 'Guides' Foreman in New 'Young' Emphasis," *Variety*, July 15, 1959, 30.
- ⁸⁴ Mervyn LeRoy, "Make Way for Youth," *AC*, Feb. 1963, 92,112.
- ⁸⁵ Abel Green, "Goldenson: 'Back to Sanity,'" *Variety*, February 27, 1963, 3, 18.
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- ¹²³ Arthur Gavin, "Filming 'The F.B.I. Story,'" *AC* (May 1959): 286-287, 305-307.
- ¹²⁴ Arthur Gavin, "'The Defiant Ones'—Ultimate in Mood Photography," *AC* (August 1958): 484-485, 500, 502.
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- ¹²⁷ Joseph Brun, "Odds Against Tomorrow," *AC* (August 1959): 487-488, 510.
- ¹²⁸ Gavin, "Experiment in Terror," 288-289, 318, 320-321.
- ¹²⁹ Sam Leavitt, "Filming 'Anatomy of a Murder' in the Story's Actual Locale," *AC* (July 1959): 416-417, 443;
- ¹³⁰ "Detroit Preems 'Anatomy'; Preminger Edited Film on Location as Shot," *Variety*; May 13, 1959, 15; Robert Landry, "Bureau of Missing Business," *Variety*, June 10, 1959, 7.
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- ¹³⁴ Denise Mann places *Sweet Smell of Success* on the margins of Hollywood production, a threat to mainstream features and a predecessor to the Hollywood Renaissance of the late 1960s. However placed within the context of subsequent films of the late 1950s and early 1960s, this 1957 film appears as an early example of a wave of dark, independently produced films that kept theaters running between mainstream blockbusters. Denise Mann, *Hollywood Independents: The Postwar Talent Takeover* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 243-239; 249.
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- ¹⁴³ Art Woodstone, "NBC Do-Good Image Gets Major Billing at Web-Affiliate Powwow: Durgin's Derring-Do a Big Click," *Variety*, November 8, 1959, 28.
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- ¹⁴⁵ Bill Greeley, "Only 9 Client-Agency Cotnrolled Shows Set for Network Airing—On Other Madison Ave. Fronts," *Variety*, June 15, 1960, 30; "Bristol-Myers to Drop 'Peter Gunn,'" *Variety*, March 22, 1961, 26.
- ¹⁴⁶ Peter Gunn Ad, *Variety*, July 19, 1961, 39; "O.F.'s Sale-a-Day on 'Peter Gunn,'" *Variety*, August 16, 1961, 30.

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- ¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴⁹ William Whyte, “Introduction,” in eds. of Fortune, *The Exploding Metropolis* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958), 8; Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1961), 486.
- ¹⁵⁰ Bob Chandler, “Ascendancy of Writer-Producer in Telefilm Arena; 17 Such Entries Helming Major Network Shows,” *Variety*, August 12, 1959, 31.
- ¹⁵¹ Art Woodstone, “Wanted: Production Execs,” August 12, 1959, 31; “Another Producer in 20th-to-WB Shuffle,” *Variety*, November 1, 1961, 4.
- ¹⁵² At the time, the lesser known partners in this new venture, Project 111, were Freddie Fields and David Begelman. After founding CMA in 1960, they rose to become mega-agents in 1960s and 1970s Hollywood. Begelman would become production head of Columbia in 1973. Fields represented directors such as Francis Ford Coppola, Steven Spielberg, and George Lucas. See Richard Natale, “Fields Fielded Top Client List,” *Daily Variety*, December 13, 2007, 1, 20.
- ¹⁵³ He would eventually make the feature version, *Gunn*, in 1967.
- ¹⁵⁴ “Edwards-Fields-Begelman Move on Many Fronts as Project III Rolls,” *Variety*, July 19, 1961, 24.
- ¹⁵⁵ “Keeping Clear of Bankers’: Goal for A&P Bunch,” *Variety*, October 25, 1961, 3.
- ¹⁵⁶ Gavin, “Experiment in Terror,” 288-289, 318, 320-321.
- ¹⁵⁷ As a point of reference, this was the same meager illumination used for Columbia’s late 40s B-films. The resulting image quality was inferior, and required the latensification process to boost a viable exposure.
- ¹⁵⁸ Gavin, “Experiment in Terror,” 288-289, 318, 320-321.
- ¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶² “Film Reviews: Experiment in Terror,” *Variety*, March 21, 1962, 6.
- ¹⁶³ Lathrop likely used a motorized zoom lens, which appeared in late 1960 as a alternative to the cumbersome, hand-cranked zoom lens. See John Forbes, “Product Report: Motor-driven Zoom Lens,” *AC* (December 1960): 746.
- ¹⁶⁴ Gavin, “Experiment in Terror,” 288-289, 318, 320-321.
- ¹⁶⁵ Metty shot *Touch of Evil* (1958), and *Experiment in Terror* employs a similar “kitchen sink” approach to film noir cinematography. Both films rely on extremely high contrast lighting, night for night photography, jarring camera angles, and eccentric camerawork.
- ¹⁶⁶ Gavin, “Experiment in Terror,” 288-289, 318, 320-321.
- ¹⁶⁷ “Showman’s Reviews,” *Motion Picture Herald*, March 28, 1962, 491.
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- ¹⁶⁹ Final script, 10 January 1962, *Days of Wine and Roses* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.

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- ¹⁷⁰ Jack McEdward to Martin Manulis, San Francisco location survey, 8 January 1962, Production Correspondence, *ibid.*
- ¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷² Budget, 8 February 1962, Budgets, *Days of Wine and Roses* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.
- ¹⁷³ Bob Holden to Jack McEdward, 16 January 1962, Correspondence, *ibid.*; Lawrence Schiller to Mort Lichter, 11 February 1962, *ibid.*
- ¹⁷⁴ Jack McEdward and Chief Cahill Correspondence, 9 January and 11 January 1962, *ibid.*; Jack McEdward to Martin Manulis, 8 January 1962, *ibid.*
- ¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*; Schiller to Lichter, 18 February 1962, Correspondence, *ibid.*
- ¹⁷⁶ R.A. Pease to Charles Greenlaw, 11 January 1962, Production Correspondence, *ibid.*; Rear Adm. Allen Winbeck to Warner Bros, 7 March 1962, *ibid.*; Gordon Bau to Charles Greenlaw, 17 January 1962, *ibid.*; Budget, 8 February 1962, *ibid.*
- ¹⁷⁷ Daily production reports, 9 February- 29 May 1962, Production Reports, *ibid.*
- ¹⁷⁸ "Film Review: Days of Wine and Roses", *Variety*, December 5, 1962, 11.
- ¹⁷⁹ "Top Rental Films of 1963," *Variety*, January 8, 1964, 37, 71; Warners, *Days of Wine and Roses* production budget
- ¹⁸⁰ Victor Gruen, *The Heart of Our Cities*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1964), 175.
- ¹⁸¹ Kevin Lynch, *Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1964), 10.
- ¹⁸² *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸³ Edward Dimendberg, *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 148-149.
- ¹⁸⁴ William Luhr and Peter Lehman describe the omnipresence of police surveillance, but argue that Red Lynch's invasion of Kelly's space questions the power of police surveillance. Yet the distinction between public and private space is vital to the plot. Lynch must regularly disguise his public appearance to avoid detection from the near omniscient FBI. Eventually, Lynch has to enter a public space, and even among a crowd of baseball fans, he is spotted and eliminated by the FBI, who seamlessly police public space. See William Luhr and Peter Lehman, "Experiment in Terror: Dystopian Modernism, the Police Procedural, and the Space of Anxiety," in Murray Pomerance, ed. *Cinema and Modernity* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers Press, 2006), 180-187.
- ¹⁸⁵ Luhr and Lehman note the similarity between the ending of *Experiment in Terror* and Harry's (Clint Eastwood) encounter with Scorpio (Andy Robinson) in *Dirty Harry* (1971). As I discuss in Chapter 5, the similar scenes which both include ascending helicopter shots, also have key differences offering disparate visions of San Francisco. See Luhr and Lehman, "Experiment in Terror," 188.
- ¹⁸⁶ Luhr and Lehman, 185-187.
- ¹⁸⁷ Frankenheimer and Edwards recall this in later interviews and commentaries for each version of *Days of Wine and Roses*. See John Frankenheimer Interview, *The Golden Age of Television* (New York: Criterion, 2009), DVD; Blake Edwards Commentary, *Days of Wine and Roses* (Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2010), DVD.

¹⁸⁸ Pamela Wojick. *The Apartment Plot: Urban Living in American Film and Popular Culture, 1945 to 1975* (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2010), 39.

¹⁸⁹ Jane Jacobs, "Downtown is for People," in eds. of Fortune, *The Exploding Metropolis* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958), 161-162.

¹⁹⁰ "Film Review: Days of Wine and Roses", *Variety*, December 5, 1962, 11.

¹⁹¹ Days of Wine and Roses Ads, *Variety*, January 9, 1963, 34-35.

¹⁹² *Experiment in Terror* trailer script, 7 February 1962, fol. 135, Jack Atlas papers, Herrick Library.

¹⁹³ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), 585.

Chapter 4: Countercultural Capital: Hollywood Chasing the San Francisco Scene

Hollywood followed a wave of media attention focused on San Francisco as it emerged as an international mecca for a young counterculture by 1967. Industry discourse on the city grew hyperbolic, suggesting not only that San Francisco was as a profitable setting for youth exploitation films but also that its mere inclusion in any film promised box office success. San Francisco's appearance in several of the biggest hits of the late 1960s pushed *Variety* to attribute a near mystical appeal to films set in the city. The exceptional hit of 1968, *The Graduate*, shot a handful of scenes in San Francisco and Berkeley, as did the number four hit, *Valley of the Dolls* (1968). *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, the number two box-office earner, benefited from a San Francisco setting despite a minimum of location shooting in the city. Two of the top three hits of 1969, *The Love Bug* and *Bullitt*, released in 1968, had a San Francisco setting.¹ In just a few years, San Francisco went from being an occasional location for Hollywood films to a potential threat to Los Angeles production as the city continued to pull filmmakers northward. 1968 marked a crucial transition for San Francisco as new mayor Joseph Alioto began an ambitious attempt to transform the city from a desirable location into a full-fledged production center for feature and television filmmaking.

In 1964, Art Seidenbaum of the *Los Angeles Times* welcomed news of the launch of a film production company in San Francisco. He surmised it was the most ambitious San Francisco production plan since 1908, when Bronco Billy Anderson began producing hundreds of Westerns in the Bay Area. San Francisco offered an appealing city for artists, technicians, and East Coast executives on business trips, but not a viable threat to

Hollywood. Seidenbaum concluded, “Better to have a few people visiting in San Francisco than watch them dodging taxes around the world.”²

Less than three years later, the *Los Angeles Times* began to worry. While European production had sagged, “several film creators were unobtrusively slipping out the back door of Hollywood on their way north to that other increasingly active rival foreign film capital—San Francisco.”³ In April of 1967, at least eight major pictures were shooting in San Francisco, “the latest answer to Cinecitta.” Adding insult to injury was the extent of the location work in San Francisco. For instance *Point Blank* (1967) ignored Hollywood’s long established precedent of recreating Alcatraz on the studio lot. Meanwhile, filmmakers shot San Francisco’s skid row rather than Los Angeles’ oft-photographed downtrodden districts.⁴ By late 1968, San Francisco crawled with cameras shooting feature films, underground films, television episodes, concert films, and news specials. Producer Aaron Beckwith, filming ABC news special on the Generation Gap, gave a simple explanation: “It’s where everything is happening.”⁵

Variety ran a major article on San Francisco’s media boom in late 1968 titled, “California’s Camelot.”⁶ Their San Francisco correspondent, Rick Setlowe, streamed through famed Bay Area products, placing Hollywood films such as *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner*, *The Graduate* (1967), and *Petulia* (1968) among musicians like the Jefferson Airplane and the Grateful Dead, television figures like The Smothers Brothers, political movements like Berkeley Free Speech and the Black Panthers, and even troop deployments to Vietnam from San Francisco. Hollywood’s commercial incentive to join the youth movement was transparent: “In their wake trekked the camp followers—television and filmmakers—to drop in, turn on and cash in on the Frisco Mystique. A street sign at the corner of Haight and Ashbury Streets became the most photographed inanimate object in the world.”⁷ As early as April of 1967, San Francisco had gained the

nickname “Psychedelphia” for its combination of rock shows, underground films, light shows, and often nude dancing. Advertisers adopted psychedelic styles and San Francisco hippie stories multiplied in major magazines and television news stories while police and city leaders braced for the inevitable onslaught of young émigrés and tourists into San Francisco.⁸ The consequent Summer of Love was as much a media phenomenon as a cultural phenomenon, and Hollywood tried to catch the hippie wave on film.

San Francisco became the filmic focal point for the social revolution of the youthful counterculture, while across the bay, Berkeley symbolized the political revolution among college students. Meanwhile, a handful of Hollywood films set in San Francisco from 1967-1968 would highlight a generational conflict in production methods. Both Otto Preminger’s *Skidoo* (1968) and Richard Lester’s *Petulia* featured the hippie scene and stylistic experimentation. The clearest difference was in shooting approach, keenly observed by *Variety*’s Setlowe:

The older tradesmen from Sam Katzman to Otto Preminger, traveling in long trains of moving vans like a gypsy exodus and loaded down with heavyweight brutes and Mitchells, shot and cut back to the Hollywood studio setups. A New Breed of filmmakers, including such disparate talents as Richard Lester and Woody Allen, utilized television techniques and its lightweight, mobile technology, shot entire features on location while still using the Hollywood labs, and money, less than an hour’s shuttle away by jet.⁹

Preminger had been a pioneer in adapting studio techniques to actual locations in films such as *Anatomy of a Murder* and *Advise and Consent*. 1960s British filmmakers pioneered a different solution, adopting a quick, less continuous style of shooting and editing to meet the temporal and spatial demands of location shooting. Instead of carefully preplanning each shot to streamline shooting and editing, these filmmakers often improvised on location, grabbing a variety of footage with multiple cameras before sorting out a rough continuity during post-production. John Boorman (*Point Blank*), Richard Lester (*Petulia*), and Peter Yates (*Bullitt*) would all leave London to shoot

Hollywood-produced films in San Francisco. Financially and stylistically, *Petulia* blurred the lines between European and Hollywood production. *Bullitt* successfully harnessed similar production techniques to Hollywood genre filmmaking. The highly successful film would fundamentally change Hollywood's location aesthetics, not only in San Francisco but also in every American city.

This chapter begins by analyzing the continued decline of feature filmmaking in Los Angeles and major improvements in location shooting technology that promoted extensive location shooting in American cities. Shooting within months of each other, *Petulia* and *Bullitt* became the first two films shot entirely on location in San Francisco. Next I provide an overview of the myriad film and television productions featuring San Francisco in the late 1960s, most of which made only cursory use of the city as a location and a dramatic setting. Case studies of *Petulia* and *Bullitt* suggest two different location production practices that allowed filmmakers to shoot exclusively in San Francisco, only returning to the studio lot for post-production. Despite a shared goal of capturing San Francisco's unique late 1960s culture, the films reveal two remarkably different cities, revealing how location filmmaking transformed rather than reflected San Francisco. Despite offering urban critiques, these energetic films matched the national excitement over the city; however *Bullitt's* successful deployment of a new style of semi-documentary police film had a profound impact not only on San Francisco's location shooting boom but also on its declining screen image in the early 1970s.

REBUILD THE LOT OR RUN AWAY?

Hollywood's dilemma over whether their studio lots would be albatrosses or rental profit centers continued throughout the 1960s, with no prevailing consensus. The mid-1960s marked the first major building campaign in decades, as Universal

Studios expanded just north of Hollywood in the San Fernando Valley. By 1968, cries against runaway production grew as loud as in the early 1960s. In any given year, a backlot might be brimming with television and feature production or practically shuttered. Caught between the unpredictable economies of real estate, television, and global filmmaking, workers and moguls alike struggled to adapt.

Cities like New York, Miami, and by 1968, San Francisco, capitalized on Hollywood's uncertainty, pitching lower shooting costs to lure productions away from Los Angeles. Domestic competition for production, largely ignored by labor leaders fighting foreign runaways in the early 1960s, emerged as a legitimate threat by the end of the 1960s. The prevalence of location shooting further depressed Hollywood's labor market, requiring far fewer crewmembers than a picture requiring major set construction. As workers eagerly campaigned for expensive, labor-intensive features like *Camelot* (1967) to return to Hollywood, breakout hits shot in domestic locations like *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) and *Bullitt* provided greater returns on investment.

MGM exemplified Hollywood's struggle to monetize the studio lot. In 1968, a new management team dithered on whether to sell, cut, or rent. Selling the entire studio would offer large acreage in booming Los Angeles for a real estate developer and fetch a hefty profit for the studio (valued at \$27 million in 1965).¹⁰ MGM could also rid itself of a backlot whose aging, poorly maintained streets had visible signs of urban decay.¹¹ On the other hand, a massive backlot full of television series rentals potentially offered regular income rather than a one-time profit. The previous management optioned a site for an all-new studio on the periphery of Los Angeles, the Conejo Valley, hoping to profit from the real estate value of Culver City while building modern facilities on cheaper land.¹² Selling some of the lot and renting the rest was another possible solution. Before any substantial action could be taken, Edgar Bronfman, Sr., who owned the studio

for only two years, sold it in 1969 to Kirk Kerkorian, a successful Las Vegas property developer.¹³ MGM's real estate value proved easier to assess than its production value or strategy.

Earlier in the decade, MCA-Revue-Universal, the studio with the closest integration of film and television production, "paved the way for the potential of new and improved facilities."¹⁴ The studio launched a multi-million-dollar makeover in 1963, beginning with the construction of the MCA office tower and several service buildings. After leveling acres of hills, the next phase would add stages, parking, and "Visitors Village," the starting point for a major innovation, the modern studio tour, a source of significant ancillary profits to this day.¹⁵ Set building at the revamped studio was just as ambitious, including an \$80,000 set for the Rock Hudson-Doris Day film, *Send Me No Flowers* (1964). Yet as director Norman Jewison suggested, such expenditure would be cheaper than location shooting during winter weather.¹⁶ Meanwhile, Revue could regularly fill the expanding, state-of-the-art stages with either in-house or rental television productions.

Buoyed by Universal's success, Darryl Zanuck pushed the idea of a super-studio, an updated version of his plan for Fox and Warners to share a single lot in the 1950s.¹⁷ Fox, MGM, and Columbia co-purchased a 75-acre site in Malibu for \$800,000 in 1963, hoping to build a studio panacea. They would leave behind wasted real estate values in Hollywood, high taxes, empty stages, and obsolete facilities. Malibu also offered dramatic terrain for backlot shooting, less traffic, and less smog, which had already begun to degrade outdoor photography in Los Angeles. Building anew, the majors could add the soundproofing and light-moving features of more recently built studios in Europe. With ample, inexpensive land, standing sets could remain standing for future exploitation. For instance, all the expensive sets built abroad for *Cleopatra* (1962) were destroyed after

production, while Hollywood studios could not afford to save idle sets for future use on such expensive acreage.¹⁸

Perhaps most importantly, a super-studio could regularize employment for studio craftsmen. With major studio production concentrated on a single lot, workers could once again report daily to the studio to work on any given production, as they had in the pre-World War II studio system. Unmentioned were the duplicated studio jobs to be lost under such an efficient consolidation.¹⁹ The facility ambitiously promised to “dramatize anew the revitalization of Hollywood as a production centre,” albeit by moving the “centre” north of Los Angeles.²⁰ Rather than relying on the inconsistent cost savings of runaway production, modern facilities might restore the cost-efficiency of the classical studio system.

Instead, by the end of 1965, the super-studio plan was dead, although Hollywood awaited MGM’s proposed new complex in the Conejo Valley. The steady demand for stages by television production, halted a major studio land sell-off. By August of 1965, several studios operated near capacity with television production.²¹ Studios hiked rental rates while television work grew so abundant that by 1966 several unions anticipated a future labor shortage.²² Fluctuations in the television market defeated long-term plans to revamp studio production, allowing runaway feature filmmaking to continue unchecked.

Runaway feature production peaked in 1961 and again in 1965, a decade after shooting abroad offered no below-the-line savings.²³ Even between these years, upwards of 40% of major productions shot abroad.²⁴ Rising production costs in Europe and fewer tax advantages stoked the eternal hope for pictures to return to Hollywood.²⁵ The challenge of meeting release deadlines for massive productions shooting abroad, such as *Doctor Zhivago* (1965) and *The Dirty Dozen* (1967), pushed some pictures back to Hollywood, particularly for post-production and sound looping.²⁶ After six weeks

shooting in Spain, *Camelot* returned to the Warner Bros. lot, where forty-five sets sprawled across twenty-three sound stages, the most ever used for a single production; four cargo planes hauled 22,000 pounds of equipment back to Burbank.²⁷ This left little room for *Bonnie and Clyde*, which Jack Warner reluctantly allowed to shoot on location in Dallas; the latter strategy, domestic location shooting, soon reached its heyday as expensive set-bound features like *Camelot* buckled under their own weight.²⁸

Despite the incipient problem of domestic runaway production, the unions remained intently focused on foreign production. Unions gained Congressional attention again in 1966, as Democratic Representative John Dent tried to revive his failed legislative effort of the early 1960s.²⁹ By late 1967, the runaway battle reached an unprecedented fever pitch, as a group comprised of every Hollywood guild and union, representing some thirty thousand workers, rallied California's two Republican Senators to action.³⁰ The winter of 1968 proved particularly harsh on Hollywood craftsmen; as production began an annual slowdown to mitigate Los Angeles taxes on film inventories, 31% of Hollywood craft workers were idle. Unemployment for grips and electricians, workers solely employed during active production, was 75%.³¹ By May, two months after the inventory tax, unemployment remained high, but "no one in management, labor or government had come up with a solution to the problem or even a proposal."³²

Hollywood workers had struggled in vain against runaway production for well over a decade, suggesting that this trend was more than an economic loophole to be closed. The system of studio filmmaking had fundamentally shifted from mass production, empowering the individual producer to choose the most opportune economic situation for shooting anywhere around the globe. *Variety* asked the question labor leaders could not acknowledge: "Is the Hollywood job market overpopulated."³³ Not only were fewer films being produced in Hollywood, but extensive location shooting required

fewer production workers. Filming a feature documentary in 1964, portable equipment enabled William Brusseau to shoot half of his footage with a three-man crew: a director, a cameraman, and a sound engineer. By contrast, typically filmed sequences required a 25-30 man union crew.³⁴ While films like *Bullitt* used union crews, shooting semi-documentary style, on location with available light, provided far fewer jobs than set-bound productions like *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*. Producer Jerry Fairbanks, who relocated a production from Spain to Hollywood due to union cooperation on crew size, argued: "We are paying more to fewer people but turning out more and better work in a shorter time."³⁵

That same summer, of forty-five movies in production, twenty-seven shot in Europe, twelve in Hollywood, and six in other parts of the United States.³⁶ While the latter six seemed a minor threat compared to Europe, domestic runaways would soon prove nearly as challenging as overseas production. The glut of television production, including commercials, opened opportunities for cities other than Los Angeles to build production economies. And as location production techniques and technologies continued to improve, Los Angeles increasingly had to compete with other American cities not only as a production center, but also as a desirable location.

Miami became one of the first cities outside of New York and Los Angeles to build professional production facilities for film and television. In 1966, Studio City, a \$5 million full-service studio complex, opened in Miami. The 65-acre site would be home to three New York production companies, a New York equipment rental house, and a color film lab. By early 1966, Miami boasted twenty-seven producers, who worked on a variety of productions including the television series, *Flipper* (1964-1967), location work for two Bond films, *Goldfinger* (1964) and *Thunderball* (1965), television commercials, and Spanish language production and dubbing.³⁷ Over a year later, Studio City remained

largely unused, except for television commercials. Yet the revived sales pitch, offering 20-25% production savings over New York and Hollywood, resonated with the global economics of runaway production. For the producer who preferred staying in the U.S, the cost of shooting in Miami fell somewhere between cheap international locations like Mexico and major American production centers like New York and Los Angeles.³⁸

New York, with its established production facilities, union workforce, and regular appearance as a film location proved a greater threat than Miami, particularly after recently-elected Mayor John Lindsay formed the Office of Film Theater, and Broadcasting in 1966. By streamlining the bureaucracy and cost gauging that had plagued location-filmmakers in the 1950s, Lindsay sought to lure Hollywood filmmaking back to the city.³⁹ The Hollywood AFL bristled when Lindsay sent representatives to meet with producers in Los Angeles, demanding action from Los Angeles Mayor Sam Yorty and accusing Lindsay of starting a war between cities.⁴⁰ The union accused Lindsay of underbidding producers with local union contracts; Lindsay claimed he only approached producers who were planning location shooting in New York. Deftly deflecting the issue to the union's primary target, foreign production, Lindsay argued that there were enough productions shooting abroad to keep production workers busy in every American city. Lindsay wanted production companies to stay beyond the location trip and complete principal photography in New York. This idea of turning a desirable urban location setting into a full-phase production center through incentives to Hollywood companies would appear in other cities, particularly San Francisco.⁴¹

San Francisco joined the fray in 1968, reacting to the explosion of film production in the city. Like New York, it also had a production base to build upon. San Francisco's beautiful urban settings and varied landscapes had made the city a regular location for television commercials, with its ringing cable cars a fixture of Rice-A-Roni

ads. Meanwhile, the greater Bay Area could stand in for locations much further from Hollywood than San Francisco. In *The Russians Are Coming* (1966), Mendocino stood in for Cape Cod, while Stockton became the Deep South for *Cool Hand Luke* (1967). But San Francisco's cultural revolution drove the production boom, with 13 features shooting partially in the city between 1967 and 1968. *Variety* even suggested that being "both physically and philosophically set in large part in the culturally churning Bay Area," explained the incredible box-office numbers for *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* and *The Graduate*, despite the fact that neither film shot extensively on location.⁴² Elected in 1968, Mayor Alioto, a former attorney for Sam Goldwyn in a suit against Fox, was eager to maintain Hollywood's appetite for the San Francisco zeitgeist. He moved quickly to sustain the film boom, contacting *Bullitt* producer Phil D'Antoni even before he took office. Soon Woody Allen was in town shooting *Take the Money and Run* (1969), and his producer, Sam Joffe, dubbed Alioto the "West Coast Lindsay."⁴³

While Alioto made every effort to lure filmmakers to San Francisco, the wave of production in San Francisco preceded his election. The pace of production in the city accelerated not only due to its cultural cache but also the increasing efficiency of location shooting. Prior to the late 1960s, location technology was still primarily designed for sound stage filmmaking and adapted to location demands. By 1968, technologies designed for shooting on location and favored by documentaries, television commercials, and European art films gained acceptance in feature filmmaking. Tools and techniques adapted from these lower-budget productions proved crucial for major studio features like *Petulia* and *Bullitt* shot entirely in San Francisco.

TECHNOLOGY DESIGNED FOR LOCATION SHOOTING

In April 1965, *American Cinematographer* asked, “Is Film Technology Losing Ground?”⁴⁴ While industries like aerospace and electronics surged ahead with new technology, motion picture and television production still relied on cameras designed, and in some cases manufactured, in the 1930s. Professional cameras lacked tools, such as automatic exposure and motorized zooms, common to consumer 8mm cameras. The author lamented the industry’s lack of attention to research and development. Yet after over a decade of shedding overhead, innovations increasingly came from outside manufacturers, not studio camera departments.⁴⁵ Almost all of these innovations made location shooting more competitive fiscally and stylistically with sound stage production.

Ideas for the future of motion picture technology mirrored speculation over modern super-studios versus location shooting. Some proposals sought to reestablish an efficient, controlled studio environment through electronics. These ideas included a camera that could generate superimposed backgrounds on live television, or a system of remote control cameras monitored from a central console on the stage or backlot.⁴⁶ Others saw the future of production in further advances in portability and mobility. Don Norwood’s “camera of the future” would be small and quiet enough to operate surreptitiously for “natural street scenes, mob scenes, riot scenes, actual battle scenes.”⁴⁷ Large camera rigs were “dinosaurs,” incapable of entering the real drama playing out on the streets and war zones of the late 1960s. By 1967, the latter future was present reality. As various cinematographers discussed the present and future state of Hollywood moviemaking, George Folsey acknowledged that the quartz-iodine light, the hand-held camera, and the zoom lens were the most important production innovations of the past decade.⁴⁸ All of these technologies emerged to improve location production for documentary, industrial, and television filmmakers. By the late 1960s, Hollywood had adapted these tools to a new style of feature filmmaking, not only evident in off-kilter,

youth oriented hits like *The Graduate* and *Bonnie and Clyde*, but in major, mainstream Hollywood features like *In the Heat of the Night* (1967) and *Bullitt*.

The quartz-iodine or halogen light, popularized by the Sun-Gun in the early 1960s, increasingly became a staple item for Hollywood cinematographers shooting on location, particularly in actual interiors. In fact even at lower intensities, these small portable lights offered a far different lighting scheme than conventional three-point lighting. Rather than relying on a powerful key and fill, cinematographers could use several to dozens of small quartz-iodine units to precisely light a scene. Arthur Miller A.S.C. compared it to having a fine brush as a painter.⁴⁹ These lights not only offered artistic advantages but logistical and economic ones, “mobility with less manpower.”⁵⁰ They lasted three times longer than conventional bulbs without fading (and thus disrupting color temperature), and higher wattages from 2,000 to 10,000 watts appeared possible in the near future.⁵¹

Quartz-iodine lights solved myriad location problems. On a low-budget color-picture like *A Swinging Summer* (1965), they allowed faster setups to meet the ten-day shooting schedule.⁵² On the *Night They Raided Minsky's* (1968), cinematographer Andrew Laszlo needed fill light for a block-long shot of New York City. He attached seven Lowell lights, quartz-iodine lamps with flexible mounts, directly to the camera.⁵³ On location, speedy, mobile and unobtrusive lighting setups opened new spaces to filmmaking, particularly where property owners could afford to rebuff filmmakers.

Introduced in 1963, the Angénieux 10:1 zoom lens became a fundamental component of the handheld cameras favored by European New Wave filmmakers in Britain and France, as well as cinema verité documentarians in America.⁵⁴ This not only created a key stylistic referent for Hollywood filmmakers, but also solved similar problems encountered on location. Haskell Wexler put a zoom lens on one of several

hidden cameras deployed for the Boston bank robbery exteriors in *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968). While the cameraman stood in a doorway across the street, by zooming in on the robbers exiting the building, he captured a sense of being on the street without alerting the crowd to the crew or the actors.⁵⁵

The hand-held camera was nothing new to Hollywood; nor had portable camera technology undergone significant changes since the early 1960s. What clearly changed was the association between hand-held camera work and the exciting stylistic changes in new wave and cinema vérité documentary. In fact for observers and advertisers, these two styles often collapsed into one. In 1965, an equipment rental firm asked “Shooting Documentary Style? Behrend’s has all the New Wave Equipment you need!”⁵⁶ By 1968, Arriflex trumpeted its role in this style as it increasingly appeared in American feature filmmaking. The ad proclaimed, “‘New wave’; ‘cinema vérité’; call it what you will. Today’s young film craftsmen are pursuing new patterns in cinematography with a vigor that amounts to a crusade.” The hand-held Arriflex helped encapsulate this cinematic revolution on 20th Century Fox’s *The Incident* (1967)⁵⁷ While camera manufacturers like Arri and Éclair benefited from their association with the newest trends in filmmaking, cinematographers also struggled to place the new style of films like *The Graduate*: “Surtees calls it ‘ultra-modern’—but it is something more than that. It has touches of ‘Mod’ and a faint aura of avant-garde, overtones of the ‘Underground’ and flashes of Cinema Verité.”⁵⁸

The growing acceptance of hand-held camerawork was also a practical trade-off, in which filmmakers accepted less polished photography for greater access to real places. Cinema vérité filmmakers exemplified the benefits of this approach. For instance, David Wolper wanted to shoot at the New York Stock Exchange, but after a large Hollywood crew had disrupted trading, the governing board banned cameras from the floor. Wolper

demonstrated his small equipment package, consisting of only an Éclair and a Nagra portable sound recorder; he would shoot with available light, without tripod or power cables. The Stock Exchange gave him permission, and Éclair promoted his success in a print ad.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, Haskell Wexler began using Éclair cameras on location for Hollywood films, winning a cinematography Oscar for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1967) and shooting best picture winner *In the Heat of the Night*.⁶⁰

Every technological change of the late 1960s seemed to favor location shooting. The Nagra, a 13 pound, sync sound recording device that debuted in 1958, would earn a 1965 Academy Award, signaling its growing acceptance for Hollywood location work.⁶¹ A new crab-dolly debuted that was small enough to carry cameras through doorways and narrow hallways on location.⁶² The most daunting challenge to location filmmaking arrived when television networks began their switch to all-color programming in 1965. As the market for color film sales to television networks boomed, Hollywood all but phased out black-and-white production by 1968.⁶³ Eastman Color quickly responded to the challenge. In June 1967, Eastman 5251 required 4 times the light of the “almost obsolete” black-and white Double-X; however a new, extended development process offered to double the effective speed of color film with little quality loss.⁶⁴ In June of 1968, Eastman introduced 5254, twice the speed of 5251 with absolutely no loss of quality.⁶⁵ The immediate application was location shooting, enabling color filmmaking “earlier in the morning, later at night and in bad weather.” Faster film required less light and promised “more realistic location coverage.”⁶⁶

American Cinematographer noted that the late 1960s boom in location filmmaking coincided with myriad technological innovations, but could not determine which was the cause and which was the effect.⁶⁷ Certainly trends in film style and film technology were mutually reinforcing, but the confluence in the late 1960s was also a

confluence of film industries and national cinemas. Film technology no longer responded to Hollywood trends alone, but a larger market working faster, cheaper, and often without sound stages. Smaller cameras and lights benefited filmmakers in various fields such as European art cinema, documentary, industrial, commercial, television, and combat. Meanwhile, runaway production and overhead reduction had displaced Hollywood as the center for technological development in filmmaking.

Cinematographer Andrew Lazlo observed the historical irony. As better lights and film stock created ideal conditions for studio filmmaking, most filmmakers were fleeing the studio for the unpredictable locations of pre-studio filmmakers.⁶⁸ Such a trend was particularly puzzling for the old guard of directors and cinematographers, whose professional pride rested on their ability to control the film image.⁶⁹ The new style favored capturing the moment in actual conditions over shaping the setting and precise movement. Better technology made it easier to capture an image with available light and less expertise, challenging the importance of the professional cinematographer.

With the rapid abandonment of black and white, cinematographers also had to find new ways to build dramatic realism and downbeat tone in color. Before color films could match the low light levels of black and white, they would have to grow duller and bleaker. Established cinematographers would have to learn not only how to make the image look better, but how to make it look worse. Ironically, as San Francisco became increasingly desirable as a location, filmmakers labored to make the city appear less desirable.

SEMI-DOCUMENTARY COLOR

In the second half of the 1960s, filmmakers not only adapted the tools of cinema verité to narrative features but also brought a similar ethos of unadulterated realism. They

faced a new challenge when Hollywood all but abandoned black-and-white film in the late 1960s. Realist dramas like *Days of Wine and Roses* featured crisp, shadowy black-and-white location cinematography; now stark realism had to be achieved on color film, a format still strongly associated with less serious stories and highly saturated hues. Filmmakers largely achieved a new semi-documentary aesthetic in two ways. First, they insistently muted the color scheme through lighting and choice of settings. Secondly, while shooting extensively on location, they employed the imprecise framings, camera movements, and lighting associated with late 1960s documentary and avant-garde filmmakers. This lack of polish became a badge of realism by comparison to the traditional Hollywood aesthetics that persisted in many Hollywood features.

Shooting *You're A Big Boy Now* (1966) for Francis Ford Coppola, Andrew Lazlo noted a "sharp turn" in Hollywood cinematography. Viewing the early camera tests, Coppola complained that they looked "too good." Rather than landmark sites, the film occurred in everyday New York locations, like "a drug store or a meat market," and Coppola wanted his footage to "come as close to the actual look of these places as possible."⁷⁰ While Lazlo credited these instincts to Coppola's background in student filmmaking, Alfred Hitchcock expressed similar goals shooting *Torn Curtain* (1966). Relying on reflected light, he wanted rooms to appear on film as they did in actual life.⁷¹ While old guard filmmakers cautioned against certain techniques popularized by younger directors, they all faced the same paradigm shift. Technological improvements allowed for subtler lighting that made earlier studio realism appear artificial by comparison. The industry's full conversion to color film forced filmmakers to adapt color aesthetics to fit stories that would have been previously shot in black and white. Finally, the growing scope and prominence of location shooting favored a new "semi-documentary" style, where cinema verité techniques suggested greater realism and a stronger sense of place.

Cinematographer Arthur Miller was a master of Classical Hollywood realism, whose work included *How Green Was My Valley* (1941), *The Ox-Bow Incident* (1943), and *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947). Yet decades after his final film, *The Prowler* (1951), he showed little nostalgia. Despite cinematographers' boasts about "natural" lighting, "for the most part we were only fooling ourselves."⁷² Faster film stocks and smaller lamps revealed how restrained filmmakers had been by technical limitations; both in staging and lighting, cinematographers had to compromise ideals of naturalism with the bright, bulky lights needed to gain exposure. He provided lighting diagrams from scenes he shot with smaller lights, such as a candlelight scene in *The Mark of Zorro* (1940), hoping that current cinematographers could better achieve subtle interior lighting with more advanced tools.⁷³

The same technological improvements that made interior lighting appear less stage-bound also made interiors less stage-based. *Bonnie and Clyde* shot almost entirely on location in Texas, spending ten weeks in small towns outside of Dallas. With the ability to shoot in actual building interiors, the crew could take advantage of a number of towns that had hardly changed their appearance since the 1930s. Thus a string of holdups spanning Indiana to East Texas could all be covered by moving from town to town in North-Central Texas, without the time or cost of building or redressing studio sets. In fact, 1960s urban decline suited Depression-Era period pieces. A "somewhat crumbling neighborhood in Dallas" resembled Joplin, Mississippi in the 1930s. Woody Allen found a similar boon in San Francisco for his Depression-Era crime comedy, *Take the Money and Run*. The decaying, depopulated buildings slated for redevelopment in the Yerba Buena Project served onscreen as the 30s slums of Camden and Union City, New Jersey.⁷⁴

Despite clear improvements in color film stock, the demand for color films checked a seamless expansion of location filmmaking. When Eastman introduced its faster 5254 stock in 1968, it hoped the speed increase would inspire not only cinematographers but also screenwriters, who would dare to write settings for color films that could previously only be captured on black and white.⁷⁵ Technological improvements opened up new territories for color filmmaking, but Hollywood would need to overcome previous assumptions governing color in the age of black and white.

The use of color film had strong generic associations, and these needed to rapidly change as black and white was virtually eliminated from Hollywood filmmaking by 1967.⁷⁶ For instance, after gaining an Oscar nomination for the black-and-white war film, *King Rat* (1965), Burnett Guffey chastised Hollywood's use of "color for color's sake." He believed black and white was the best medium for mystery, action-adventure, or "stark" drama.⁷⁷ By 1967, black and white was no longer a real choice. For *In Cold Blood* (1967), writer-producer-director Richard Brooks had to fend off multiple studio attempts to shoot the film in color; the next successful studio film shot in black and white would be *The Last Picture Show* (1971).⁷⁸ As color film became almost universal, cinematographers had no choice but to develop a realist aesthetic in color. In 1967, Guffey meticulously desaturated the color palette for *Bonnie and Clyde* to provide a realistic look for a shockingly violent film. He won the Oscar for best cinematography and helped set off a trend in using bleak colors for increasingly bleak films.⁷⁹

Older directors such as Alfred Hitchcock and Otto Preminger experimented with new color aesthetics just as black-and-white filmmaking was rapidly declining. Hitchcock believed color could convey the same mood as black and white, but distinguished between "vulgar and delicate" color, where "the colors are not shouting at us."⁸⁰ Color realism would be synonymous with a muted tone, while fantastical stories

could still display the ebullience of lavish Technicolor spectacles. For *Torn Curtain*, cinematographer John Warren bounced nearly every interior light off of a reflector, and even crafted new canvas reflectors to create soft, shadowless light.⁸¹ John Huston mounted a more ambitious experiment with delicate color. After half a year experimenting with lab processing, Huston selectively desaturated *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (1967), resulting in a sepia palette with the exception of red, which could explode in its full vibrancy in a flower or other intensely red objects. Huston arrived at this unique aesthetic from a similar perspective to Hitchcock. “Color in nature is very different from color on the screen... thus color effects are unnaturally heightened.”⁸² While Huston hoped his restricted palette would shield the story’s psychological drama from garish color, he ironically drew greater attention to the use of color than the story.⁸³ Various filmmakers struggled to define a new color aesthetic, but they largely agreed that current Hollywood color aesthetics needed to be drastically dimmed for realistic stories; shooting *Bullitt*, director Peter Yates and cinematographer Bill Fraker similarly experimented with toning down the color of San Francisco locations.

Despite experiments by elder craftsmen like Hitchcock and Huston, a distinction between vulgar and delicate color largely followed generational lines, with younger directors such as Coppola, Mike Nichols, and Arthur Penn favoring chromatic restraint. Robert Surtees highlighted the gap between the old and new aesthetics by shooting two strikingly different best-picture nominees, the high-key musical *Doctor Doolittle* and the softly lit youth hit, *The Graduate*. Dubbed a cinematographer with a “split-personality” by *American Cinematographer*, Surtees suggested how the new school of color fit into other changes in filmmaking: “On *The Graduate* I had to forget all the years of trying for perfect photography. On that film it was not how beautiful the photography was that counted, but how emotional and exciting it was.”⁸⁴ *The Graduate* struck a significant

balance between the “unreality” of its innovative camera techniques and the natural appearance of its lighting, color, and settings. Burnett Guffey echoed these sentiments describing *Bonnie and Clyde*, which also combined droll fantasy and stylistic flourishes (the slow-motion finale) with realist cinematography: “Color in itself sometimes detracts from realism because it comes out pretty whether you want it or not. We tried very hard to subdue the color in this picture... I think he [Penn] succeeded because this is one film that can never be called ‘pretty.’”⁸⁵

Two stylistic influences helped resolve this seeming opposition between realism and overt stylistic techniques: cinema verité and European New Wave cinema. *American Cinematographer* rarely ran articles about foreign filmmakers, but the impact of *Battle of Algiers* occasioned a story on its production written by director Gillo Pontecorvo. Pontecorvo emphasized his preference for available light, preferring to bounce sunlight to fill natural settings. He shot the entire film with an Arriflex camera (William Fraker would do the same for *Bullitt*), giving the small crew access to real locations in the crowded urban setting of Algiers. While all of these techniques created a palpable sense of realism, Pontecorvo aggressively violated a hallmark of Classical Hollywood realism: unobtrusive style. He remarked, “I believe that the motion picture camera has been used too passively for the most part. It should be the most creative thing about the entire business of filmmaking. It should truly move.”⁸⁶ A new realist aesthetic was being forged, one that prized fidelity of location but championed the active presence of the camera, moving through the action rather than perfectly framing it.

The increased presence of direct-cinema filmmakers in American documentaries further reinforced the association between mobile, imperfect camerawork and realism. These films had a larger impact on younger filmmakers, circulating through college campuses and producing countercultural music documentaries by the mid-1960s, such as

Don't Look Back (1965) and *Monterrey Pop* (1968).⁸⁷ The response by veteran filmmakers who had built their careers on polished realism was largely dismissive. In October 1968, an industrial/documentary filmmaker, Mike Waddel, addressed the budding verité trend: "If a technique calls attention to itself, it is bad because it will divert the audience's attention from what you are attempting to say... some of the most common being out of focus scenes, awkward zooms, and the most common—camera D.T.'s or the hand-held jiggle approach."⁸⁸ Hollywood veterans were no kinder. For Edward Dmytryk, handheld camera was nothing new, successfully used by James Wong Howe for boxing scenes in *Body and Soul* (1947). Handheld and long zoom lenses were merely a current European gimmick.⁸⁹ *American Cinematographer* editor Herb Lightman offered a similar jab at a colloquium on lighting: "Except for a few, very new directors who feel that all there is to cinematography is grabbing a hand held camera and available light in order to create an automatic masterpiece, the vast majority of my fellow directors have a tremendous respect for the Director of Photography."⁹⁰ The newfound ability to point, shoot, and film in 35 millimeter was a viable threat to professional standards and industry standing of established cinematographers.

Haskell Wexler, the only respected cinematographer regularly using such techniques, became the interlocutor for the new style of filmmaking. Despite shooting Academy-Award winning features, he still considered himself a documentary cameraman.⁹¹ His stylistic influences for the *Thomas Crown Affair* were *Battle of Algiers* and *War Games* (1966), a documentary short about World War II POWs. Rather than criticizing established techniques, Wexler advocated for greater experimentation.⁹² Documentary filmmaking, with its less cumbersome and less costly equipment, allowed such trial and error: "I learn more when I go out with a Bolex or a 16mm Éclair and, as you might say, just 'play around' with film."⁹³ Other cinematographers wondered how to

translate freewheeling location photography to the studio set, which remained a key component of most feature films. Wexler's response was to treat the studio set like a real location.⁹⁴ Thus by the late 1960s, location shooting not only represented a viable alternative to filming on the studio lot but location aesthetics began to shape sound stage production.

While films such as *Bonnie and Clyde* and *The Graduate* signaled the rise of an American New Wave, Hollywood studios and producers did not hesitate to recruit foreign filmmakers to shoot studio-financed films in America. Robert Chartoff and Irwin Winkler capitalized on the growing popularity of British films and actors, releasing *Darling* (1965) in America and securing its budding star, Julie Christie, for the MGM blockbuster, *Dr. Zhivago*. As producers, they described themselves as, "an American outgrowth of the English revolution in movie-making."⁹⁵ Their first film, *Point Blank*, considered an "offbeat film," featured Hollywood stars and California locations (San Francisco and Los Angeles), but also included "a sleek contemporary look" and "an elliptical style in the European manner."⁹⁶ Warner Brothers' *Petulia* and *Bullitt* would pair British directors, key crewmembers, and actors with Hollywood stars, San Francisco locations, and studio financing. In fact, when *Petulia* arrived at Cannes as an official U.S. entry, observers debated whether it was actually a British film with a "Yank label."⁹⁷ The new look of American films would emerge not only by the influence of European filmmakers, but their active participation.

Prolonged runaway production helped stifle Hollywood creativity. At the 1966 IATSE conference, Jack Valenti acknowledged a void of new talent in Hollywood, and IATSE had a share of the blame.⁹⁸ Many important unions were closed to new membership by 1966.⁹⁹ The cameraman's local, whose leader Herb Aller had been a vocal opponent of runaway production, was deemed a job monopoly by the National

Labor Relations Board after its third unfair labor complaint in three months.¹⁰⁰ As Hollywood unions closed ranks to protect their remaining job opportunities, a new generation of young talent gained training in Hollywood filmmaking abroad. Europe offered more opportunities for young production workers, who gained technical expertise and increasingly competed with American workers.¹⁰¹ Reflecting on studio lots in the summer of 1966, filled with television series but devoid of feature filmmaking, Peter Bart wrote, “Nearly all of the potentially important movies—big budget pictures as well as the small “art” films—are being shot in Europe, not Hollywood.” He concluded, “Hollywood’s once limitless creative resources seem to be running thin.”¹⁰² Fittingly, English filmmakers John Boorman, Richard Lester, and Peter Yates indelibly captured California’s new creative capitol, San Francisco.

Changes in both popular taste and production practice promoted this British invasion of San Francisco. American foreign film preferences shifted from France to Britain in the second half of the 1960s, as films like John Schlesinger’s *Darling* and Richard Lester’s *The Knack* captured the fashionable London scene.¹⁰³ Meanwhile, the British style of rapid location shooting and unconventional editing allowed them to capture the popular moment in San Francisco with less concern for classical continuity. Moreover, British filmmakers were drawn to San Francisco for the same revolutionary cultural experience sought by American teenagers, advertisers, and media producers. San Francisco journalist David Talbot described the 1960s counterculture as “essentially a cultural dialogue between San Francisco and London.”¹⁰⁴ By 1967, San Francisco had the louder voice. British producer-director Silvio Narizzano, who had just shot *Georgy Girl* in London, planned to shoot his next project in San Francisco, which he dubbed, “the most exciting city in the world today.”¹⁰⁵

SAN FRANCISCO: SETTING, LOCATION, AND URBAN FORM

Between 1967 and 1968, San Francisco became a highly popular setting for feature films and television series. Sharply different approaches to depicting the city revealed a widening gulf in production practices. *Petulia* and *Bullitt* relied on the newest technologies and location shooting styles; the back lot look of *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* and *The Love Bug* could largely have been achieved by the mid-1950s. Over seven seasons, *Ironside* (1967-1975), a television detective drama starring Raymond Burr as a wheelchair-bound San Francisco police chief, likely spent less time shooting on location than either *Petulia* or *Bullitt*. Case studies of these two films reveal how new techniques and urban aesthetics began to quickly transform San Francisco's role as a location and setting through the mid-1970s. Both productions sought a more authentic image of San Francisco than the bulk of late 1960s productions that exploited the city's popular image without carefully exploring the city.

a. Exploiting the City

Before *Bullitt* ushered in a wave of extensive location shooting in San Francisco and other cities in the 1970s, a studio lit reproduction of the city still held plenty of audience appeal.¹⁰⁶ The cheapest way to cash in on the San Francisco scene remained a quick location trip, supplemented by psychedelic set dressing in Los Angeles. Such a solution appealed to the tight budgets of exploitation and television filmmakers, as well as the tight production restraints imposed on Stanley Kramer for *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?* While *The Graduate* shot few scenes in San Francisco, *Variety's* inclusion of the film among its list of San Francisco hits is not incidental. The film highlighted opposing styles of filmmaking as well as the opposing symbolism of Southern and Northern

California. Both San Francisco and *The Graduate* became metonyms for myriad new stylistic and cultural practices.

The rural outskirts of Northern California provided fertile ground for shooting a number of exploitation biker films such as *Devil's Angels* (1967) and *Angels From Hell* (1968). Capturing Downtown San Francisco proved less cost-effective. Sam Katzman, “the Speedy Gonzales of exploitation films,” cashed in early on the exploitation value of rock music and free love in San Francisco with *The-Love Ins* (1967), “the first film set in San Francisco in the jet age that was shot entirely on a Hollywood lot.”¹⁰⁷ American-International Pictures’ *Psych-Out* (1968) would go to further lengths to capture the San Francisco scene. Produced by Dick Clark, the film featured a soundtrack from current psychedelic bands such as The Strawberry Alarm Clock and The Seeds. The film opens with a montage of handheld, documentary-style footage of the Haight-Ashbury district, including the sign at the intersection and the de rigueur shot of a San Francisco cable car. Yet like most films set in San Francisco in previous decades, the early action moves away from actual locations to interior sets of hippie clubs and crash pads. Haight-Ashbury becomes a style rather than a location, as cinematographer Lazslo Kovacs (who would shoot *Easy Rider* the next year) deploys an array of camera movements, colored lighting, and focus pulls to compliment the studio set dressing and costumes.

Set in San Francisco, NBC’s *Ironside* debuted in 1967, perfectly timed to capitalize on the continued popularity of the city, it proceeded as a typical Universal television production, “confined to the backlot, except for a couple of postcard shots of the SF police HQ and the Golden Gate Bridge.” Upon its 1967 premier, a *Variety* reviewer warned producers that they needed to take better advantage of San Francisco locations shooting, beyond “a lot of stock cut-ins and rear screen loops.”¹⁰⁸ Half a year later, *Ironside* remained a fixture of the NBC schedule, and *Variety* faintly praised the

show for going against the trend towards television location shooting by “playing down the Frisco locations” and “making it without the scenic crutch.”¹⁰⁹

Ironside gestured to the youth culture centered in San Francisco through casting. Raymond Burr, a veteran TV star in *Perry Mason* (1957-1966), was paired with a younger white detective (Don Galloway), a stylish young female investigator (Barbara Anderson), and a young black assistant with a criminal past (Donald Mitchell). They were a tamer version of *The Mod Squad* (1968-1973) with adult supervision. On rare occasions, *Ironside* dealt with crimes specific to San Francisco. In *Groove Tube*, Aniko Bodroghkozy places a 1968 episode of *Ironside*, “A Trip to Hashbury,” within the context of other series, such as *Dragnet '67*, that devoted episodes to condescending depictions of young runaways swept up by villainous hippies taking advantage of a drug-fueled, promiscuous cultural scene.¹¹⁰ The settings were equally cartoonish, with “Hashbury” staged as an isolated mansion (non-existent in the densely urban, rundown Haight), with psychedelic decorations, a flower-painted car, and flower-children extras. Likely shot on the Universal lot, this Haight was an episodic flight of fancy, and San Francisco served as a trivial detail of the *Ironside* series narrative.

While economics largely confined these previous examples, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* faced different limitations. The first was Stanley Kramer's shooting style, which when possible, favored the controlled environment of the studio lot, where he could focus on performances rather than location logistics. Despite an ocean setting, Kramer shot *Ship of Fools* (1965) entirely on the Columbia lot.¹¹¹ The bigger limitation was Spencer Tracy's health as he struggled to finish the picture while dying of cancer. Production centered on efficiently getting Tracy's performance on film, relying on simple staging for his scenes while shooting the rest between his short, painful visits to the set.¹¹² With most of the story set inside the parents' house, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?*

required less location work, but any scenes involving the lead actor had to be captured in the studio. Kramer was never a master technician, and attempts to meet these challenges degraded the film's aesthetics. While the rear projection driving shots were still common in 1967, the painted San Francisco backgrounds of the mansion terrace and rear projection of Tracy walking into an ice cream parlor looked cheap and dated.

The mixed critical response to the very style of *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?* suggested that the aesthetic gap between studio production and location shooting followed generational lines. For instance, Andrew Sarris attacked Kramer's "lumbering machinery" of filmmaking and Joe Morgenstern pilloried the decades-old aesthetic of Kramer's film.¹¹³ Coupled with the celebrated performances of the older stars, Tracy and Katharine Hepburn, the film appeared as a swan song for Hollywood's studio era. Yet despite the minimal location shooting, the narrative invocation of San Francisco powerfully shaped the film's appeal. According to Setlowe, "It was set entirely in San Francisco, because the revolutionary movie storyline of an ideal, live-happily-ever-after inter-racial romance was somehow more acceptable there, even to the moviegoers in Lester Maddoxland who broke box office records in Atlanta."¹¹⁴ The fantasy of San Francisco bounded social change within a West Coast peninsula, comfortably distant from a South still roiling over Civil Rights. The city's revolutionary image reinforced a rather timid crossing of cinematic boundaries.



Fig. 4.1. Crossing the Bay Bridge in *The Graduate* (Embassy, 1967)

The Graduate similarly relied upon symbolic geography. As Benjamin breaks away from the plastic, materialistic Southern California world of Mrs. Robinson and his parents, he travels north through San Francisco and into Berkeley. Nichols famously shot Benjamin driving the wrong way across the Bay Bridge (toward San Francisco), which allowed for camera cars and helicopters to capture the open sky rising above him (Figure 4.1).¹¹⁵ As he chooses Elaine and a young, rebellious college generation, epitomized by Berkeley campus activists, he almost inevitably drives away from Los Angeles towards the Bay area.

Aside from the film's narrative, the unique stylistic flourishes in *The Graduate* further associated it with San Francisco, booming with experimental film and music artists. While like *Petulia* and *Bullitt*, *The Graduate* employed mobile equipment and improvised staging, *Petulia* most of the film remained confined to the studio lot; rather as Wexler suggested, Nichols built and shot sets to function like real locations. Nichols had Mrs. Robinson's house constructed in its entirety on the Paramount lot, rather than as a series of sets. Thus if he decided to film his actors moving between rooms, he could do so on the fly. The house even included a bathroom, despite no scene in the script taking

place there. Such a realistic space offered the constraints that spurred creativity on location while the technical resources of the studio provided a safety net. At one point, Nichols decided he needed a wall removed to fit his camera. While a wild wall would have saved time, the crew could still accomplish the task if he was willing to wait. Such destruction and such a delay would be intolerable at a real location.¹¹⁶

When *The Graduate* did shoot on location, the film revealed creative and effective ways to use new equipment to open otherwise impossible to capture locations. *The Graduate* features one of cinema's most famous zoom shots, where the extreme telephoto lens captures Benjamin seemingly running in place towards the church in the film's climax. Yet the zoom proved just as important to capturing subjects unaware on location. Even a handheld camera would have disrupted a scene in which Benjamin and Elaine walk through a crowd of hippies outside a Sunset Strip venue. Instead, a 500mm lens hidden at a gas station across the street captured the action as little-known actors Dustin Hoffman and Katharine Ross walked through the crowd with wireless microphones.¹¹⁷

The Graduate also employed low-power, quartz-iodine lights to circumvent noise restrictions on generators. Filming Benjamin meeting Mrs. Robinson at the bar of the Ambassador Hotel, conventional studio lights would have required a generator, a loud disturbance for actual hotel guests. Instead, cinematographer Robert Surtees hung around one hundred quartz-iodine lights throughout the lobby. Later, shooting in Beverly Hills, a municipality with a generator-ban, he ran the same lights on household power from helpful residents.¹¹⁸ These generator restrictions stood in sharp contrast to San Francisco locations; *Petulia* caused a major disturbance shooting for days at San Francisco's marquee hotel, the Fairmount. Unlike Los Angeles, where regular production spurred

wealthy residents to guard their neighborhoods from filmmaking disruptions, San Francisco residents still enjoyed the novelty of film production in the late 1960s.

Hits like *The Graduate* and *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?* gained cultural currency through their limited engagement with San Francisco. Director Richard Lester and producer Steve McQueen shared a different, more ambitious approach, seeking to authentically depict the city by shooting entirely on location. Rather than copying the San Francisco style, as myriad filmmakers and advertisers had done, they attempted to capture the inimitable energy of the actual city through location shooting. Effectively filming a city now defined by its young residents rather than its architecture required new techniques and equipment. With small crews, mobile cameras, and a willingness to improvise, British directors Lester and Yates scoured and shot the real places of San Francisco. They found two different cities.

b. *Petulia*: Collage City



Fig. 4.2. San Francisco locations for *Petulia* (Warner-Seven Arts, 1967)

Petulia was the first major studio feature entirely shot in San Francisco (excluding a two day shoot in Tijuana). Even a handful of scenes set in Acapulco were shot in nearby Sausalito.¹¹⁹ This decision was remarkable (and galling to Los Angeles observers) because the source novel, “Me and the Arch Kook Petulia,” was set throughout Los Angeles, including Hollywood (Figure 4.2).¹²⁰ *Petulia* not only ran away from Los Angeles but also London, where the key production personnel were based.

By 1967, *Petulia* director Richard Lester had established himself as one of the most creative filmmakers in the industry while his films returned major box office profits. Lester’s multi-format experience also prepared him for the frenetic pace of shooting a modish, moderately budget feature entirely on location. Before establishing himself as a British filmmaker, Lester worked in Canadian television.¹²¹ He continued his television career in London, directing an improvisational comedy series, *The Goon Show*, as well as 500 television commercials. His first feature was a low-budget rock film, *It’s Trad, Dad* (1962), for Columbia. Lester’s next film, *Hard Day’s Night* (1964), starred The Beatles and revolutionized the rock and roll film to enormous commercial success.¹²² Unlike French and Italian films of the 1960s, which grew more opaque and cerebral, British films drew criticism for commercial and sexual exploitation, and Lester’s style toed the line of advertising pizzazz and avant-garde experimentation.¹²³ The result was a string of films that were both stylistic innovative and commercially successful, including a second Beatles film, *Help* (1965), as well as two successful comedies, *The Knack... And How to Get It* (1965) and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (1966).

For *Petulia*, Lester joined first-time film producer, Raymond Wagner, who came out of American television, working for years as a new projects executive for MCA-TV.¹²⁴ Wagner packaged Richard Lester and Julie Christie for *Petulia* in March of 1966 and sought a distributor. The original plan was to shoot in February in both London and

San Francisco.¹²⁵ The London locations were likely included to qualify the film as a British production and thus count towards the British quota and unlock Eady Fund money. Despite being financed by Warner Bros., Lester insisted the film was still British after scrapping the London shoot; since a largely British crew shot the film, he argued San Francisco was merely a location, not a place of origin. Throughout production, *Petulia* was classified British, but it failed to meet quota restrictions upon release. Nevertheless, the co-production played at Cannes as an American entry, and even Lester enjoyed the irony.¹²⁶ Born in Philadelphia before becoming a filmmaker in Canada and London, he was just as trans-Atlantic as *Petulia*.¹²⁷

While the financial geography was uncertain, Lester and San Francisco were a natural pairing. Like *The Knack*, *Petulia* was a quirky urban romance, where characters roamed the city at will. Like *A Hard Day's Night*, the film had a rock and roll angle, shooting during the height of the San Francisco rock scene. *Petulia* premiered in June 1968, the same month The Jefferson Airplane appeared on the cover of *Life* magazine. A special section on “new rock” would begin with a photo spread of Janis Joplin with Big Brother and the Holding Company; the same band played the opening scene of *Petulia*.¹²⁸ Originally, Jefferson Airplane was scheduled for the scene, but manager and Fillmore rock promoter Bill Graham pulled them, rightly predicting that by the time *Petulia* released, the band would be too famous to be merely a background act.¹²⁹

Lester's filmmaking style was uniquely suited to the San Francisco. His rapid and playfully discontinuous editing was a key influence on the “new look” of Hollywood films of the late 1960s, setting a precedent for the celebrated use of slow motion in *Bonnie and Clyde*, as well as the dreamy montage of *The Graduate*.¹³⁰ Avant-garde editing was also a staple of the underground films of San Francisco, many of which set the backdrop for local rock shows. In fact *Petulia* fell under the sub-headline

“Underground Films” in a *Variety* piece on the San Francisco music scene, mentioned alongside avant-garde films by Bruce Conner and Kenneth Anger. While Lester was shooting, Michelangelo Antonioni was screening underground films at the Fillmore; like Lester, Antonioni followed the zeitgeist from London to San Francisco following *Blow Up* (1966).¹³¹ San Francisco promised a confluence of the European New Wave and the American Avant-Garde.

Lester hired British cinematographer Nicolas Roeg, who had shot Lester’s last picture, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, and Julie Christie’s last picture, *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1967). A seasoned location cinematographer, Roeg invented a Color Filter spray on the latter picture. According to Roeg, who began marketing the product, the spray could be quickly applied to windows to balance indoor and outdoor color temperature in place of costly gels that consumed both time and space.¹³² Expedient solutions such as this would be critical to *Petulia*, where narrow interiors and a freewheeling handheld camera left little offscreen space for production personnel.

Lester’s and Wagner’s resumes suggested they could deliver a hip picture while staying under budget, having both worked under the tight budget and time restraints of television production. However Lester’s unique shooting method defied Hollywood’s established methods for keeping pictures under budget during the production phase. Daily production reports tracked how many feet of film rolled and the number of script pages completed. Thus top executives like Jack Warner could glean from these reports whether productions moved too slowly or overshot and quickly intervene. Meanwhile, industry logic dictated that savings promised during production were incidental. *Petulia* began principal photography without an approved budget, and in a memo to Warner, executive Walter MacEwen doubted the independent producers, Lester’s Petersham Films, Ltd.,

had made enough effort to minimize costs. He added, “The only trouble with economies effected after a picture starts shooting, is that they usually end up being minor – because the fixed costs involved for cast etc. cannot be reduced.”¹³³

Less than a month later, production continued after Lester cut the shooting schedule from 72 to 56 days, almost a 25% reduction. Warners executives faced a dilemma about Lester’s overshooting. In May, MacEwen wrote Jack Warner:

I am afraid it is too much to hope that Lester will depart from his established technique of multiple cameras, including hand held cameras. That appears to be the only way he knows how to make a film—making use in the cutting room, of bits and pieces of almost everything he shoots. In my opinion, any attempt to clamp down on Lester in this regard could be disastrous—also deprive us of the full value of the unique talent of the man we bought as director.¹³⁴

Production reports failed to clarify that Lester was actually two days ahead of the new, shorter shooting schedule.¹³⁵

Departing from classical Hollywood continuity was not only a stylistic challenge but also a challenge to the entire production apparatus. Pictures were scheduled and budgeted based on scripted scenes and settings. Lester instead shot as much as he could capture in the given schedule, regardless of the screen duration of a given scene. Thus Warners had no idea what picture they had paid for until well after shooting had wrapped. For instance, towards the end of shooting, Lester spent five days on the opening scene at the Fairmont Hotel Ballroom, where Archie and Petulia first meet as Big Brother and the Holding Company entertain a room full of formally dressed socialites. Yet aside from principal settings like Archie’s apartment and the hospital, Lester would cover most locations in a single day.¹³⁶ The film featured non-diegetic shots, including fashion poses by the principal actors under the Golden Gate Bridge, and rapidly cut flashbacks and flash-forwards breaking into various scenes. Such montage elements were a signature of

Lester's style but also extended postproduction and further confused executives trying to track the progress of the film.

Warners hesitated to reign in Lester not only because they realized his unconventional methods paid off onscreen, but also because they had to compete with other studios for talent. During shooting, Lester's attorney informed Warners that he had signed a multi-picture deal with United Artists, including no budget restrictions and a 50% profit share. United Artists' confidence kept MacEwan hopeful that as Lester's "track record" suggested, *Petulia* would be a major hit; it was not, although it easily outperformed *The Bed Sitting Room* (1969), the one picture Lester completed on his UA deal.¹³⁷ In its early stages, the growing power of the auteur director that peaked in 1970s Hollywood was not only an issue of talent competition but of executive expertise. New shooting methods made the time-tested data of budgets and daily production reports a more imprecise indicator of progress towards completion. Instead, executives had to rely on contract language and track records to gauge budgets. On a medium budget, it led to false expectations for *Petulia*; on a large budget, it led to *Heaven's Gate* (1980), where Michael Cimino, a seemingly reliable talent after the success of *The Deer Hunter* (1978), essentially bankrupted United Artists shooting an expensive box-office failure.¹³⁸



Fig. 4.3. Abstract scenic images in *Petulia*.

Lester quickly proved the value of his flexible approach when as was so often the case, rain fell on San Francisco. Undeterred, Lester lost no time and played up the rain to set the mood of his characters' bittersweet romance.¹³⁹ Shooting in a small Telegraph Hill apartment, crewmembers hid in closets and stairwells to stay out of frame.¹⁴⁰ Roeg's ability to capture the urban landscape of San Francisco also proved an asset, particularly because Lester's discontinuous editing style allowed for abstract scenic images to punctuate the film (Figure 4.3).¹⁴¹ For *Petulia*, location shooting in San Francisco proved far less challenging than its downbeat tone and disorienting style.

Petulia begins with the newly-married title character seducing Archie at a charity ball also attended by her husband (Richard Chamberlain). This begins a sporadic love affair between the two, with Petulia bringing youthful irreverence into Archie's staid routine. The story takes a dark turn when Archie finds Petulia beaten nearly half to death by her husband. The husband's powerful father (Joseph Cotton) helps convince Petulia to return to his son and they leave San Francisco on his yacht. Upon her return, Archie sees

Petulia, ready to give birth, at his hospital. In this final scene, he asks her to run away with him, but neither of them has the courage to abandon their established lives.



Fig. 4.4. Dialectical editing in *Petulia*.

While Petulia plays an eccentric flower child for Archie, she refuses to leave her abusive husband and his high society family. In many ways, *Petulia* is the story of *The Graduate*'s Mrs. Robinson, not Benjamin—one reason for the film's limited commercial success. Yet Lester offers a striking picture of late 1960s San Francisco, where the Nob Hill high society, fixtures of 1940s and 1950s San Francisco films, struggle with a youth movement in direct opposition to their material culture. From the opening scene, Lester introduces this theme with abrupt dialectical edits between wheel-chaired dowagers ascending an elevator and Janis Joplin playing at their charity ball (Figure 4.4).

This bravura opening scene for *Petulia* also exemplified Lester's improvisational shooting style. The production had reserved a ballroom at the Fairmount, but upon seeing the voluminous lobby, Lester could not resist staging the ball there. Such a large area required "about half the lighting needed to flood Candlestick Park," a reminder of the daunting lighting demands still required to shoot location interiors in color; somehow enough power remained for The Holding Company's electric guitars. The lobby included a car on a platform for a convention; Lester wrote this into the script as the grand prize at

the ball. Hotel management let the company shoot in the lobby, but only between 2 and 6 am, so as not to inconvenience hotel guests. Not surprisingly, a late night rock concert with 150 extras generated several complaints from sleeping guests. For the next four nights, after the band played the opening riffs to establish the dance beat, the party proceeded in silence. In the final film, the scene ran for only a minute and a half.¹⁴²

This production anecdote reveals as much about shooting in San Francisco in the late 1960s as it does Richard Lester. Even before Mayor Alioto assumed office in January of 1968, San Francisco proved remarkably amenable to an influx of filmmakers, even if it rankled guests at the ritziest hotel in town for nearly a week. The society page of the *San Francisco Chronicle* provides a key clue to the lack of resistance: Hollywood courted the very blue bloods satirized in *Petulia*. One “Junior Leaguer” who took drama classes at Stanford landed bit roles in both *Petulia* and *Bullitt*. About *Petulia* she quipped, “I think all of San Francisco society worked in that one.” The same article, titled “Elite in the Act,” featured an image of socialite James Wyatt II dancing as an extra in the opening party scene.¹⁴³ While the San Francisco filmmaking boom remained novel, city residents, particularly the influential citizens who often found their way on set, tolerated the requisite disturbance caused by urban location shooting—an attitude that soon changed when Hollywood productions became commonplace by the early 1970s.

In *Petulia*, Lester exploded the paradigm of San Francisco cinema tourism in two key ways. First, he expanded the travelogue montage to encompass the entire film. Sightseeing is not isolated in *Petulia*, nor is the rapid editing between different places. Instead, Lester staged the principal actors moving through various tourist sites, ranging from the Fairmount Hotel, the Japanese Garden, Chinatown, Alcatraz, Fisherman’s Wharf, and the Palace of Fine Arts. He even captured a dialogue scene with *Petulia* aboard a trolley car, the same shot that fell apart during *Experiment in Terror* when it

drew too large a crowd. The television pace and willingness to patch scenes together around editing allowed Lester to quickly capture dozens of locations with lead actors.

Unlike past cinema tourism, Lester explicitly acknowledged the commercial tourism industry that flourished in San Francisco's beautiful scenery. While Archie tours Muir Woods with his children, the mystical setting from *Vertigo* reveals a commercial camera crew using the ancient forest as the background for a cigarette ad. Archie picnics with a date at the Japanese Garden, but a loudspeaker intrudes upon the beautiful scenery, ushering visitors to the gift shop. Archie tries to entertain his kids with a boat ride to Alcatraz, but they reveal that his ex-wife's new boyfriend has already taken them on the tour. Instead they sneak past the fences and frolic through Alcatraz, an escape from the routine tour ironically staged in a prison.

Even San Francisco's adult spectacles prove illusory. Archie has lunch with a friend at The Roaring Twenties, the same club featuring nearly nude girls on swings in Blake Edwards' *Experiment in Terror*. Offscreen, the North Beach club was now not only famous for its swinging girls but the first bottomless strip tease in the city.¹⁴⁴ While girls in pasties parade past the camera, the men seem largely detached from the erotic display. The girl on the swing has her back to them as they strain to read the menu in the dimly lit club. Archie gives a momentary glance at the swing, triggering a flash cut to Petulia, but he soon returns to the menu. Lester cuts away to a nude dancer, draped in a towel, who eats a sandwich behind the shadow of the band (Figure 4.5). Behind the scenes, the dancers are having a working lunch as well, and the club, charged with sex and seediness in *Experiment in Terror*, appears almost as mundane as Archie's hospital.



Fig. 4.5. Roaring Twenties nightclub in *Petulia*.

Like the dancer on the swing, San Francisco's counterculture largely becomes part of the *mise-en-scene* rather than the plot. After their first tryst, Archie walks Petulia to her cab. As she leaves, a flower-painted VW bug rolls backwards down the street past him. Hippies play pantomime rock songs on a stage by the Palace of the Arts. They draw chalk patterns on hillside steps and leave psychedelic posters throughout the city (Figure 4.6). For a film set during the peak of the San Francisco hippie scene, Lester decidedly framed the youth movement as scenery rather than an active participant in the story, thus adopting the worldview of his wealthy resident protagonists. By 1967, it was hard to distinguish actual happenings from tourist events; the youth culture had become the focal point of San Francisco's tourist economy.¹⁴⁵ Lester suggested something subtler, using the hippies as a leitmotif. While staged as spectacle for the upper class (exemplified by the charity ball), the hippie lifestyle remains beyond their comprehension, a direct challenge to their sterile culture.

If Archie fits squarely, albeit joylessly, within San Francisco's high society, Petulia toes the line between the hippies and the urban elite. Her floral name, style of dress and reputation as a "kook" clearly place her within the counterculture. Early during their affair, she surprises a sleeping Archie at his apartment carrying a tuba. A flash cut reveals she smashed a window in a pawnshop to retrieve it. Yet once her husband is

revealed to be not just a rich stiff, but also an abuser, her status as a free spirit becomes far more ambivalent. Late in the film, when Archie confronts her in her bedroom, trendy floral fabrics drape a four-poster bed and posh room in a modernist mansion (Figure 4.7A). Petulia echoes Julie Christie's role as hip but feckless Diana in *Darling*, and similarly suggests that the sexy free spirits of the era are indelibly beholden to a wealthy establishment. Yet unlike Diana, who effortlessly moves between men, Petulia suggests a more cynical reality, where her hippie fashion is the cover over her golden cage. In a damning shot, Petulia's radiant sun dress stands out against a trolley car filled with uniformed soldiers, the second military reference after a television news report on Vietnam served as a transitional shot (Figure 4.7B). The same class funding Petulia's wardrobe funds the Vietnam War.



Fig. 4.6. Hippie imagery in Petulia.



Fig. 4.7. Color décor and fashion in *Petulia*.

While socialites Petulia and Archie fail to embrace the social freedom represented by the hippies, Lester embellishes the opposition between the professional class and youth movement by inter-cutting psychedelic rock shows with the mechanical aspects of Archie's world. The opening scene introduces this cross-cutting, as the camera sways horizontally with Janis Joplin's wailing rock show, producing a sonic and visual contrast with the party guests, doubly trapped in wheelchairs and a grated elevator, rising vertically to a creaky mechanical sound. Lester later plays with sound and image to create a similar disjunction. As Archie gives dry medical descriptions at the hospital, Lester cuts in footage from another rock show (which Archie attends much later in the film), as the technical language becomes the soundtrack for the silent performance footage. The same technique brutally reappears when Petulia leaves her apartment on a gurney after a savage beating by her husband. A sound montage of neighbors' gossip and the ambulance wailing again bleeds over inserted images from the rock show (Figure 4.8). These flash-forwards, which initially appear to be non-diegetic images, intercut with emotionless medical technology and procedures, provide rare moments when youth culture abruptly jumps to the forefront of the film. They heighten the sense of soullessness and dread hiding beneath Archie and Petulia's posh lives. Rather than emphasizing the growing commercialism of the Summer of Love, Lester emboldens the counterculture through

disruptive interjections of music and image with the force that cut through the images of a failing mainstream culture.



Fig. 4.8. Rock show image in *Petulia*.

Petulia also stages cultural conflict on the scale of the city through a creative use of San Francisco's diverse architecture. Jet set palaces and hotels contrast infinite plains of tract houses. Lester stages Archie and Petulia's first tryst at the ultra-modern Hilton in San Francisco. The couple walks up the elegantly slanted concrete parking structure, use strange key cards, and fiddle with electronic devices throughout the hotel room. The hotel's comical space-age trappings strike a similar cord with the high-tech machinery Archie regularly employs at the hospital. Domestic modern architecture, such as the husband's family home, features an audacious cobweb window, an elegantly engineered dream home that offers little comfort. In fact the father conducts the family like a business from his desk.

These sterile spaces clearly contrast the swirling colors, organic lines, and dark interiors of the rock show scenes. Yet Lester introduces a remarkable third space of San Francisco by choosing a rarely filmed part of the peninsula: Daly City. In a subplot, Archie investigates Petulia's adoption of a Mexican child, and finds himself lost in rows of identical houses climbing hills into the horizon. A pair of hippies fails to help him find information, and look equally out of place in this seemingly uninhabited housing farm. Wide shots reveal an endless supply of domestic mass production, where working class homes spread autonomously across the landscape. San Francisco, with its various urban landmarks, offered the illusion of a dense downtown playground, an antidote to the sprawl of Los Angeles. Unlike Hitchcock, who visited outlying areas to extend the dreamscape of the city, Lester highlighted the incompatible forces at play in the American city. While specialized technology overgrows downtown interiors, manufactured suburbs sprawl endlessly beyond the city limits. If Lester finds crass commercialism in the social realm of downtown San Francisco, he finds the physical expansion of this ethos in the vast landscapes of suburban sprawl, and forcefully defines San Francisco as the sum of irreconcilable parts.

Beyond Lester's specific social, aesthetic and architectural critiques in *Petulia*, his urban montage also offers a unique form of cinematic city. Unlike early urban montage features, such as *Berlin: Symphony of A Great City* (1927) and *A Man With A Movie Camera* (1929), *Petulia* is clearly a narrative feature that focuses on urban characters. Similarly, Lester's rapid editing rarely bridges several locations. Nor is Lester's montage restricted to the travelogue interludes featured in films such as *The Pleasure of His Company*, or the opening sequences of myriad San Francisco films. Instead, jarring cuts draw comparisons between two disparate spaces, such as the rock show and the hospital, different times, through flash-forwards and flashbacks, and inherent contradictions within

spaces, such as the commercial shoot in the natural preserve of Muir Woods. Beyond these specific instances of montage editing, Lester stages scenes, not just establishing shots, at dozens of San Francisco interiors and exteriors. These background settings are imbued with signification, populated by hippies, commercial intrusions, and new technologies. One reviewer, who noted the stunning locations of the hotel and the modern mansion, described the film as “a gaily-colored patchwork quilt,” although she found it lacking meaning.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, Lester builds a patchwork San Francisco, without a central pattern; rather the city is composed of distinct, meaningful spaces that clash with each other.

During the 1960s and 1970s, urban designer Colin Rowe developed the concept of the “Collage City,” which like *Petulia*, approached urban form through montage and juxtaposition. He noted: “Collage is a method deriving its virtue from its irony, because it seems to be a technique for using things and simultaneously disbelieving in them, it is also a strategy which can allow utopia to be dealt with as image, to be dealt with in *fragments* without our having to accept it *in toto*.”¹⁴⁷ Lester creates a similar, playful tension between San Francisco’s dual identities as a mainstream tourist center and countercultural youth haven, impishly bringing both elements of the city into conversation and into question. His provocative montage and *mélange* of striking locations offers no final verdict on the city, the youth culture, or even Archie and *Petulia*; they fail to escape their social mores but are no less charming or sympathetic for this failure. There is no epic confrontation between generations, as in the wedding scene in *The Graduate* or the violent shootout in *Bonnie and Clyde*. Rather San Francisco’s charm and failings are its eclecticism, its conglomeration of urban lifestyles and generations that cannot coalesce or annihilate each other.

In Lester's film and public perception, urban collage is also why San Francisco was chosen as a location over Los Angeles. Lester commented, "Los Angeles is too powerful a city. The images would overwhelm the story. San Francisco is more subtle: therefore more suitable for our picture which is a sad love story. I'm not sure you can tell that kind of a story in Los Angeles." Producer Wagner added, "I consider San Francisco the only city in the world with an honest contemporary flavor."¹⁴⁸ With such dramatic scenery, how is San Francisco such a more intimate, realistic urban setting than Los Angeles? First, San Francisco offered a pedestrian scale, a vibrant core to be traversed by the characters. Non native filmmakers would hardly know where to begin to capture L.A. Secondly, as the cutting edge of the youth movement remained in San Francisco and Berkeley, the increasingly commercialized hippie aesthetic appeared authentic there. As one cameraman quipped, "Sure, there's a peace march in L.A. today. But we don't build them like they do up here."¹⁴⁹ By contrast, Los Angeles appeared to be a ruthless corporate town of detached houses. Films set in both San Francisco and Los Angeles, like *The Graduate* and *Point Blank*, dramatically staged this popular distinction.

Bullitt managed to combine these urban contradictions in San Francisco. The title cop, played by Steve McQueen, straddled a vicious criminal world and a counter-cultural paradise. Meanwhile, the most influential car chase in film history transformed San Francisco from a pedestrian oasis into an automotive dreamscape. While *Petulia* relied on semi-documentary production techniques to efficiently capture myriad San Francisco locations, *Bullitt* fully embraced late 1960s trends in semi-documentary realism. Unlike *Petulia's* kaleidoscopic color portrait of the city, *Bullitt* aggressively deployed dim lighting and dismal locations. As *Petulia* faded from theaters, *Bullitt* became a runaway hit and not only accelerated the growth of location filmmaking in San Francisco, but

strongly shaped the police genre and bleak semi-documentary aesthetic that dominated depictions of the city for the first half of the 1970s.

c. *Bullitt*: Automotive City

Wagner and Lester described San Francisco as “the most exciting and dynamic community in the Western world today.”¹⁵⁰ *Bullitt* directed this energy not towards the people of San Francisco, but towards the city itself, converting cultural energy into vehicular momentum and converting San Francisco’s topography into an automotive playground. *Petulia* offered a realist portrait of San Francisco’s cultural landscape. *Bullitt* instead offered the realism of the semi-documentary, heightening the authenticity of the action through an emphasis on physical locations and non-theatrical lighting. *Petulia* explored the internal struggles of its characters within a beautiful city. *Bullitt* captured a sordid city that only a hero could navigate. *Petulia* earned \$1.5 million on a \$3.5 million budget.¹⁵¹ At a cost of \$5.5 million, *Bullitt* earned at least \$16.4 million during its domestic release as one of the top three films of 1968.¹⁵² Due to its box office success, *Bullitt* became a prototype for Hollywood’s urban police films of the 1970s, staged in San Francisco and other cities.

Premiering a year before *Bullitt*, *Point Blank* set a clear precedent in both production practice and style. Producers Chartoff and Winkler hired John Boorman to direct with only one picture to his name, *Having A Wild Weekend* (1965), a rock music comedy in the vein of Richard Lester starring the Dave Clark 5. This was a curious decision, considering *Point Blank*’s gangster plot, where Walker (Lee Marvin) seeks vengeance on the partner and criminal organization that stole his money and left him for dead. The producers felt that the young audience wanted to see the latest artistic trends, and a young filmmaker from the hip London scene would prove more valuable (and

cheaper) than a Hollywood veteran. On a modest budget of \$2.5 million, they hoped for \$9 million.¹⁵³ The quirky action film only grossed \$3.5 million, but *Variety* lauded Boorman's "superior exercise in cinematic virtuosity."¹⁵⁴

Bullitt producers Phil D'Antoni and Robert Relyea, working for Steve McQueen's company, Solar Productions, made a more calculated risk. They also hired a sophomore director from England, Peter Yates. Yates' first film, *Robbery* (1967), was a suspenseful restaging of the Great Train Robbery shot in "cinema verité" style.¹⁵⁵ Thus Yates had proven not only his stylistic ability but also its effectiveness in a realist action film. Cinema-verité proved to be an effective tool for reviving the semi-documentary with the newest trends in documentary filmmaking. By contrast, John Boorman infused a formulaic gangster genre with an artistic flashback structure associated with European art film. The results elevated *Point Blank* beyond its peers, but placed it squarely between two disparate audiences, the younger art cinema crowd and older popular action audience, neither of whom it quite fit.

Point Blank also further opened the door for filmmaking in San Francisco with an ambitious use of locations. Alcatraz had been abandoned as a prison after 1963, but in 1967, had yet to be fully converted to tourism. Yearly maintenance of the federal facility cost \$24,000. MGM offered \$2000 for a week or more of location shooting at Alcatraz for *Point Blank*. The government agency in charge of the site was more than happy to oblige, saving taxpayers the expense.¹⁵⁶ While a Los Angeles journalist chided the production for not simply using a set, the difference was unmistakable. With free reign over the large, rundown prison, Boorman exploited the full value of the location in the opening scene, where Reese (John Vernon) shoots Walker after they rob a helicopter delivery of cash at Alcatraz. The massive scale of the desolate ruin at night offers deep compositions throughout the eerie interiors and exteriors. Alcatraz also offers arguably

the best view of San Francisco, against which Boorman stages Walker in the foreground. Alcatraz is the defining location of the film, the site of betrayal that drives Walker's relentless revenge but also the abandoned island tomb, the prison of the past that sets a classical gangster against the dispassionate ruthlessness of a corporatized criminal syndicate.

The contrast between the old school Walker and new school syndicate, nearly indistinguishable from a Fortune 500 company, would not manifest in San Francisco, the original setting for the entire film. As Boorman later commented, “[San Francisco] was all soft, romantic, pastel shades – a very beautiful place – but the complete opposite of what I wanted for the film. I wanted my setting to be hard, cold and, in a sense, futuristic. I wanted an empty, sterile world, for which Los Angeles was absolutely right.”¹⁵⁷ He convinced the producers to move the primary location to Los Angeles, in part due to its still cheaper location expense than San Francisco. Boorman stages the action at used car lots, under highway freeways, guarded penthouse apartments, and suburban mansions with swimming pools. As Allan Siegel has observed, *Point Blank* suggests the post-industrial city's incompatibility with the noir criminal.¹⁵⁸ Walker is a determined man with a code of vengeance facing an abstract landscape concerned only with finances and corporate hierarchies. This value distinction is paralleled in the film's invocation of Los Angeles and San Francisco, the former conceived as shallow and materialistic, the latter perceived as passionate and authentic.

Steve McQueen also pushed the association between San Francisco and realism, but specifically the realism captured through location shooting. In an interview, he claimed: “We want to capture the feeling of the city... the movement, the productivity, the people along the streets—the whole upbeat feeling of San Francisco. Most films miss that. The Europeans are able to get it—Antonioni, Godard, DeSica.”¹⁵⁹ Here McQueen

illustrated the tensions in realism that defined *Bullitt*'s aesthetic. Like other productions, the goal is to capture the popular energy of late 1960s San Francisco. Yet the film also aspires towards neo-realism, a location shooting movement that depicted the city at its cruelest and most quotidian. Meanwhile, the extravagant chase sequence, the cornerstone of the film, offers a realist style paired with the highest form of spectacle. All the while a detective plot and a series of dangerous, dimly lit interior locations, appear worlds away from the young Hashbury denizens. *Bullitt* shows a remarkable ambivalence, alternatively realistic and fantastical, escapist and critical. While Lester's creative editing in *Petulia* played up cultural conflicts inherent in San Francisco, Frank Keller's celebrated editing of *Bullitt* helped smooth the film's tonal oscillation.

Bullitt also had to balance its police storyline with the counterculture it sought to capture in San Francisco. The source novel, *Mute Witness*, had been set in New York, but like *Petulia*, producers adapted the story to the popular San Francisco setting.¹⁶⁰ By mid-1967, *Variety*'s Setlowe compared the relationship between police and hippies to an Arab-Israeli truce, making it difficult to imagine a hip San Francisco police detective like McQueen's character, Frank Bullitt.¹⁶¹ Bullitt could not be simply a tough cop, like the title detectives in *Madigan* and *Coogan's Bluff* (1968). Rather, as McQueen put it, "This guy *Bullitt* is an oblique person... He's a man who's earnestly interested in society... Not all police nowadays represent the long arm of the Establishment."¹⁶² The archetype for the anti-establishment detective in San Francisco was Peter Gunn, and Bullitt showed many of the same traits. After escorting a witness to a dingy hotel, he meets his girlfriend Cathy (Jacqueline Bissett) at her architecture studio in a modern loft. They go to dinner at a hip restaurant with a folk band, featuring longhaired and African-American patrons. Like Peter Gunn, Bullitt is a detective equally adept at navigating San Francisco's youth

culture as policing the city's most dangerous corners. While not a private eye, *Bullitt* shows similar behavior, bucking police and political authority to pursue suspects.

Bullitt benefited from Mayor Alioto's earliest efforts to lure filmmaking to San Francisco. In January of 1968, the Mayor announced a new plan for the annual San Francisco Film Festival. Claude Jarman Jr., a former child actor (he played the boy in *The Yearling*, 1946), would not only lure higher profile films to the festival, but use the festival as an opportunity to convince these filmmakers to shoot in San Francisco. Meanwhile, filmmakers in 1968 were practically given a key to the city. *Bullitt* was given up to eight city blocks to close off at a time for the chase sequence. This generous limitation still delayed the epic chase scene, filmed over the course of several weeks. San Francisco's architecture added further danger during shooting as most doors and garages opened directly onto the sidewalk; an uninformed resident could pull out into the careening stunt cars before seeing them. A cooperative police force walked the entire route of each driving shot with the crew, securing entire blocks for filmmaking.¹⁶³

Like *Petulia*, *Bullitt* benefited from high society's desire to appear on film. Producers secured a ritzy home in Russian Hill as the setting for a benefit for Senator Chalmers (Richard Vaughn), the politician who interferes with *Bullitt*'s case. The owner, Mrs. Edmund (Kate Morrissey), appears briefly in a non-speaking role (Figure 4.9).¹⁶⁴ Alioto recognized this enthusiasm as well, turning the San Francisco premier of *Bullitt* into a benefit for a swimming pool in Hunter's Point. Warner Bros.-Seven Arts donated \$25,000 towards the pool's construction, and in turn received publicity for a gala premiere. The first 150 people who purchased \$100 tickets received a champagne pre-reception at the Palace of the Legion of Honor and after the movie, dinner at the Imperial Palace restaurant.¹⁶⁵ Thus Hollywood, the Mayor, and the star-struck socialites all got their money's worth.



Fig. 4.9. Society woman in *Bullitt* (Warners-Seven Arts, 1968).

Despite San Francisco's hospitality, the complicated and expansive car chase put *Bullitt* three-weeks behind schedule, and Warners tried to clamp down the way studios always had in the past: wrapping the location shoot and finishing the car chase on the backlot. The filmmakers found the idea of shooting this definitive car chase on a studio set laughable.¹⁶⁶ Steve McQueen had to flex his industry muscle to preserve *Bullitt's* location aesthetic. After a weekend meeting in Hollywood, he returned with a promise to finish the film in San Francisco. The cost was forfeiting a six-picture deal between Warner Brothers and McQueen's Solar Productions on the first picture. *Bullitt's* immediate success was likely a bitter pill for the short-lived Seven-Arts studio heads, but they likely would have prevailed over a lesser star. Yates, who had insisted on shooting entirely on location, scrapping the originally scheduled studio days, credited McQueen for having both the power and conviction as an actor-producer to defend the look of the picture.¹⁶⁷

Seven Arts' predicament reveals how much uncertainty extensive location shooting introduced into production. McQueen estimated that television-trained directors, like Yates and Lester, could average sixty to seventy setups per day, compared to the studio average of eight to twelve setups. At this pace, higher transportation and living costs could balance the major savings on set construction and studio rentals. But Yates suggested, "Studios don't like shooting of this kind. They don't have a close control. It's the beginning of total independence. This is the first major film of this kind ever shot entirely on location with an all-American crew."¹⁶⁸ Yet how could a studio predict whether this freedom was warranted? Lester had a far better track record on location than Yates, but the San Francisco locations provided far more box office value for *Bullitt* than *Petulia*. The daily value of shooting on location also varied tremendously. The car chase in *Bullitt* and the party scene in *Petulia* required far more days for fewer pages of script than any other sequences.

The uncertainty of these location pictures was further compounded by their reliance on editing. While Lester could shoot far more setups per day, he also needed to overshoot the script, building the film in post-production from a variety of fragmented clips. Editor Frank Keller, who would win an Oscar for *Bullitt*, faced a similar task. Among editors, Keller was credited with saving a nearly fatal mistake for the car chase in *Bullitt*. A stunt car filled with dummies triggered the climactic car explosion too early. Keller created a clever montage that hid the mistake and preserved the excitement.¹⁶⁹ Yet the entire car chase stretches the limits of continuity editing, tracing an impossible path through the city that knocks five hubcaps off of the villain's car.¹⁷⁰ Upon completion, the chase looked so remarkable that the producers arranged to show it in its entirety on *The Ed Sullivan Show* to promote the film's release.¹⁷¹ Yet as unedited footage, it looked messy enough for the studio to kill a six-picture deal.

Bullitt's key editing innovation began before shooting began. In San Francisco, they rented a large vacant room for Frank Keller to edit throughout production.¹⁷² He screened dailies and cut sequences at a projection space around the block. Keller took immediate note of the intended style and construction from the producers on site. They also conferred on added scenes without delay. Cooperation with Warners' editing department and San Francisco's proximity to Los Angeles allowed dailies to arrive in sync the day after shooting.¹⁷³ This on-site editing helped balance the uncertainty of location footage that required a continuous look despite being shot in myriad locations over the course of days. When they left San Francisco, *Bullitt* producers could be reasonably certain that they had the picture they wanted in the can.

With the whole picture shooting on location, Yates and cinematographer Bill Fraker chose to shoot the entire picture on Arriflex cameras. While this small, often handheld camera had been regularly used by Hollywood throughout the 1960s, it was limited to specific shots, such as action on location streets; typical setups would be shot with the industry-standard Mitchells. The most celebrated use of the camera came when it was mounted inside and outside of speeding cars. This was as much an achievement of rigging as the camera itself. With so much time devoted to shooting the chase, the filmmakers experimented with aluminum railings and flatbed mounts that gave hitherto impossible but remarkably stable images from the point of view of the car and driver. Meanwhile, by using up to five cameras at a time, Fraker could cover the high-speed stunts from various angles. Thus cameramen experimented with new techniques while traditional methods, such as panning with the cars' movement, clearly captured the action.¹⁷⁴ Keller's final cut involves a clever mix of traditional shots that clarify the action and mounted shots that accentuate the speed and danger.

The signature car chase also relied on improvisation and collaboration on the streets. While the stunts had to be carefully choreographed, Yates communicated the actions he wanted and walk through them with the cameramen and stuntmen. A stuntman might suggest a better hill a few blocks away and they would readjust the setup. Fraker remembers that Yates began the picture with storyboards, but the film seemed to take on a momentum of its own for the entire crew.¹⁷⁵ In short, with large tracts of the city open for shooting, the filmmakers let the location dictate what should happen on film, and the results took full advantage of nearly every twist, turn, and elevation that San Francisco had to offer. This was a far cry from Hitchcock's minute instructions to the second unit for the driving sequences in *Vertigo* (1958).¹⁷⁶



Fig. 4.10. Unblimped and blimped Arri in a *Bullit* featurette. *Steve McQueen: A Commitment to Realism* (Warners-Seven Arts, 1968)

While the use of Arriflexes for the action scenes was inspired, its use for the remainder of the film was far more intrepid. Crews worked in daunting interior locations, particularly two poorly lit, seedy hotels with very small rooms.¹⁷⁷ Here the size of the camera was even more essential, particular since it would require a larger rig for recording sound (Figure 4.10). Tire screeches could be added during post-production but attempting to capture dialogue on location required a large camera blimp. The Arriflex opened up cinema-verité techniques for the entire picture. Cinematographer Bill Fraker

had left studio work as a cinematographer to shoot television commercials and documentaries, hoping to learn less formal Hollywood techniques.¹⁷⁸ Thus shooting *Bullitt*, he had an opportunity to revitalize the semi-documentary, combining established Hollywood visual storytelling with documentary techniques that relied on the maneuverable Arri camera.

In fact real locations such as these hotels and an actual hospital set a dark, realist tone that helped make the otherwise outlandish car chase appear believable. They also revealed an underworld of San Francisco that had never been captured onscreen. As Bullitt scopes out a hotel room where they'll hide a witness, a dingy, cracked window reveals the stained concrete overpasses of the Embarcadero Freeway, the climactic set piece in *The Lineup* (Figure 4.11). Even this ugly view holds potential danger, as Bullitt cautions the witness to stay away in case of a shooting. As the cars stream by, we see a preview of the automotive landscape that Bullitt will need to traverse. But unlike the spectacle of hills and surrounding mountains at full speed, we see the interstitial eyesores of a skid row hotel.



Fig. 4.11. Hotel room by the Embarcadero Freeway in *Bullitt*

The bleakest setting in the film is the interior of an actual hospital, where several scenes in the first half of the film take place, including chasing a would-be assassin through the hospital corridors. Working in closed down floors of the hospital, the crew set up scaffolds of lights; otherwise, they changed every fluorescent ceiling light or filtered them to prevent a greenish hue on film. On a few occasions, they left them unfiltered, adding an alien green glow to the already dark institutional setting.¹⁷⁹ In fact, by testing the limits of low lighting on color stock, the low-key look associated with black-and- white realism at times appeared unrealistic. For instance, a shaft of daylight through the windows reveals a hospital inexplicably bathed in shadow (Figure 4.12). As Bullitt walks through the hallways, he nearly drops out of sight between the staggered ceiling lights. With a goal of semi-documentary realism, Fraker relied on dim source lights in actual locations, but the lighting bears as little resemblance to an actual daytime hospital as any theatrically lit film noir.



Fig. 4.12. Hospital in *Bullitt*.

The finale at the San Francisco Airport further tested the limits of exposure and realism. Bullitt chases his suspect through an airfield at night. The actual runway left few options for lighting; there was no way to get a generator there and cables could not be run across an active runway. Relying on battery-powered lights, Fraker pushed the exposure a stop; Yates insisted on two stops. The result is one of the lowest-key color sequences of the 1960s, but the brightly lit planes and the sound of gunshots orient the viewer through the climax. Steve McQueen added to the realism by performing his own stunt, running under a plane on the active runway.¹⁸⁰ Thus by eking out an image and risking the actor-producer's safety, *Bullitt* gained both realism and production value that would be unattainable and prohibitively expensive on the studio lot.

Bullitt also offers more delicate touches of realism, such as a short sequence in an actual corner grocery store. *Bullitt* enters the store, moves to the freezer, and grabs a stack of frozen TV dinners. The art director cleared an aisle and rearranged the food to facilitate a dolly shot.¹⁸¹ Here in a moment we see the mundane part of Bullitt's life, the bland meals of a policeman who's too wrapped up in a case to bother with anything else. We also see a glimpse of San Francisco, where apartments over storefronts suggest walkable, personable districts. Other moments, such as Bullitt's partner waking him at his apartment, show not the indomitable driver of the car chase but the unglamorous policeman in his daily grind. This is a far cry from Harry Callahan in *Dirty Harry* (1971), whose daily life away from the case remains entirely offscreen.

Most of the film's settings reveal none of the current San Francisco culture that producers hoped to capture. Fraker raved about the energy of the city, as well as its various social districts, but aside from the restaurant date, these places are largely absent from the final film. Instead, San Francisco's postcard views and landmarks stand in for the people who defined the city. Fraker would compose shots around famous sites, such

as the Bay Bridge or Alcatraz, even panning past the action to end shots on popular landmarks of the city.¹⁸² Similarly, the speed and danger of the car chase precluded showing many San Francisco residents. Instead, the physical traits of San Francisco supply the energy. As the cars bounce over the famous hills, the actual topography of the city is activated as part of the action. Similarly, the creative geography of the chase circles around the city streets before exceeding them, pushing further into the surrounding hills, meadows, and bay views lying beyond the Golden Gate Bridge.

Bullitt makes a weak attempt to reconcile the scenic images of the city with the bleak, semi-documentary interiors. Late in the film, Cathy glimpses a corpse after intruding upon Bullitt during an investigation of a murder scene in another dim hotel. She says, "You're living in a sewer, Frank," and questions whether she really knows him. In the background, industrial structures contaminate the bucolic setting outside the city. The closing scene of the film returns to this idea of Bullitt's duality as a hard-boiled policeman and a countercultural figure. A panning shot shows Cathy's yellow car by the street. Next, Bullitt stares obliquely into the mirror before Yates cuts to an insert of bullets lying on the dresser. This narrative closure suggests a far deeper and more complex figure than the remainder of the film. In fact Cathy's dissatisfaction appears late in the film, soon after the car chase. Rather than reconcile the competing pleasures of the cosmopolitanite and the reckless cop, the film feigns resolution by framing Bullitt as one of the ambiguous protagonists of the youth films of its era.

Bullitt's depiction of San Francisco is far less personal than *Petulia* but equally indebted to authentic San Francisco locations. Rather than seeking places that captured San Francisco's cultural contradictions, *Bullitt* chose dynamic locations that activated the latent image of the city in automotive motion. Following an opening sequence in Chicago and the film credits, *Bullitt* offers its first image of San Francisco. Perched above the tall

buildings of Nob Hill, the camera offers a birds-eye view of the streets of the city. A slow zoom draws closer to the street, resting on a taxicab turning left. The San Francisco story begins with this passenger, who is introduced as a witness against the Chicago mob. Yet the zoom also announces the visual logic of the city: the focal point of the urban action will be the movement of cars. Yates often begins scenes with establishing shots where Bullitt parks his Ford Mustang at the next location. When separated from his car, Bullitt remains in automotive motion, interviewing a gunshot victim in the back of a moving ambulance or driving through the countryside in his girlfriend's yellow convertible. Highway ramps regularly appear in the background before and after the car chase. For over a decade, these structures appeared antithetical to a postcard San Francisco. *Bullitt's* ten-minute chase scene recoded these concrete barricades as the most exciting avenue to see San Francisco.

As cars careen through San Francisco, there is a far greater articulation of motion than place. Match cutting offers the perception of a continuous ride while the speed of the chase activates a dormant pleasure in San Francisco's hills. They become rhythmic undulations rather than views, although with each cut, Yates offers yet another one of San Francisco's picturesque urban backdrops. There is no articulation of direction beyond the match cuts but also no time to perceive buildings and districts as more than a backdrop for the arena of action in the streets. The only real delimiter of the distance traveled is the change in scenery from downtown to the surrounding hillside. Shifts in landscape primarily introduce new obstacles, such as oncoming traffic on one-lane roads and sharp curves etched by rocky hills. Traffic never arrests movement, but merely adds another obstacle to provoke another screaming turn of the wheels. Small details, such as background continuity or extra hubcaps, are nearly imperceptible within the sheer

momentum of the chase. In a single sequence, *Bullitt* exhausted nearly the entire landscape of *Vertigo*.

San Francisco's Summer of Love drew *Bullitt* to town, but the film's urban action aesthetic would soon be transplanted to other cities. Neither the scale of highways and airports nor the grim corridors of hospitals and hotels left room for more than cursory gestures towards the specific population of the city of the moment. In fact *Bullitt* offered a utopian combination of Los Angeles and San Francisco, energizing the former city's grit and automania with the latter city's spectacular sights and cultural cache. *Bullitt* and *Petulia* both exemplified the expansion of studio-backed, urban location shooting in the late-1960s. *Bullitt* proved the value of exploring the location as not only a place, but as a set piece.

Despite relying on several dark locations and a gritty, semi-documentary style, the San Francisco of *Bullitt* soon appeared halcyon compared to the San Francisco of *Dirty Harry*, shot only three years later. *Petulia*'s image of the American city was already out of step with the growing sense of an urban crisis by the time of its release. Warners asked that *Petulia* be completed by early November for an Easter release, providing six months for the distribution department.¹⁸³ Those six months brought the Tet Offensive and the assassination of Martin Luther King, followed by riots in many American cities. Returning from Cannes, *Petulia* had its U.S. premiere days after Robert Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles. San Francisco ceded its spotlight to Chicago in August of 1968, where protestors and policemen battled outside of the Democratic National Convention. America seemed on the verge of chaos and the primary battlegrounds were its cities. Hollywood responded with bleaker urban depictions, and for the first time, San Francisco no longer appeared as the exception to urban blight. By the early 1970s, this filmic city came to resemble the towering decay of Manhattan.

Notes:

¹ “Big Rental Films of 1968,” *Variety*, January 8, 1969, 15; “Big Rental Films of 1969,” *Variety*, January 7, 1970, 15.

² Art Seidenbaum, “Spectator, 1964: Film Mogul Dips Toe in Bay Area,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 8, 1964, D1.

³ Robert Joseph, “Tapping S.F.’s Film Potential,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 30, 1967, C16.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Rick Setlowe, “California’s Camelot: ‘Where Everything is Happening,’” *Daily Variety*, Oct. 29, 1968, 22-23, 94.

⁶ Setlowe, “California’s Camelot,” *Daily Variety*, Oct. 29, 1968, 22-23, 94.

⁷ Rick Setlowe, “Miscellany: Frisco Is Psychedelphia; So Many Happenings You Can’t Tell Hippies From the Interrelated Tourists,” *Variety*, April 12, 1967, 2.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Setlowe, “California’s Camelot,” *Daily Variety*, Oct. 29, 1968, 22-23, 94.

¹⁰ “MGM Lot: Sell, Cut or Rent,” *Variety*, September 11, 1968, 3; 21; “Film Biz Okay in 1965: Exhibition and Production,” *Variety*, January 1, 1966, 67.

¹¹ MGM, *Hollywood’s Greatest Backlot*, 219.

¹² “MGM Orders Review Re Culver City Site: Stay or Go Conejo Way?,” *Variety*, June 7 1967, 1, 71.

¹³ Steven Bingen, et al., *MGM: Hollywood’s Greatest Backlot* (Solano Beach, CA: Santa Monica Press, 2011), 268.

¹⁴ Robert Landry, “Hollywood-Beyond-the-Smog: Malibu Tract’s New Frontyard,” *Variety*, May 29, 1963, 1, 18.

¹⁵ “U Dictum: The Hills Must Go,” *Variety*, October 7, 1964, 7; Bernard Dick, *City of Dreams: The Making and Remaking of Universal Pictures* (Lexington: U. of Kentucky Press, 1997), 165.

¹⁶ “Universal Building to Stagger Reality,” *Variety*, January 1, 1964, 4.

¹⁷ See Chapter 2.

¹⁸ “Hollywood-Beyond-the-Smog,” *Variety*, May 29, 1963, 1, 18.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ “Schneider, O’Brien, Zanuck Meeting,” *Variety*, October 30, 1963, 3.

²¹ “Hollywood Studios at SRO: Rentals Boom; ‘Runaway’ Fade,” *Variety*, August 11, 1965, 7; “Finish Goldwyn Backlot,” *Variety*, October 7, 1964, 7.

²² “Metro Joining Other Studios in Rental Hike,” *Variety*, February 1956, 3; Dave Kaufman, “Employment So Bullish in H’wood, Unions Foresee Labor Shortage,” *Variety*, June 29, 1966, 24.

²³ Thomas Pryor, “Hollywood and ‘Runaway,’” *Variety*, April 26, 1967, 41.

²⁴ “Hollywood’s Runaway Boom: U.S. Production Holds Steady,” *Variety*, September 2, 1964, 1, 62.

²⁵ “Film Biz Okay in 1965: Exhibition and Production,” *Variety*, January 1, 1966, 67.

²⁶ Thomas Pryor, “Hollywood and Runaway,” *Variety*, April 26, 1967, 41.

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- ²⁷ “‘Camelot’ Home to Cal; Tricky Logistics Involve Use of Spanish Castles,” *Variety*, October 19, 1966, 16.
- ²⁸ Mark Harris, *Pictures at a Revolution: Five Movies and the Birth of New Hollywood* (New York: Penguin, 2009), 258.
- ²⁹ “D.C. Eyes Runaway Pix and TV—Again,” *Variety*, August 31, 1966, 2.
- ³⁰ Dave Kaufman, “Hollywood All-Out Anew to Halt ‘Runaway’ Theatrical & TV Filming,” *Variety*, December 6, 1967.
- ³¹ “31% of Hollywood Crafts 24,000 Pool Idle; Press to End ‘Inventory’ Slowdown,” *Variety*, March 27, 1968, 16.
- ³² Thomas Pryor, “Hollywood Unions Fight ‘Runaway’ But Waving U.S. Flag Not Enough,” *Variety*, May 8, 1968, 35.
- ³³ *Ibid.*
- ³⁴ Herb Lightman, “Portable Lightweight Equipment Keeps Production Costs Down,” *AC*, July 1964, 374-375; 403-404.
- ³⁵ “Unions Started ‘Runaway’ Trend But Fairbanks Back in L.A. and Jolly,” *Variety*, October 12, 1966, 4.
- ³⁶ Peter Bart, “Where the Action Isn’t,” *The New York Times*, July 31, 1966, D7.
- ³⁷ “With Studio City Operating, Count 27 Picture Producers in Miami,” *Variety*, February 9, 1966, 22.
- ³⁸ Stuart Byron, “Second Try for Studio City, Miami; Call It Ideal Midpoint for Budget Pics Between L.A. and Mexico,” *Variety*, October 18, 1967, 5, 22.
- ³⁹ Stanley Corkin, *Starring New York: Filming the Grime and the Glamour of the Long 1970s* (New York: Oxford U. Press, 2011), 6.
- ⁴⁰ “L.A. Labor Laments to Lindsay Lure; New York Seeks No ‘War of Cities,’” *Variety*, February 15, 1967, 11.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² “Mayor’s Campaign to Make Frisco Hollywood’s ‘Back Lot’ Succeeding,” *Daily Variety*, August 21, 1968, 1, 4.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁴ Hank Stockert, “Is Filming Technology Losing Ground?,” *AC* (April 1965): 226-228.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶ Walter Beyer, “Travelling Matte Photography and the Blue Screen System,” *AC* (October 1964): 564-565; 568; 592; 598; Stockert, “Is Filming Technology,” 226-228.
- ⁴⁷ Don Norwood, “The Camera of the Future,” *AC* (June 1966): 390-392.
- ⁴⁸ “Motion Picture Lighting Past, Present and Future,” *AC* (July 1967): 480-483, 500-501, 510, 512-513.
- ⁴⁹ Arthur Miller, “‘Natural Lighting’ For Interior Sets,” *AC* (September 1966): 618-621.
- ⁵⁰ Fenton Hamilton, “Studio Set Lighting – Present and Future,” *AC* (April 1964): 248-249.
- ⁵¹ “New Tungsten-Halogen High-Wattage Lamps,” *AC* (May 1968): 342-344; 370-371.
- ⁵² Ray Fernstrom, “Low Budget Color Photography of *A Swingin’ Summer*,” *AC* (May 1965): 293-295.

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- ⁵³ Andrew Laszlo, "Recent Trends in Location Lighting," *AC* (September 1968): 666-668, 696-697.
- ⁵⁴ Barry Salt, *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis*, 2nd ed (London: Starword, 1992), 258; Mike Waddell, "Cinema Verite and the Documentary Film," *AC* (October 1968): 789, 796-798.
- ⁵⁵ "The Boston Location Filming of 'The Thomas Crown Affair,'" *AC* (October 1968): 740-743, 786-787, 793-795.
- ⁵⁶ Behrend's, Inc. Ad, *AC* (April 1965): 212.
- ⁵⁷ Arriflex Ad, *AC* (April 1968): 255.
- ⁵⁸ Herb Lightman, "Cinematographer with a 'Split Personality,'" *AC* (February 1968): 104-107, 132-134, 138-139, 142-144.
- ⁵⁹ Éclair Ad, *AC* (August 1967): 563.
- ⁶⁰ Éclair Ad, *AC* (February 1969): 223.
- ⁶¹ "The Academy Award-winning Nagra Recorder," *AC* (June 1966): 409-411, 432.
- ⁶² "Product Report: The Colortran Hydraulic Crab Dolly," *AC* (September 1966): 522-525.
- ⁶³ Brad Chisholm, "Red, Blue, and Lots of Green: The Impact of Color Television on Feature Film Production," in Tino Balio, ed., *Hollywood in the Age of Television* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 227-229; Gorham Kindem, "Hollywood's Conversion to Color: The Technological, Economic and Aesthetic Factors," *Journal of the University Film Association* 31, no. 2 (Spring 1979): 29-36.
- ⁶⁴ Ted Fogelman, "Extended Development of Eastman 5251 Color Negative," *AC* (June 1967): 412-413.
- ⁶⁵ "Eastman Introduces Three Revolutionary New Films," *AC* (June 1968): 424-426, 449, 466-467.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid.
- ⁶⁷ "Product Report: The Lowell Quartz System," *AC* (May 1968): 360-262, 382.
- ⁶⁸ Andrew Laszlo, "Recent Trends in Location Lighting," *AC* (September 1968): 666-668, 696-697.
- ⁶⁹ For a detailed exploration of this ethos, see Patrick Keating, *Hollywood Lighting from the Silent Era to Film Noir* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).
- ⁷⁰ Andrew Laszlo, "Recent Trends in Location Lighting," 666-668; 696-697.
- ⁷¹ Herb Lightman, "Hitchcock Talks About Lights, Camera, Action," *AC* (May 1967): 332-335; 350-351.
- ⁷² Miller, "'Natural' Lighting," 618-621.
- ⁷³ Miller, "'Natural' Lighting," 618-621.
- ⁷⁴ Morton Beebe and J. Bruce Hayes, "Tinseltown on the Bay," *San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle*, August 22, 1971, 10-12, "Locations-CA, San Francisco," Clippings file, Herrick Library.
- ⁷⁵ "Eastman Introduces Three," 424-426, 449, 466-467.
- ⁷⁶ Scott Higgins, *Harnessing the Technicolor Rainbow: Color Design in the 1930s* (Austin: U. of Texas Press, 2009), 212. The 1967 Academy Awards would merge black-

and-white and color cinematography back into a single category, indicative of the growing rarity of black-and-white features.

⁷⁷ Burnett Guffey, "The Photography of *King Rat*," *AC* (December 1965): 777-781.

⁷⁸ Harris, 386; Paul Monaco, *The Sixties, 1960 – 1969* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 2001), 69.

⁷⁹ Higgins, 217.

⁸⁰ "Hitchcock Talks About Lights, Camera, Action," intvw. by Herb Lightman, *AC* (May 1967), 332-335, 350-351.

⁸¹ Charles Loring, "Filming 'Torn Curtain' By Reflected Light," *AC* (October 1966): 680-683, 706-707.

⁸² Herb Lightman, "'Reflections in a Golden Eye,'" *AC*, December 1967, 862-865; 896; 900.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Lightman, "Cinematographer with a 'Split,'" 105-107; 132-133; 138-139; 142-144.

⁸⁵ Herb Lightman, "Raw Cinematic Realism in the Photography of 'Bonnie and Clyde,'" *AC* (April 1967): 254-257.

⁸⁶ Gillo Pontecorvo, "'The Battle of Algiers;' An Adventure in Filming," *AC* (April 1967): 266-269.

⁸⁷ Dave Saunders, *Direct Cinema* (New York: Wallflower, 2007): 82-83; Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History: Theory and Practice* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 237.

⁸⁸ Mike Waddell, "*Cinema Verite* and the Documentary Film," *AC* (October 1968): 789, 796-798.

⁸⁹ "The Director-Cameraman Relationship," *AC* (May 1968): 52-53, 64-66, 338-389, 364-365.

⁹⁰ "Motion Picture Lighting," 480-483, 500-501, 510, 512-513.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² "The Boston Location Filming," 740-743, 786-787, 793-795.

⁹³ "Motion Picture Lighting," 480-483, 500-501, 510, 512-513.

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⁹⁵ Kevin Thomas, "Chartoff and Winkler: Entrepreneurs of the Offbeat Film," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 16, 1968, D1.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ "Britons See Irony In Choice of 'Petulia' as U.S. Entry at Cannes," *Variety*, May 15, 1968, 17.

⁹⁸ Ron Wise, "True 'Runaway': Film Costs," *Variety*, July 27, 1966, 15.

⁹⁹ "Hollywood Unions Greater 'Threat' To Yank Pix Biz Than Runaways: Prem," *Variety*, November 9, 1966, 1.

¹⁰⁰ "Third Case in Hollywood Brands IATSE Cameraman's Local as Job Monopoly," *Variety*, February 15, 1967, 11.

¹⁰¹ Thomas Pryor, "\$100-Mil. In 'Runaway' Pix," *Variety*, August 17, 1966, 3.

¹⁰² Peter Bart, "Where the Action Isn't," *The New York Times*, July 31, 1966, D7.

¹⁰³ Mark Harris, 136-137

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- ¹⁰⁴ David Talbot, *Season of the Witch: Enchantment, Terror, and Deliverance in the City of Love* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 90.
- ¹⁰⁵ Joseph, "Tapping S.F.'s Film Potential," *Los Angeles Times*, April 30, 1967, C16.
- ¹⁰⁶ A key factor in these competing aesthetics that deserves further scholarly attention is a widening aesthetic gap between genres in the 1960s. While crime thrillers had to develop a new color aesthetic, many comedies remained comfortable in a slightly more subdued Technicolor gloss. Even by 1972, the candy-colored 1950s palette of *What's Up, Doc?* did not limit the box office success or youth appeal of a San Francisco screwball comedy.
- ¹⁰⁷ Rick Setlowe, "Barbary Coast's New 'Frisco Sound' Phasing-out Hashbury Hippies?" *Variety*, August 23, 1967, 1, 62.
- ¹⁰⁸ "Television Reviews: Ironside," *Variety*, March 29, 1967, 46.
- ¹⁰⁹ "Television Reviews: Ironside," *Variety*, September 20, 1967, 33.
- ¹¹⁰ Aniko Bodroghkozy, *Groove Tube: Sixties Television and the Youth Rebellion* (Durham, N.C.: Duke U. Press, 2001), 75-85.
- ¹¹¹ Herb Lightman, "Voyage on a Sound Stage," *AC* (January 1965): 28-29, 68. Kramer shot on location when needed for the plot, such as the action chase through the woods in *The Defiant Ones* (1958) although this was limited to Southern California. See Arthur Gavin, "'The Defiant Ones'—Ultimate in Mood Photography," *AC* (August 1958): 484-485, 500, 502.
- ¹¹² Harris, 296-299.
- ¹¹³ Harris, 373.
- ¹¹⁴ Setlowe, "California's Camelot." *Daily Variety*, Oct. 29, 1968, 22-23, 94.
- ¹¹⁵ Peter Hartlaub, "Memorable Goofs in Movies About San Francisco," <http://www.sfgate.com/movies/article/Memorable-goofs-in-movies-about-S-F-5355388.php> (last accessed July 8, 2014).
- ¹¹⁶ Harris, 315-316.
- ¹¹⁷ Lightman, "Cinematographer with a 'Split,'" 105-107; 132-133; 138-139; 142-144.
- ¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁹ Beebe and Hayes, "Tinseltown on the Bay," 10-12. The company shot in Tijuana after wrapping in San Francisco. See daily production reports, 3 April- 12 June 1967, Budget and Production Reports, *Petulia* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.
- ¹²⁰ Joseph, "Tapping S.F.'s Film Potential," *Los Angeles Times*, April 30, 1967, C16.
- ¹²¹ "Julie Christie-Dick Lester Combo for 'Kook' Film; Seek Distrib Support," *Variety*, March 9, 1966, 5.
- ¹²² Tino Balio, *United Artists: The Company That Changed the Film Industry* (Madison: U. of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 248-252.
- ¹²³ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁴ "Julie Christie-Dick Lester Combo," *Variety*, March 9, 1966, 5.
- ¹²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁶ "Lester Forecasts San Francisco Pic," *Variety*, July 6, 1966, 17; "Britons See Irony," *Variety*, May 15, 1968, 17. The financial implications of this classification are murky and

further complicated by Seven Arts' purchase of Warner Brothers before *Petulia* was released.

¹²⁷ "Julie Christie-Dick Lester Combo," *Variety*, March 9, 1966, 5 ; "Lester Forecasts," *Variety*, July 6, 1966, 17.

¹²⁸ "The New Rock," *Life*, June 28, 1968, 45-62.

¹²⁹ Setlowe, "Barbary Coast's," *Variety*, August 23, 1967, 1, 62.

¹³⁰ Ralph Rosenblum and Robert Karen, *When the Shooting Stops...*, (DeCapo Press: New York, 1986), 12-13.

¹³¹ Setlowe, "Miscellany: Frisco Is Psychedelphia," *Variety*, April 12, 1967, 2, 78.

¹³² Bob Solo to Dutch Meyer, 23 December 1966, fol. 2019, Production Correspondence, *Petulia* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.

¹³³ Walter MacEwan to Jack Warner, 20 April 1967, *ibid.*

¹³⁴ MacEwan to Warner, 10 May 1967, *ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Daily production reports, 3 April- 12 June 1967, Warners Archive, USC.

¹³⁷ MacEwan to Warner, 10 May 1967, Warners Archive, USC. Lester did not make another film until *The Three Musketeers* (1973).

¹³⁸ See Steven Bach, *Final Cut: Art, Money, and Ego in the Making of Heaven's Gate, the Film That Sank United Artists* (New York: Newmarket Press, 1999).

¹³⁹ Rick Setlowe, "Lester 'Adopts' Rains for 'Petulia'," *Variety*, May 10, 1967, 11.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Roeg proved his value as a filmmaker and landscape cinematographer far from San Francisco, with his extraordinary footage of the Australian Outback in *Walkabout* (1971).

¹⁴² Beebe and Hayes, "Tinseltown on the Bay," 12.

¹⁴³ Albert Morch, "Elite in the Act," *San Francisco Examiner and Chronicle*, March 10, 1968, Movies-S.F.

¹⁴⁴ Setlowe, "Miscellany: Frisco Is Psychedelphia," *Variety*, April 12, 1967, 2, 78.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Kathleen Carroll, "Julie Christie Charms in Mod Film," *New York Daily News*, 11 June 1968, fol. 2019, Prod. Correspondence, *Petulia* Prod. File, Warners Archive, USC.

¹⁴⁷ Rowe, 149.

¹⁴⁸ Joseph, "Tapping S.F.'s Film Potential," *Los Angeles Times*, April 30, 1967, C16.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Abe Greenberg, "Frisco Quietly Raids Film Biz!," *Citizen News*, 4 April, 1967, "Locations-CA, San Francisco," Clippings file, Herrick Library.

¹⁵¹ "Big Rental Films of 1968," *Variety*, January 8, 1969, 15; "'Petulia,' Out-Take At Cannes, Opens At Gotham's Plaza," *Variety*, May 29, 1968, 5.

¹⁵² "Big Rental Films of 1969," *Variety*, January 7, 1970, 15; Marc Eliot, *Steve McQueen: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 2011), 212. *Variety* placed *Bullitt* as the third highest earner of 1969, just behind *Funny Girl* (\$16.5 million) and *The Love Bug* (\$17 million). Eliot cites other sources that estimate *Bullitt*'s domestic gross at upwards of \$35 to \$80 million.

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- ¹⁵³ Kevin Thomas, "Chartoff and Winkler," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 16, 1968, D1.
- ¹⁵⁴ "Big Rental Films of 1968," *Variety*, January 8, 1969, 15; "Film Reviews: Point Blank," *Variety*, September 6, 1967.
- ¹⁵⁵ Stanley Eichelbaum, "Steve McQueen Film Seeks 'Feel of City,'" *San Francisco Examiner*, February 22, 1968, S.F./Filmmakers, *S.F. Examiner* Clippings, S.F. History Center, S.F. Public Library (hereafter cited as Filmmakers-S.F.).
- ¹⁵⁶ "MGM Renting Alcatraz for Film Scenes," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 March 1967, "Locations-CA, San Francisco," Clippings file, Herrick Library.
- ¹⁵⁷ Michael Ciment, *John Boorman* (London: Faber, 1986), 73. Quoted in Peter Wilshire, "The Art of Dying: *Point Blank*," *Offscreen.com*, 17, Iss. 4, www.offscreen.com/index.php/pages/essays/art_of_dying/ (accessed February 18, 2014).
- ¹⁵⁸ Allan Siegel, "After the Sixties: Changing Paradigms in the Representation of Urban Space," in eds. Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice, *Screening the City* (London: Verso, 2003), 147-153.
- ¹⁵⁹ Eichelbaum "Steve McQueen Film," February 22, 1968, Filmmakers-S.F.
- ¹⁶⁰ Rick Setlowe, "Frisco's Slant on 'Runaway'," *Variety*, March 27, 1968, 7, 20.
- ¹⁶¹ Setlowe, "Miscellany: Frisco Is Psychedelphia," *Variety*, April 12, 1967, 2, 78.
- ¹⁶² Eichelbaum "Steve McQueen Film," February 22, 1968, Filmmakers-S.F.
- ¹⁶³ William Fraker oral history, 144-146, Herrick Library.
- ¹⁶⁴ Morch, "Elite in the Act," March 10, 1968, Movies-S.F.
- ¹⁶⁵ "Alioto Pushes 'Bullitt' Benefit," November 8, 1968, Filmmakers-S.F.
- ¹⁶⁶ Fraker oral history, 145-146, Herrick Library.
- ¹⁶⁷ Setlowe, "Frisco's Slant," *Variety*, March 27, 1968, 7, 20.
- ¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶⁹ Rosenblum, 3-4.
- ¹⁷⁰ Jim Van Buskirk and Will Shank, *Celluloid San Francisco* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2006), 33.
- ¹⁷¹ Paul Monaco, *The Sixties*, 98-99.
- ¹⁷² The fifty by twenty foot room was a luxury for Keller compared to the typical twelve by fifteen foot studio editing room. Herrick, Frank Keller Papers.
- ¹⁷³ Herrick, Keller notes.
- ¹⁷⁴ Fraker oral history, 149-150, Herrick Library.
- ¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 144, 153.
- ¹⁷⁶ See Chapter 2.
- ¹⁷⁷ Fraker oral history, 142, Herrick Library.
- ¹⁷⁸ Setlowe, "Frisco's Slant," *Variety*, March 27, 1968, 7, 20.
- ¹⁷⁹ Fraker oral history, 158, Herrick Library.
- ¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 159.
- ¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 156.
- ¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 144-145.
- ¹⁸³ Walter MacEwan to Raymond Wagner, 8 June 1967, fol. 2019, Production Correspondence, *Petulia* Production File, Warners Archive, USC.

Chapter 5: The Manhattanization of San Francisco: *Dirty Harry* and *The Streets of San Francisco*

Bullitt's San Francisco premiere in October of 1968 also served as a fundraiser with a goal of \$50,000 to defray construction costs for a new swimming pool in the Hunter's Point neighborhood. Following a \$25,000 donation from Warners-7 Arts, the city built the pool before public funds were allocated and by the time of the *Bullitt* premiere, it was already in heavy use. There was a clear reason why the city rushed to build it before the project was fully funded.¹ In September 1966, the largely African-American Hunter's Point was the site of a six-day riot.² The new recreation facility literally offered to cool the tension in one of San Francisco's ghettos. Alioto also pushed *Bullitt* producers to hire Hunter's Point residents as extras. In a *Playboy* interview, Eldridge Cleaver, the fugitive spokesman for the Black Panthers, derided Alioto's attempt to buy off pockets of black revolution with "little handouts" that included paid film and television appearances.³

By the end of 1960s, the violence, property destruction, and racial animosity of a wave of riots sharply redefined the public image of the American city. The 1965 Watts rebellion heralded summer uprisings in African-American urban areas throughout the 1960s. An August cover of *Life* magazine featured a Watts resident fleeing his flaming, low-income house, under the headline, "Arson and Street War—Most Destructive Riot in U.S. History: 11 Pages in Color."⁴ What many hoped was an isolated tragedy became an ongoing, national phenomenon. By the end of the summer of 1967, at least 31 had cities experienced riots, including a conflagration in Detroit that required President Johnson to send in the National Guard. This number rose to 125 cities in the week following Martin Luther King's assassination in April 1968. The imagery of the riots became emblematic

of urban decline. President Nixon emphasized urban disorder in his acceptance speech for the Republican nomination, “As we look at America, we see cities enveloped in smoke and flame. We hear sirens in the night.”⁵

In a study of American urban decline, Robert Beauregard argues that race riots created a “sharp break” with the previous fifteen years of postwar discourse. Urban decline became “urban crisis” as by 1968, racial insurrection, violence and crime in the central cities became the second biggest political issue behind Vietnam.⁶ In fact, these two crises quickly became visually and linguistically intertwined. Beauregard notes the common descriptors of the riots, including “anarchy, guerilla war, snipers, ...race war;” these terms could just as easily describe the conflict abroad.⁷ By the early 1970s, they could also describe Hollywood’s image of the city in police dramas like *Dirty Harry* (1971) and *The Streets of San Francisco* (1972-1977). Such depictions fit the bleak reality of New York, a nearly bankrupt city facing myriad social and financial crises from the late 1960s through the early 1970s.⁸ Yet San Francisco had carefully preserved its image as the American urban exception, making the city’s aesthetic degradation far more jarring.

The Hunter’s Point riot failed to mar San Francisco’s distinct national image. Kenneth Clark, whose 1967 *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power* harshly criticized America’s racist urban policies, listed the Bay Area as the possible exception to “creeping blight.”⁹ Neighboring cities overshadowed San Francisco’s own struggles with race and campus violence, as Oakland gained attention for the Black Panthers and protests at Berkeley drew increasing attention away from a prolonged student strike at San Francisco State.¹⁰ On the national stage, San Francisco’s Summer of Love seemed to directly contrast the summer of riots in other American cities.¹¹ Mayor Alioto helped quell a near-riot following the King assassination, and San Francisco largely preserved an

internal and external perception as an oasis from the racial conflicts of other cities.¹² As other cities fought for downtown investment, San Francisco continued its “vertical earthquake,” as skyscrapers rose throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Neighborhood activists criticized this “Manhattanization,” which drove up rents and blocked cherished scenery.¹³

Onscreen, Hollywood performed a different form of “Manhattanization” on the city, a reflection of new production strategies and aesthetic paradigms for location shooting. As San Francisco grew as a filmmaking center, the city drew production not only for its aesthetic and cultural appeal, but also for its financial and logistical advantages. Ironically San Francisco leached films from a struggling New York City only to appear as grimy and crime-ridden as New York on film. This bleak urban aesthetic not only reflected cultural pessimism over American cities but major advancements in location shooting technology. Filmmakers gained an unprecedented ability to capture nearly any part of the city, day or night, at a time when the most desired locations were the dark corners that defined a revived, semi-documentary form of urban realism. In *Dirty Harry*, a city marked by pervasive crime, red light districts, and macabre violence made the San Francisco of *Bullitt* look like an urban fantasy, *The Streets of San Francisco* reinforced and serialized this image of the decaying, crime-ridden city.

While the urban crisis altered the image of the city, a devastating recession between 1969-1972 fundamentally altered Hollywood production. Mounting debt on expensive films with middling box office prospects left Hollywood with little money to invest in new productions. As a result, Hollywood focused on relatively inexpensive films shot largely on location that took advantage of new location production equipment and union exceptions. As a result, location shooting became the dominant method of Hollywood filmmaking by the early 1970s, particularly for young filmmakers shooting low-budget features. Mayor Alioto took advantage of this trend and lured filmmakers to

Hollywood by offering extensive cooperation and production support. *Dirty Harry* epitomized the confluence of extensive location shooting and an aesthetic of urban decay in the early 1970s. The film took full advantage of San Francisco structures and local government support only to make the city appear as a chaotic wasteland. The surprise box office success of *Dirty Harry* helped popularize the image of a dangerous, blighted San Francisco, particularly on *The Streets of San Francisco*, where depictions of a city overrun by violent crime appeared weekly.

A MATTER OF SURVIVAL

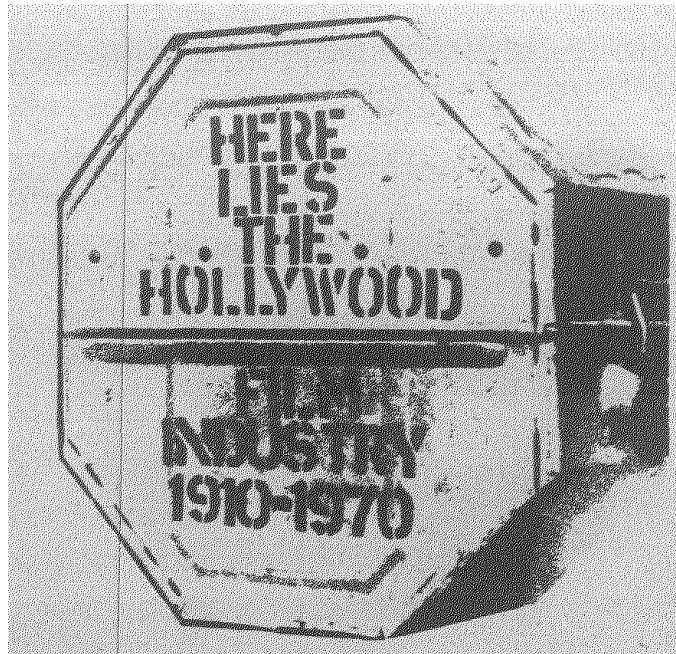


Fig. 5.1 USC Film Conference logo (*American Cinematographer*, June 1972)

For 1972, USC titled its Annual Film Conference “A Matter of Survival.” The conference logo was a film canister stamped with the epitaph, “Here lies the Hollywood film industry, 1910 -1970 (Figure 5.1).”¹⁴ Major directors such as Blake Edwards, Peter Bogdanovich, Rouben Mamoulian, and Sydney Pollack participated in panels, along with

industry leaders such as Fox president Gordon Stulburg and other creative workers, such as screenwriter John Milius and cinematographer John Alonzo. While recent hits like *The Godfather* (1972) and *The French Connection* (1971) encouraged Professor Arthur Knight, he estimated an 80% industry unemployment rate, an overstatement indicative of the public and private fears of Hollywood's total collapse. Two weeks later, MPAA president Jack Valenti and *French Connection* director William Friedkin addressed another college event at Babson University, a seminar titled "Who'll Save Hollywood?"¹⁵ What scholars now term the Hollywood Recession was at the time commonly referred to as the Hollywood Depression, indicative of the veritable collapse of the industry from 1969-1971.¹⁶

Hollywood acutely suffered from the social upheaval of 1968. In "perhaps the most civil violent year of the 20th century," violence in the streets had an immediate impact on the Hollywood box office. Black intercity residents and commuters afraid of racial violence avoided downtown theaters. The youth audience, shaped by a cultural revolution, remained a key but increasingly unpredictable demographic. New York, the most important urban movie market, was particularly hard hit by everything from a flu outbreak to a strike that shut down Broadway to the "intangible box-office loss" in and around Harlem due to "black militancy and white backlash." *Variety* labeled it "not-so-Fun City."¹⁷

These external factors proved far less damaging to Hollywood than its internal industry crisis. By July of 1968, the slate of Christmas and winter releases included several major hits such as *The Graduate* (\$40 million), *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* and the second run of *Bonnie and Clyde* (\$16.5 million). A year later, *Bullitt* was the sole film approaching \$15 million in box office. Meanwhile, the only promising summer hits in wide release were *Midnight Cowboy* (1969) and a Cinerama picture, *Krakatoa East of*

Java. The expensive roadshow releases, particularly dependent on struggling downtown districts, played poorly with rare exceptions like *Funny Girl* and *Oliver*. Hollywood's hopes rode on a record \$200 million inventory of 20-25 expensive films.¹⁸

Even before the failure of films like *Paint Your Wagon* (1969) and *Darling Lili* (1970), Hollywood sat on a record inventory at the worst possible time. The 1969 national recession spiked interest rates for film production effectively above 10%. With some \$1.2 billion in total inventory in Hollywood between 1969 and early 1970, the \$120 million in interest was roughly equal to the entire yearly box office gross for a major studio.¹⁹ Coupled with the poor box office returns on much of this inventory, studios only survived through a variety of financial maneuvers facilitated by the Nixon administration.²⁰

As in previous decades, spiraling debts immediately led to backlot divestment. In January of 1969, Paramount sold its Cahuenga lot for \$9 million, ostensibly to honor a consent decree for purchasing the Desilu lot in 1967.²¹ In September, Paramount laid off 150 workers, putting the Cahuenga sale in the context of a major restructuring to reduce overhead. Paramount not only needed to save money, but also to become a more competitive lot for rentals. Independent producers increasingly chafed at hiring studio personnel, such as crews and set designers, as part of a production deal, making many backlot employees not worth the overhead cost. Meanwhile, Paramount had a surplus of about forty finished pictures, giving the studio little need for in-house production employees. Paramount's move was the most visible, but every studio had been gradually shedding weekly employees over the first half of 1969.²² Even Universal, which as late as January of 1969 planned to add two stages and to cut 100-150 workers in November, shaving roughly \$2 million in payroll.²³

By 1970, the cuts were even more drastic, resembling the production downturn and overhead slashing of the late 1940s. A reeling Fox decided to reduce yearly production from 18-20 features down to 12-16. This echoed recent announcements by MGM, Paramount, and other companies. The goal was an \$11 million spending decrease, \$6 million of which had already been achieved through gutting operating costs. A restructured Fox also tried to better exploit its realty assets. Despite these drastic changes, it took years for Fox to emerge from debt. Despite a series of hits such as *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969), *Hello Dolly* (1969), *Mash* (1970), and *Patton* (1970), Fox took a \$17 million second quarter loss in 1970, with all of the profits merely chipping away at Fox's massive debt interest. In September 1970, Fox still had \$159 million tied up in film inventory, a quarter reduction from the beginning of the year. Despite slashing employment and production budgets, Fox still lacked the available funds to mount any major new productions.²⁴

Another solution was to build cash by selling physical assets, evidenced by MGM, which began selling off the vast majority of its studio real estate. New owner Kirk Kerkorian and his studio head, James Aubrey, planned to sell all but 20 acres of MGM's 140 acres of Culver City lots. Not only did they divest in real estate, but sold the camera department to Panavision and held a public auction of studio memorabilia, including Judy Garland's ruby slippers from *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). The biggest parcel of land went to a real estate developer, not a production company, revealing how little use contemporary filmmakers had for MGM's famous standing sets. A 1970 internal study assumed that only demolition costs lowered the estimated real estate value; on paper, the existing facilities had a negligible value.²⁵ Part of this devaluation stemmed from decades of neglect; MGM's New York Street served as the post-apocalyptic setting for *Soylent Green* (1973), and the decaying sets needed little embellishment.²⁶ Outside these blighted

urban sets, acres of fallow lots surrounded by chain-link fences were creating a dismal gray zone in Culver City. As wrecking balls swung in 1972, a television documentary and a *60 Minutes* special on MGM publicized the death of the Hollywood dream factory.²⁷

Despite such dire images and the common refrain from filmmakers that studio sets were unrealistic, *Variety* suggested in a December 1970 lead story that “the demise of the backlot is somewhat exaggerated.” Neither Universal, Columbia, and nor even Fox sold off major backlot properties; Fox’s Malibu ranch usefully doubled as Korea for *MASH*, the studio’s current box office hit.²⁸ By 1971, as Hollywood’s financial crisis continued, plans for studio facility mergers reappeared, as they had throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Columbia discussed becoming a co-tenant on Warner’s lot so it could sell off its main lot and ranch. Other mergers, such as a “tri-studio complex” for 20th, MGM, and Columbia, or another three-studio lot with separate entrances housed on the Paramount lot, gained less traction. As it had in the past, corporate competition stymied such mergers, and *Variety* hoped that the current desperation would overcome these obstacles to efficiency.²⁹

An aside in a *Variety* article on plans for new studios provided a more compelling argument for the economic value of the back lot: “Some corporate owners of the studios have been waging a war of attrition, hoping to outlast other lots and therefore sharing in the windfall of increased usage when factors induced other studios to close.”³⁰ With MGM shutting down production and other studios contemplating selling land to pay down debt, weathering the depression promised a major payoff. MCA-Universal, which had best monetized and modernized their facilities, including a profitable studio tour begun in the mid-1960s, stood to be the biggest winner.³¹ With the steady rise of independent production and the steady demand for television production space, the surviving lots stood to earn far more from rentals than the savings realized by shooting

their own films on the lot. Reduced overhead spending favored physical facilities over regular employees.

Employment conditions off the lot grew just as desperate, as high inventories, runaway films, and dwindling financing left few active productions for crews. By late 1969, several craft unions reported upwards of 50% unemployment. The situation was particularly dire for production workers. The cameraman's local, which last fall had virtually no unemployment, had 159 members out of work.³² A spokesman for the Propmans' union saw the bleakest employment situation since 1933. Despite IATSE's successful effort lobbying Los Angeles to repeal its film inventory tax, which frequently caused end-of-the-year slowdowns in filmmaking, Hollywood production work remained sparse.³³

Unemployment persisted even as the pace of runaway production abated. In Britain, a major destination for runaway productions, Hollywood filmmaking declined due to a combination of factors, including the anti-runaway campaign, domestic hits such as *The Graduate* and *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), and a reduction in Eady fund subsidies.³⁴ Yet just like *Petulia* and *Bullitt*, other European-helmed films such as *Midnight Cowboy* and *Zabriskie Point* (1970) avoided Los Angeles entirely. British director Michael Winner shot United Artists' *Lawman* (1971) in Mexico, and estimated saving \$1 million on a \$3.5 million below-the-line budget by avoiding the overhead and union labor costs of shooting at the studio.³⁵ With the support of Los Angeles Mayor Sam Yorty, production workers continued to hope for an American version of the Eady plan that never materialized.³⁶

The biggest rein on production continued to be the high inventory and interest expenses. This capital tie-up came directly at the expense of funding for new production. Not only did approved budgets tighten, but the "front money" needed to start new

productions was the lowest in years. Other pictures already in motion on “step deals” would be dropped well before shooting as studios refused to pay for the next stage of development.³⁷ Mayor Yorty asked for federal assistance to address the “catastrophic” employment situation, but *Variety* took issue with the implication that the studios were on the verge of bankruptcy.³⁸ Indeed, the financial maneuvers and tax shelters built by the Nixon administration saved the studios while leaving production workers to fend for themselves.

These dire straits left unions with little leverage to negotiate. IATSE gained a 22% raise by the fourth year of their new contract with the Association of Motion Picture and TV Producers, signed in early 1969. However, their demands for television residuals and a percentage on runaway films, intended to curb foreign production, were flatly refused.³⁹ Labor saving production devices, such as the Cinemobile, gained industry-wide acceptance, despite early resistance by the Hollywood Teamsters.⁴⁰ Workers saw a rise in non-union companies, often crewed by union members too desperate for work to report the violation. As one labor exec put it, “The unions have lost control.”⁴¹

The overwhelming beneficiaries of the Hollywood Recession were young up-and-coming-filmmakers, exemplified by companies like BBS. On the heels of the success of *The Monkees*’ television series, young production executives Bert Schneider and Steve Blauner joined producer-director Bob Rafelson to form BBS, a small production company focused on producing low-budget films for the youth market. When the BBS film *Easy Rider* (1969) became a major hit on a miniscule budget, Hollywood increasingly let young filmmakers try to make modest films for a countercultural youth film market that older producers struggled to understand.⁴² But the success of *Easy Rider* was particularly attractive in a depressed market; with so little capital to invest in production, the low-risk, high-reward strategy of low-budget filmmaking offered an

alternative to more conventional blockbusters that many major studios could not afford to finance. Columbia struck a six-picture deal with BBS, with each picture guaranteed under \$1 million.⁴³ Thus the success of *Five Easy Pieces* (1970) and *The Last Picture Show* (1971) more than offset losses on unsuccessful films like *Drive, He Said*.

The \$1 million number was far from arbitrary. On March 1, a IATSE went into effect that made special provisions for pictures budgeted under \$1 million, provided they shot in Hollywood or used Hollywood crews on location. The immediate beneficiaries were American International Pictures and BBS.⁴⁴ On the one hand, there was a reasonable argument for such an exception, since union regulations had been crafted around large studio productions, where hard-won concessions amounted to a smaller fraction of the below-the-line cost. On the other hand, such a move spoke to how desperate union members had become for employment, particularly when these skeleton-crewed productions offered few jobs to reward such concessions. Nonetheless, by the end of 1972, BBS still regularly clashed with unions, arguing that their regulations put an undue burden on low-budget filmmakers. The historically protective cameraman's union helped quash the BBS production "Gone Beaver," when it refused to make concessions for Nelson Almendros, a French citizen, to shoot the film without hiring a union standby cameraman.⁴⁵

Another beneficiary of union concessions was Francis Ford Coppola, who completed *The Rain People* on a \$750,000 budget. Coppola assembled a small crew of ten, hired from New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, while hiring additional technicians at each location in 18 different states. This small picture helped put his new San Francisco production house, American Zoetrope, into action. Despite various problems with the sound mix for *Rain People*, a clear sign of Zoetrope's lack of professional filmmaking experience, Warners allowed Coppola and his young partners, including

George Lucas, to keep learning on a low budget. A five-picture deal, each budgeted under \$1 million, represented a minor investment with the potential for major returns if the talented filmmaker produced even a modest hit. While Coppola emphasized the virtues of intimate films, the *Variety* headline highlighted the studio benefit: “Hollywood’s New Breed of ‘Personal’ Films Has Corporate Angle: Modest Budgets.”⁴⁶

Tighter budgets paid off for more expensive, more conventional films as well. Ted Ashley, Warners’ new production head when Kinney Services bought out Seven-Arts, gave his first green light to *Woodstock* (1970), an inexpensive documentary that grossed \$13.5 million domestically. He pushed “lean negative costs” not only for youth films, but for the full 1971 slate of features, averaging a mere \$1.7 million budget for 13 features. With a reasonable budget, Warners could take risks, such as the seedy plot of *Klute* (1971); the film paid off handsomely at \$6 million in rentals, rather than requiring a broader audience to justify its budget. While many companies budgeted for films to break even in the U.S. and begin earning abroad, Warners’ doubled production costs on several films domestically, such as *Dirty Harry*, *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* (1971), and *A Clockwork Orange* (1971). By focusing on the domestic market, Warners’ also focused on specifically American settings, including three of the films mentioned above, as well as forthcoming films like *Deliverance* (1972), *Steelyard Blues* (1972), *Cotton Comes to Harlem* (1972), and *What’s Up, Doc?* (1972).⁴⁷ This was a far cry from the expensive European spectacles of the past decade, although each production marked a return to America, not Hollywood.

Despite the Hollywood Recession-Era enthusiasm for tightly budgeted films, cheaply-produced films rarely became hits. Coppola and Lucas would have incredible success on big budget features but failed to find a hit “personal” film, from Coppola’s *Rain People* to Lucas’ debut, *THX-1138* (1971). Warners looked brilliant for *Woodstock*

but similar attempts at the youth counterculture, *Dusty and Sweets Magee* (1971) and *Medicine Ball Caravan* (1971) went nowhere. Meanwhile, *Billy Jack* (1971), an inexpensive Warners' acquisition, became a surprise hit with a middle-American youth market.⁴⁸ Other than low costs, no formula explained such different films as *Easy Rider*, *Woodstock*, and *Billy Jack*, nor did it explain the failure to replicate them.

As dozens of low-budget features by young filmmakers failed to produce another hit like *The Graduate* or *Easy Rider*, veteran producers like Walter Mirisch questioned Hollywood's cheap, "Don't trust anybody over 30" production strategy. Producers seemed to ignore the enormous returns on ambitious, mainstream projects, such as *Airport* (1970) and *Love Story* (1970), as well as an overseas audience with far different tastes than America. While not advocating for outrageous budgets, Mirisch saw less opportunity for cheap, youth-targeted films to expand beyond that audience. Following the success of *The Godfather*, Kirk Kerkorian questioned his company's approach to rapid filmmaking. MGM got its inexpensive films to market in an average of five months, instead of the average ten-month lag between the start of production and the film's release. This allowed them to quickly capitalize on relevant topics and market trends. But as Kerkorian lamented, "It remains difficult to get a 'Godfather,' 'Fiddler on the Roof' or 'Cabaret' to market five months after putting it into production."⁴⁹ As Hollywood's financial crisis subsided and tight-fisted production strategies yielded little profit, studios renewed their emphasis on more expensive productions with wider box office appeal.

The French Connection, which would win Best Picture, exemplified Hollywood's new economics. Producer Phil D'Antoni managed to finish the film for \$2.2 million, half the \$4.4 million cost of *Bullitt*, but saw similar box office success. Crucial savings came by taking a chance on younger talent. With Gene Hackman starring rather than Steve McQueen, above-the-line costs dropped from \$1.7 million to \$500 thousand. D'Antoni

also managed to reduce below the line costs by \$1 million, despite the same shooting schedule of seventy days. This was not a matter of belt-tightening, but primarily, the result of key technological improvements in the three years since *Bullitt* premiered. These developments made location shooting far more efficient, reducing budgets and production schedules while allowing cinematographers to shoot effectively in almost total darkness. With below-the-line costs rising from 60% of picture costs for *Bullitt* to 77% for *The French Connection*, location shooting came to rival star power.⁵⁰ In San Francisco and other cities, the most exciting new places to shoot would be the dark corners and dim, cramped interiors of blighted districts.

SHOOTING IN THE DARK

Much of *Dirty Harry* was shot on location in San Francisco at night, including sequences when the characters and action are barely visible in the darkness. While these shadowy settings provided an atmosphere of urban dread for the gritty police films of the early 1970s, they also offered a sense of adventure for filmmakers. Faster film stock allowed cinematographers to shoot with so little light that they could barely see their equipment. Low-key interiors and dark streets not only represented the urban crisis but prompted urban exploration, as filmmakers sought locations that only the newest technologies could capture.

When Eastman's 5254 stock appeared on the market in 1968, filmmakers had limited access to the fast new film. Not surprisingly, Haskell Wexler, who preferred shooting documentary style on location with available light, fought to acquire some for *Medium Cool* (1969). Directing his first feature film for a major studio, Wexler staged actors within actual scenes of American upheaval, culminating in the melee between policemen and protestors at the August 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago. The

film was an innovative blend of documentary and feature filmmaking that captured actual revolutionary events, but Wexler seemed most excited by a handful of dim interiors he shot on Eastman 5254, where he realized the implications of the faster film. For natural interior lighting, he simply put a brighter bulb in a household lamp, supplemented by a slight amount of movie lighting. The result saved five hours of lighting preparation and in his opinion, looked better.⁵¹

Wexler gained further light sensitivity working with a fast new pair of lenses designed for still photography. He adapted these to fit his small, custom Éclair camera. He soon learned that he could “push” the 5254 one f-stop in development without noticeably more grain, gaining even more effective speed. Wexler captured a sharp image of an actress crossing a Chicago bridge at night without additional lighting. Taken together, the faster stock, faster lenses, and pushed development allowed Wexler to achieve a photographic milestone. He marveled, “Everything you can see with your naked eye you can photograph in color.”⁵² Cinematographers had long prided themselves on their ability to create natural lighting, where a series of high-powered lights created the illusion of the world as seen through the human eye. Now color filmmaking technology could nearly do the same with available light, and for the first time, virtually any location could be filmed, often without additional lighting.

Wexler had an unconventional shooting style and worked with non-studio equipment, tempering the impact of his achievements with low light. However a few months later, veteran cinematographer James Wong Howe performed his own experiment. In what *American Cinematographer* described as “a radical departure from traditional technique,” Howe shot the big-budget feature, *The Molly Maguires* (1970), using quartz lights instead of brute arcs. He originally wanted to shoot the feature in black and white, due to the difficult lighting conditions and gritty tone of a picture about

coal miners, but Paramount refused because it would decrease its resale value for television. Despite the challenge of low-lit settings, arc lights were “hellishly expensive” on location, and 70% of the film would be shot on location in rural Pennsylvania and Ohio. Arc lights required massive generators, operators for the generators, and trained operators for each individual light. They frequently smoked and flickered, halting the shoot while operators changed carbons and then waited minutes for them to fully ignite. Due to years of downsizing and protectionist union practices, most skilled arc light operators had retired while few young ones had the experience to properly handle them.⁵³

The Molly Maguires was an expensive box office failure, but Howe’s cinematography lowered the cost of future Hollywood productions by proving the efficacy of shooting with smaller lights.⁵⁴ Once shooting wrapped, Paramount asked Howe to perform a direct comparison test between conventional lights and quartz lights. The detailed findings ran alongside the article about making the film in the April 1970 issue of *American Cinematographer*. For both exterior and interior shots, the look was almost identical.⁵⁵ In the midst of an economic crisis, Hollywood grew more willing to challenge basic production practices, and the results showed that newer technologies could not only supplement but supplant studio equipment. The approval of an old master of natural lighting signaled a greater flexibility for cinematographers, similar to their adaptation to stricter schedules following the postwar industry decline of the late 1940s.

In the early 1970s, a boom in new production equipment reduced production costs and mobility on location. Since the 1940s, production technology such as the photoflood lights used by William Daniels to shoot *The Naked City* occasionally trickled upward from amateur filmmakers to industrial and commercial producers, followed by television producers and finally Hollywood feature production. Yet the common use of arc lights in 1970, nearly a decade after quartz-lights gained professional attention in the early 1960s,

exemplifies how reticent Hollywood cinematographers were to abandon their familiar tools. Similarly, studios had little incentive to pay for new equipment if the old equipment was still effective. For the most part, new technologies like the Arri reflex camera or quartz-lights were only used on special occasions when studio equipment proved clumsy, particularly on location.

The speed of Eastman 5254 reduced lighting requirements far enough to make powerful, expensive studio lights largely obsolete. The boom in location filming during the 1970s, in part brought about by faster film, opened the door to a host of other new technologies. While established Hollywood insiders like Mitchell and Technicolor struggled to adapt, newer innovators like Panavision, Nagra, Arri, and Cinemobile flooded Hollywood production. After years of overhead reduction, the studio camera departments were no longer hubs of research and development. Instead, companies reliant on non-feature filmmakers developed technologies best suited for economic location shooting. As this practice became the norm rather than the exception during the Hollywood Recession, feature filmmaking underwent rapid technological change.

In 1969, Wexler still had to retrofit faster still photo lenses onto movie cameras to gain exposure, but by the early 1970s, new professional cinema lenses met this and other challenges. Working in concert with the Motion Picture and Television Research Center, Canon built three models of the modern zoom lens, debuting in mid-1971. Unlike earlier zoom lenses, these were lightweight, gave little distortion, and were as fast as conventional lenses, even at lengths as close as 2 inches from the lens. Adaptors fit both Arri and Mitchell cameras. Now filmmakers on location could carry far fewer lenses and easily maneuver the ring-focus on the zoom, even while shooting handheld. An effective zoom lens offered a cheaper alternative, if not exact equivalent, to dolly shots,

notoriously difficult to perform on location due to uneven surfaces and other location restrictions.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, Panavision continued to develop faster prime lenses that coupled with pushing in development, allowed for incredibly low light levels. For instance, using several Panavision lenses, Jack Priestley shot most of the interiors for *Across 110th Street* (1972) between five and twenty-five foot-candles, using available light as often as possible.⁵⁷ Panavision claimed its cameras added roughly a half stop of exposure due to increased efficiency, while ultra-wide lenses captured night exteriors with a quarter of the light requirements. The biggest detriment to further adoption of Panavision was their successful business model. Panavision was more expensive than other equipment to rent and the company did not sell their products; thus some producers favored cheaper rentals or studio packages included in production deals.⁵⁸ Clint Eastwood's Malpaso production relied on Panavision despite the expense because the superior technology helped films like *Dirty Harry* shoot efficiently with low-key lighting on location.⁵⁹

Early 1970s improvements in sound and video recording technology added further efficiencies to location filmmaking. The 1970 model of the Nagra sound recorder was palm-sized to make it easier to carry and operate on location⁶⁰ Crystal sync, a technology for wirelessly recording synchronous sound, had been developed in the 1960s, but Hollywood's further emphasis on location mobility in the early 1970s helped make it a regular rather than occasional tool. The same wireless technology made a new video replay system, developed by Video West, a more practical tool for use on location.⁶¹ While locations would never provide the quiet of the sound stage, wireless microphones made location dialogue far more attainable and surreptitious. Video replay helped ensure that location footage was effective before abandoning the location. While location sound

recording saved filmmakers extensive ADR work in post-production, particularly when shooting in noisy urban locations, video replay helped prevent expensive reshoots.

Other technologies that found more limited use underscore the overwhelming shift from soundstage to location. For instance, an “‘air bubble’ location stage” provided an inflatable sound stage for distant locations. The temporary production space would handle the occasional scenes that could not be captured on location, while serving as a backup set during inclement weather.⁶² Even special effects technology became more portable. Bill Hansard, a background projection specialist on 1960s television series such as *Green Acres* and *Petticoat Junction*, developed a front projection system “packed down into the minimum amount of space... with everything redesigned for mobility.”⁶³ These products responded to an era where for many filmmakers, Hollywood would become a place to finish films, not make them. Michael Ritchie, who shot *The Candidate* (1972) entirely on location, largely in the Bay Area, praised Hollywood’s technical facilities, including special effects, sound and music, and titles; he eschewed Los Angeles production facilities.⁶⁴

The culmination of these myriad location technologies would be the Cinemobile and its various imitators. Fouad Said developed the prototype for an all-purpose production van while shooting *I Spy* (1965-1968), a television series with the unique challenge of shooting on-location throughout the world on the typically restrictive television budget. As early as 1967, Said built new models for TV series and television movies like *Kona Coast* (1968). By 1969, as shooting cheaply in multiple locations became a regular practice for theatrical films, Said debuted new, larger models of the Cinemobile designed to accommodate feature production. The elegant design of the Cinemobile provided quick access to any piece of equipment, eliminating the need to fully unpack and repack trucks on location. Aside from a few pieces of technology

designed by Said, such as a compact generator, the van compactly assembled the smallest and lightest existing technologies. These included Nagra recorders, zoom lenses, Colortran lights, and Arriflex cameras, described as “one-eighth the weight and one-tenth the cost of conventional U.S. made-Mitchells.”⁶⁵ A promotional story for Cinemobile, originally published in *Business Week*, was reprinted in *American Cinematographer* courtesy of the equipment manufacturers that benefited from Cinemobile’s further adoption, ColorTran and Arriflex.⁶⁶

The Cinemobile held the greatest appeal for low-budget films and television work, where the below-the-line costs constituted a greater portion of the negative cost. In dense cities, which tended to have limited and expensive parking, the compact production vehicle was particularly useful. Thus in 1971, three features (*The Strawberry Statement*, *Harold and Maude*, and *Fools*), two series (*McMillan and Wife* and *Ironsides*), and two television movies (*Cross Current* and *Incident in San Francisco*) all used Cinemobiles to shoot in and around San Francisco; Quinn Martin, who produced *Incident*, would return to the city for *Streets of San Francisco*, which debuted the following year. While Cinemobile gained higher budget clients on two major Westerns, *Little Big Man* (1970) and *Jeremiah Johnson*, *The Godfather*, a blockbuster shot in crowded urban neighborhoods, proved the efficacy of Cinemobile for major pictures.⁶⁷



Fig. 5.2. Top: *They Call Me Mr. Tibbs!* (United Artists, 1971); bottom: *The Organization* (United Artists, 1972)

Location shooting technology advanced to a point in the early 1970s where cost was no longer a major obstacle to shooting in San Francisco and other cities. This facilitated a surge in urban location shooting that coincided with the redefinition of American cities as centers of crime and chaos. The popular image of the blighted city complemented a continuing trend towards bleak, semi-documentary realism as filmmakers actively worked to drain beauty from color film. While San Francisco suffered less offscreen blight than most American cities, the new semi-documentary aesthetic effectively blighted its onscreen image.

FILM STYLE AND URBAN CRISIS

Jan Dawson opened her 1969 *Sight and Sound* review of *Midnight Cowboy* with a comparison to two recent films set in Los Angeles and San Francisco:

Unlike John Boorman's *Point Blank* and Peter Yates' *Bullitt*, both of which managed to uncover some cinematically virgin aspect of America's urban landscape and to flesh out their criticisms of the society they found their with an obvious pioneer enthusiasm... British director John Schlesinger's first American feature confines itself to the now familiar terrain of the American Dream turned nightmare.⁶⁸

Dawson's allusions to the Western frontier indicate a paradigm shift in America's image-myth of city and frontier, which I discuss in detail later in this chapter. She also suggests more immediate shifts in Hollywood's urban production style between 1968 and 1969. While offering gritty cinematography and social criticism, *Bullitt* and *Point Blank* both reveled in the thrill of expanded access to urban location shooting; while eschewing the overt tourism of previous decades, these films approached America's new cultural capital as a cache of visual treasures. *Midnight Cowboy* and its bleak depiction of "New York's neon wasteland" heralded an era where urban location shooting favored the vice districts and rundown neighborhoods of the American city.⁶⁹ On film, urban realism became synonymous with urban decay.

The advent of the ratings system in 1968 brought a wave of films for "mature" audiences treating adult subjects with brutal realism. Partly as a consequence of *Bullitt*'s box-office success, shooting entirely in an urban location went from exceptional to commonplace the following year; the new challenge would be to shoot in tougher neighborhoods and under tougher conditions. Filmmakers would chase *Bullitt*'s aggressively low-light levels, approaching absolute darkness with faster stock and faster lenses. Later in her review, Dawson criticizes Schlesinger for failing to distinguish the transcendent dreams of the characters from "the ugly environment" they intimately inhabit. Such a critique could extend to Hollywood cinematography, where fidelity to often depressing locations took priority over characterization.

Midnight Cowboy famously won Best Picture with an X-rating, and a host of other controversial films, ranging from the acclaimed *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) to the

sensational *Deep Throat* (1972) became top-ten hits in the early 1970s. More typical genre films with M and R rated genre films gained a gruesome realism that pushed cinematographers to spend more time degrading the image than beautifying it. The cops and criminals featured in *The French Connection* and *Dirty Harry* were far more disturbing than *Bullitt*. An action film could feature rape, as in *Deliverance*, while hit crime films like *The Getaway* and *The Godfather* featured explicit violence previously reserved for exploitation films. Even successful musicals like *Cabaret* featured taboo sexuality and Nazi violence. Cinematographers gained attention for creatively stripping the beauty away from color cinematography, an aesthetic response to the harsh realism of the content.

Shooting *The Godfather*, Gordon Willis distinguished his work as decreasing rather than increasing image quality. He wanted the film to, “look like a newspaper photograph in bad color—a black and white print out of the New York Times, with a little color introduced.”⁷⁰ He even sought to make the image prominently grainy. Such a degradation of the image was not limited to period pieces, where historical distance might justify a weathered aesthetic. The futuristic *THX-1138* frequently shot under uncorrected fluorescent light in San Francisco locations, which “destroyed the features of people and their humanity.” Filmmakers did “everything that would ‘uglify’ the color.”⁷¹ On *The French Connection*, William Friedkin and cinematographer Owen Roizman even avoided “fancy compositions” that might aestheticize the film’s semi-documentary realism. Friedkin described the story as “dirty, stark and ruthless,” adjectives that defined the cinematography as well.⁷² In the early 1970s, gritty realism approached cinematic brutality, where not only embellishment but also photographic polish was meticulously avoided.

After shooting *The New Centurions* (1972), yet another bleak police film, cinematographer Ralph Woolsey suggested the continued impact of the virtual elimination of black-and-white filmmaking. Coupled with faster stocks, smaller lighting units, and extensive location shooting, the studio practice of beautifying the image had fallen out of favor. The goal was now almost exclusively to “make things and people look the way they really are,” and the result made locations like San Francisco often look worse than in reality.⁷³ America’s ongoing crises at home and abroad suggested that this visual truth had to be an ugly truth. Meanwhile, as lighting for color film in typical locations ceased to be a significant challenge, filmmakers tested their ability to shoot in near total darkness. Roizman shot a nightclub scene for *The French Connection* where table lights lit actors with only 4-6 foot-candles.⁷⁴ On *THX-1138*, the young filmmakers experimented with extremely low light levels, in places where they needed a flashlight to view the light meter and where the light meter could not even get a reading. Their motto became “Just put on your fastest lens, open it up all the way and shoot.”⁷⁵

For veterans like James Wong Howe and experienced cinematographers like Roizman and Willis, the subtlety of approximating natural lighting, particularly in dim locations, became hallmarks of their craftsmanship. Less than a decade earlier, the lighting demands of color cinematography placed far more emphasis on proper exposure and color temperature, while eliminating the smaller lights that facilitated fine detail. By shooting at low light levels and pushing in development, cinematographers like Gordon Willis left little room for laboratories to alter the final image. Thus they guaranteed the look of the picture against later interference, in case the studio wanted to brighten the print before release.⁷⁶ Cinematographers like Roizman prided themselves on creating the look of available light with carefully placed, small lighting units.⁷⁷ Yet such an aesthetic opened the door for younger, low-budget filmmakers such as George Lucas to

approximate this style shooting with available light. While such a method was far less precise, it facilitated rapid location shooting, and new technology provided a safety net against wasteful underexposure.⁷⁸

As Paul Ramaeker details, the Hollywood police film most completely embraced the location techniques of French New Wave and direct cinema, with *Bullitt* serving as the exemplar. By the 1960s, this genre would be almost exclusively set in “seedy metropolitan locations.”⁷⁹ *Bullitt* featured a mix of blighted locations, such as shady hotel rooms, and scenic attractions, such as Grace Cathedral. By 1971, scenic urban districts all but disappeared from realist films, replaced by slums and red light districts. For the *French Connection*, an “important goal was to not make New York look pretty. So the approach in scouting locations was to pick places that would make the city look the way it really looks.”⁸⁰ Roizman sought a “dismal” and “dreary” atmosphere, but if this were the only real image of New York, why would they need such careful location scouting? Gene Polito, cinematographer for *Prime Cut*, made a similar association between realism and squalor: “This rat infested flop house transcends our world of make believe. It stands out in my mind as a grim reminder of the spectre of human misery that exists today.”⁸¹ Ralph Woolsey listed the range of Los Angeles locations for *The New Centurions*, emphasizing adult theaters and bookshops, “nudie cafes” and Skid Row.⁸² While poor urban neighborhoods and sleazy night districts had long been a hallmarks of film realism, the era’s urban aesthetic suggested that these had all but taken over the city; in *Coogan’s Bluff* (1968), urban blight even overtook the halls of a New York police station.

Filmmakers also described themselves as urban frontiersmen, daring to penetrate dangerous neighborhoods. The “Blaxploitation” film *Across 110th Street* provoked a particularly breathless account of production risks in *American Cinematographer*. While author Charles Loring described shooting entirely on location as standard practice for

“rawgut realism,” he emphasized “the special problems of shooting in the teeming ghetto of Harlem.” Hollywood wanted Director Gary Shear to abandon “probably the worst ghetto in the country... he refused to be intimidated.”⁸³ Filmmakers hired local residents for security, and were shocked that observers enjoyed watching the location shoot rather than mounting resistance. D.P. Jack Priestly bragged about shooting in actual brothels, as well as apartments lined with rats and junkies that smelled “worse than a Himalayan yak.”⁸⁴ With the same bravado that 1950s and 1960s Hollywood filmmakers had celebrated the challenge of shooting in distant locations, they crowded over the danger and exoticism of shooting in hitherto un-photographed pockets of ethnic urban poverty.

While *Medium Cool* served as a limit case for the integration of documentary and narrative filmmaking in Hollywood, the ability to capture actors against the unfolding of real events in cinema-verité style remained an affordable flourish of location realism. *The Candidate* took particular advantage of this technique throughout the Bay Area. The story documents a California senate campaign, and cameramen shooting hand-held with available light appeared onscreen as TV-news cameramen. Shooting wide open with pushed, Eastman 5254, Victor Kemperer, who had just shot *Husbands* for John Cassavettes, took advantage of both available light and available events. Rather than hire the myriad extras and expensive locations required to stage political rallies, they took advantage of existing crowds. Director Michael Ritchie filmed candidate Bill McCay (Robert Redford) among the 20,000 person crowd at a high school football homecoming rally in rural Tracy, CA. Every December 31st in San Francisco, financial firms employees showered Montgomery Street with shredded calendars. Ritchie played it as a ticker-tape parade for McCay, and the jubilant crowd’s response to a movie star doubled for a political celebration. The production team asked for permission to embellish nearby spectacles, such as the Army’s burning of old barracks on Angel Island. Upon convincing

the Army to light a bigger fire, they added a scene where McCay and his opponent race to the site of a wildfire to provide political talking points.⁸⁵

Shooting verité style perfectly suited the economic, technological, and stylistic developments of the Hollywood Depression. Young directors like Michael Ritchie and older directors trained on tight budgets, like Don Siegel, showed flexibility adapting scripts and staging to the uncertainties of actual locations. Production obstacles that prevented consistent or polished cinematography became production assets in the form of gritty realist aesthetics. *The Candidate* cost only \$1.5 million, despite shooting a large number of locations, some of which allowed for only a single take. Yet the use of multiple, hand-held cameras and in post-production, faster editing ensured that improvised scenes could be stitched into the narrative.⁸⁶ Rough continuity and compromised photography would support, not hinder, the new mode of semi-documentary realism.

Hollywood films now regularly covered dozens of locations and increasingly used local people and events as part of the drama. Such practices required municipal cooperation, particularly in dense urban areas, where a location shoot could inconvenience or even endanger larger groups of residents. Yet Hollywood's economic crisis would be less prolonged than that of most American cities, where deindustrialization and white flight decimated the tax base. As Corkin observes, filmmaking offered a clean industry that employed blue-collar workers, and New York took the lead in wooing producers to town.⁸⁷ While San Francisco better weathered the economic slump of the 1970s, film production boosted revenue for local services like hotels and restaurants. Ritchie estimated that *The Candidate* pumped \$750,000 into the San Francisco area, half of the film's budget. Mayor Lindsay set the precedent for luring

filmmakers to the city; Mayor Alioto followed quickly on his heels, capitalizing on New York's struggles to lure filmmakers to Northern California.

BECOMING NEW YORK

Mayor Alioto's papers on San Francisco filmmaking contain a newspaper clipping titled, "Lindsay Signs New Film Pact." One paragraph is circled that suggests two relevant points of interest. The first is the \$40 million Mayor Lindsay claimed filmmakers annually contributed to the New York City economy. The second is the four-month suspension of filmmaking due to a union fight with producers over starting times, now resolved in a new 1971 agreement.⁸⁸ Lindsay set the precedent and proved the economic returns for other cities to court Hollywood location filmmaking. Yet New York's specific challenges also opened the door for San Francisco to lure productions away from the East Coast.

By 1970, New York's Time Square district was a public embarrassment for the city. In March, a lead article in *Variety* described the latest crime, when a subway drifter shot a transit cop in front of the Taft Hotel. The sub headline read: "Porno Sinema Tone Hurts N.Y." The rise of midtown office buildings left behind tracts of poorly lit construction sites adjacent to a growing vice district, populated by "muggers, hustlers and assorted Times Sq. flotsam." A 10-month survey identified "fear" as the most common word used to describe the area, now commonly referred to as "The Great Dark Way."⁸⁹ The decaying core of a once thriving entertainment district would gain further notoriety as the milieu of the acclaimed and widely seen *Midnight Cowboy*.⁹⁰ In contrast, another article on a group of San Francisco making family friendly films ran lower on *Variety's* front page, under the headline, "Frisco's Good Clean Fun."⁹¹

Hollywood documented and embellished New York's precipitous decline, from *Coogan's Bluff* to *The French Connection* to *The Taking of Pelham One Two Three* (1974); for Lindsay, luring production jobs and money to the city was worth the price of negative publicity onscreen. The year before he took office in 1966, only two features shot entirely in New York. By the end of his second term in 1974, 366 films had shot in the city. In his first year in office, Lindsay set up the New York film office to both coordinate and promote filmmaking.⁹² In 1968, California Senator George Moscone described Lindsay as "a one-man task force to seduce the motion pictured industry to New York." Mayor Alioto began following suit in Moscone's hometown of San Francisco. In fact the senator used such location incentives to question the need for a California film subsidy.⁹³

One of the key innovations of Lindsay's film office was a streamlined permit process. Rather than dealing with dozens of local agencies, filmmakers could efficiently and economically reach agreements through a centralized system.⁹⁴ In December of 1971, Los Angeles approved its own "one stop" permit office at city hall in another effort to stem runaway production. As the threat of domestic runaway production grew, Los Angeles had to adapt and compete with other cities as a potential location, not as an alternative to location shooting.⁹⁵ San Francisco struggled to adopt such a model, relying on a mayor's committee with no authority over production permits. The San Francisco Film Committee would soon be housed within the San Francisco Convention & Visitor's Bureau, which emphasizes the city's distinct approach to filmmaking. While the biggest promise of location filmmaking for Los Angeles and New York would be jobs, San Francisco kept a strong focus on location crews' downtown spending on hotels and restaurants, as well as the tourist promotion and publicity gained from the film industry.⁹⁶

Despite Lindsay's concerted effort to bring location filmmaking to New York, strong local unions clashed with Hollywood producers, as they had during New York's 1950s location shooting boom.⁹⁷ An agreement with N.Y. Studio Mechanics took over eleven months to settle in 1971. This led to further negotiations with Teamsters, the cameraman's union, and scenic artists to be flexible with start times and to share lunch hours. Teamsters bristled at Cinemobile's non-union drivers, while art directors fought producers who considered them unnecessary on location.⁹⁸ Paramount president Frank Yablans publicly blamed New York unions for driving the below-the-line costs of *The Godfather* from an expected \$600,000-\$700,000 to as high as \$1.7 million. Harvey Genkins, a representative for the New York cameraman's union, blamed *The Godfather* producers' indecision and bad planning for escalating costs. *The Godfather's* unprecedented box-office success would make these below-the-line costs negligible, but the immediate consequence would be Paramount pulling two pictures out of New York, including *Play It Again, Sam* (1972), which moved to San Francisco. Columbia followed suit, moving *Butterflies Are Free* to San Francisco.⁹⁹ Defenders of New York filmmaking acknowledged the problem but faulted Hollywood producers who did not know how to handle New York, a far cry from Lindsay's welcoming attitude.¹⁰⁰

Unlike New York, local unions in San Francisco directly implored the mayor to emulate Lindsay and insisted on flexibility to lure more Hollywood production. This strong support stemmed from San Francisco's place on the precipice of becoming a steady film production center. While Hollywood remained active in San Francisco in the early 1970s, the film committee urged the mayor to keep pushing to sustain regular employment for the local film industry.¹⁰¹ Mayor Alioto and union representatives, allied against San Francisco's powerful Board of Supervisors, which worried about the negative impact of filmmaking on the local environment. Alioto emphasized economic growth,

actively promoting downtown office construction that became an ancillary benefit for filmmakers, who used San Francisco's skyline as an alternative to New York.¹⁰² The influential citizens who opposed the new downtown's disruption of San Francisco's historic urban form and culture would similarly challenge the urban disruption caused by Hollywood filmmaking.¹⁰³

Bullitt not only showed the potential of San Francisco as a dynamic location, but also initiated the direct involvement of Alioto and city government in developing the city as an attractive working environment for Hollywood producers. The production push brought over 56 film and television productions to San Francisco from 1968 to 1973.¹⁰⁴ Alioto's initial 1968 filmmaking campaign gained the most publicity but few results. *Take the Money and Run* would follow *Bullitt* and *Petulia* as the third film shot fully in San Francisco in 1968, leading to the front-page *Daily Variety* headline "Mayor's Campaign to Make Frisco Hollywood's 'Back Lot' succeeding."¹⁰⁵ The low-budget feature, a parody of 1930s crime stories, took place in the urban East Coast and rural Midwest, but the greater San Francisco area provided the geographical variety to play these regions. Not coincidentally, *Take the Money and Run* was an early adopter of the Cinemobile, which allowed the production to shoot in 92 different locations around San Francisco.¹⁰⁶ The city itself offered other production assets, such as a Mission district warehouse converted to television office and production space.¹⁰⁷ San Francisco turned its local blight into a desirable location; the Yerba Buena project, a decaying area South of Market designated for development, stood in for the 1930s slums of Camden, New Jersey.¹⁰⁸

Films with settings non-specific to San Francisco, such as *Take The Money and Run* and *The Boston Strangler*, which used San Francisco in place of Back Bay Boston, proved more sustainable than simply promoting San Francisco screenplays. In fact

despite Alioto's public promotions in 1968, the number of projects shot in San Francisco declined from around seven in 1968 to five in 1969. The direct cause would be the overall production decline brought by the Hollywood Recession. San Francisco's national profile would also wane from the peak attention received during the Summer of Love, as the countercultural music and experimental film scene declined while strip clubs and pornographic films gained national attention.¹⁰⁹

The most prominent San Francisco films fit the current urban pessimism. After scouting Oakland and Los Angeles, Michelangelo Antonioni chose San Francisco for the site of a "Negro riot" for *Zabriskie Point*; in the actual film, the riot became a violent, interracial student protest.¹¹⁰ *The Strawberry Statement* (1971) centrally focused on campus violence, featuring a prolonged student strike, building takeover and a military police raid on the protesters. Producers Irwin Winkler and Robert Chartoff, who shot in San Francisco for *Point Blank*, staged most scenes in nearby Stockton, but additionally shot in the city to suggest San Francisco State. The film hoped to capitalize quickly on the protests at Columbia and Berkeley, but San Francisco served as a fitting stage for youth liberation turning to pitched violence.¹¹¹ While the box-office failure of both films reduced the negative impact on the city's image, they showed that San Francisco locations had lost their box-office magic.

In early 1969, San Francisco's Recreation and Parks Commission announced they would eliminate permit fees, making popular locations like Golden Gate Park more affordable to smaller film companies. Lindsay had done the same thing in New York. The Mayor's Office also suggested an annual license for companies rather than a long series of permit requests.¹¹² Yet over a year later, San Francisco's IATSE office complained that companies who had balked at the \$250 fees were now being charged again, at \$200, still a hefty price for smaller operators.¹¹³ Meanwhile, the local SAG

office complained to the Mayor that the film committee received an inadequate budget from the Chief Administrative Officer. Faced with an immediate fiscal crisis, the Mayor instead suggested a model of direct assistance by the business community that would benefit from an uptick in local production.¹¹⁴

Despite San Francisco's disorganized production apparatus, Hollywood location production boomed in the city in the early 1970s, rising from eleven productions in 1970 to eighteen in 1971 and seven in the first half of 1972. Prior to the start of the *Streets of San Francisco* in 1972, the city already estimated \$40-45 million in revenue from Hollywood, commercial, industrial, and documentary production combined in the last five years (1968-1972). This number did not include the additional revenue from increased tourism promoted by San Francisco's growing screen time.¹¹⁵ While big-budget films like *Dirty Harry* and *What's Up, Doc?* gained the most attention, the key to San Francisco's production boom were the less expensive films, particularly, television movies.

Debuting in 1966 on NBC, television movies became a fixture of network programming by the early 1970s.¹¹⁶ They also served as a brilliant way to mitigate the risk of launching a new network series. "Pilots" such as *Incident in San Francisco* (1971), which appeared as a two-hour, *ABC Sunday Night Movie*, promoted new series while giving the network a test run with audiences before ordering a full series. *The Streets of San Francisco* would follow this launch pattern, while failed pilots like *Incident* and Warners' *Cross Current* (1971) merely served as television movies. Television movies were also cheaply produced and with lower union restrictions compared to film.¹¹⁷ San Francisco would similarly benefit from the under-\$1 million pictures eligible for IATSE and other union exceptions, which allowed producers to hire more local cast and crew in San Francisco without compensating Los Angeles unions.

Crosscurrent (1970), *Fools* (1970), and *Play It Again Sam* all publicly reported a \$1 million budget, and several other inexpensive films shot in San Francisco likely fell below this threshold.¹¹⁸

San Francisco continued to attract productions consonant with its past images. For instance, the series *McMillan & Wife* and the adamant throwback to classical Hollywood, *What's Up, Doc?*, depicted the city with cine-tourist splendor, the former in a colorful bicycle chase through the city and the latter through a posh hotel setting and a slapstick car chase through Chinatown. Similarly, increasingly mobile television series used San Francisco as an exciting change of scenery, including episodes of *The FBI*, *Mission Impossible*, and *Lassie*.¹¹⁹ Other films tapped into the hippie and drug culture, such as the 1972 films *Thumb Tripping*, *Dealing*, and *Butterflies Are Free*. San Francisco's liberal reputation also made it a plausible setting for African-American led dramas. Sidney Poitier reprised his role as Virgil Tibbs, now relocated to San Francisco, where a happy home and a lack of prejudice seemed more believable than set in the Deep South, or even Tibbs' hometown of Philadelphia. *Cross Current* was a police show expected to become the first hour-long drama starring an African-American (Robert Hooks). Airing in a 2-hour version on ABC in 1971 and a 90-minute version on CBS in 1972 (retitled *The Cable Car Murder*), *Variety* praised the San Francisco locations, which added, "the immeasurable sense of the city's vaunted charm;" nonetheless, the program never became a series.¹²⁰ Even the bizarre romance of *Harold and Maude* appeared more plausible set in San Francisco and Northern California.

A final piece of the San Francisco production boom was the establishment of a San Francisco studio: American Zoetrope. Coppola used seed money from a multi-picture deal with Warners' Ted Ashley to build a filmmaking plant in San Francisco in 1969, which he hoped would become a new form of cooperative feature film studio. By the end

of 1970, Warners' displeasure with *THX-1138* caused Ted Ashley to terminate the deal and call in the loan, essentially bankrupting the fledgling film complex. The company survived, in large part due to Coppola's ability to tap into San Francisco's thriving television commercial market, as well as educational and industrial films.¹²¹ By investing heavily in new camera equipment and flatbed editing machines, Coppola positioned Zoetrope to become a small production house akin to New York rental and production facilities. Filmmakers like Michael Ritchie who moved to San Francisco and became a regular at Zoetrope, took advantage of state-of-the-art equipment and begin post-production work before returning to Los Angeles on location pictures like *The Candidate*.¹²²

Indicative of the rise of location shooting, Coppola decided to build American Zoetrope without a sound stage. This preference for location shooting proved overly optimistic when Coppola's first production, *THX-1138*, directed by his protégé, George Lucas, involved a science fiction set pieces that forced them to rent a Hollywood sound stage.¹²³ However the ability to shoot at very low light levels helped Lucas capture certain San Francisco locations that could double as science-fiction sets. Gaining access to the newly constructed BART stations and tunnels, Lucas found empty, space-age facilities that added immeasurable production value to the film. Bay Area architecture, such as the Oakland Coliseum, the Pacific Gas and Electric Building (built in 1971 and also featured in *Dirty Harry*), and the Marin County Civic Center (Frank Lloyd Wright's final commission), provided voluminous, modernist settings for the future dystopia. Shooting on location, Lucas pushed almost every shot for available light, except tellingly, shots needed for optical effects.¹²⁴ Years later, Lucas' pioneering use of optical effects would make him a billionaire, while drawing him and the Hollywood industry back from the extensive location shooting used for *THX-1138* and *American Graffiti* (1973).

One of Alioto's major challenges would be to keep both Hollywood producers and San Francisco residents supportive of increased location shooting in the city. Alioto carefully branded the San Francisco Film Festival as a celebration of American film in 1968. He introduced the Samuel Goldwyn Award, named after his former client, for "the best American-made picture." Thus he framed his efforts, like Lindsay's, to promote production in his city—and the United States—as part of the larger cause of promoting American over foreign production. He named the award after Goldwyn for his role as "a long-time critic of 'runaway' motion picture production." *Variety* wondered whether this would finally convince the major studios to cooperate in the film festival. But reporter Thomas Pryor gave credence to Alioto's jingoism, hoping it might, "bring the controlling forces of the European festivals to their senses and rekindle a respect for the U.S. industry, which has been treated with contempt of recent years."¹²⁵ This diplomatic stance towards Los Angeles also supported Alioto's larger aspirations as a potential Democratic vice-presidential candidate in 1968 and a candidate for California governor in 1974.

Alioto satisfied San Francisco by insuring that producers contributed something to local interests, which began with the charity premiere of *Bullitt*. The *Dirty Harry* premiere raised \$10,000 towards the Police Activities League, which even critics like Herb Caen had to acknowledge; smaller films like *The Organization* gave \$2500 in an unspecified cultural donation.¹²⁶ In 1972, Alioto decided to ask production companies shooting in San Francisco to donate to the film festival; he even suggested requiring producers to meet with the mayor before the final granting of a shooting permit, which would allow him to make a personal "pitch" for donations.¹²⁷ Thus location production would build the festival, and the festival would build interest in further location production.

Both *Dirty Harry* and *What's Up Doc?* shot on location in San Francisco during 1971. *Dirty Harry*, with its violent portrayal of San Francisco and ambivalent stance on police vigilantism seemed like a film that would begin to sour residents on the boom in local filmmaking. Surprisingly, it was *What's Up, Doc?*, which director Peter Bogdanovich touted as, "A G-rated comedy with no redeeming social values."¹²⁸ Decrying the scarcity of the escapist fare that defined classical Hollywood, Bogdanovich captured San Francisco in near-Technicolor glory with a screwball comedy starring Barbra Streisand as a character who combined the comic anarchy of Bugs Bunny and a Howard Hawks female lead. Unlike Hawks, Bogdanovich shot almost entirely on location, and the climax was a wacky car chase through Chinatown. Producers secured a permit to drive a single Volkswagen down the steps at Alta Plaza, a park in the wealthy Pacific Heights district, provided it was equipped with a rubber piece to protect the stairs. Instead, the unmodified Volkswagen and four full-sized sedans "plummeted down the stairway," chipping the old concrete. This innocuous incident might not have made the news in another city. In San Francisco, the headline read, "Outrage at Alta Plaza."¹²⁹

At the time of this October 1971 incident, four films were busy shooting in San Francisco's condensed and densely populated urban core. While Warners' insurance easily covered the damage to Alta Plaza, the tony residents reacted to Hollywood filmmakers cavalierly ignoring an agreement with the Parks and Recreation Department. Complaints drew the attention of Supervisor Robert Mendelsohn, who decided to hold hearings on location filmmaking. While not seeking to discourage filmmakers, he suggested that, "the enormous growth in filming on our streets and parks has raised a number of questions which deserve study." He sought to determine whether producers adequately paid for services, such as policemen and street closures, and whether they sufficiently protected property, what he saw as "reasonable guidelines."¹³⁰ Herb Caen, the

legendary columnist for the *Chronicle*, not only approved of Mendelsohn's suggestion, but took the argument a few steps further.

Caen was amenable to the major cultural shifts of 1960s San Francisco, but Los Angeles visitors seemed clearly antithetical to San Francisco's unique urban culture.¹³¹ He wrote, "The chutzpah of these Hollywood invaders is wondrous to behold," and listed the traffic problems, police protection, and property damage San Francisco gave in exchange for publicity. Yet here he pivoted to the specific content of these productions. *Bullitt's* high-speed chase, without alerting a squad car, and the ineffectual police commissioner of *McMillan and Wife* at best showed an inept San Francisco police force. Worse even was the "brute of a cop" in *Dirty Harry* and *The Organization*, where "S.F. crime runs rampant."¹³² The once star-struck residents of San Francisco had grown annoyed with the intrusion of location filmmaking. But more fundamentally, the deteriorating image of San Francisco appeared both inaccurate and destructive to the city's reputation.

The uproar in San Francisco made the front page of *Variety* two weeks later, under the headline, "Frisco has Some Second Thoughts On Wooing Film Productions." Although *Variety* blamed some of the uproar on San Francisco's "anti-auto sentiment," citing the still unfinished Embarcadero Freeway featured in *The Lineup*, they also blamed the city for never making a clear effort at production coordination. While successfully promoting filmmakers to come to town, San Francisco still lacked a dedicated production office like New York, and the resulting chaos might result in further filming restrictions. While acknowledging Caen's overstatement, *Variety* did agree with his second point: "As today's films strive for realism, one seldom sees any flattering side of urban life unspooled on screen once the crews are gone from town." While New York continued to fight for production jobs, "the consistent movie view of Gotham these days is hardly

glamorous.”¹³³ The confluence of ugly realism and expanded urban location shooting created a dilemma for cities vying for film production. San Francisco wanted the production economy of New York but they did not want to inherit its blighted image.

Mayor Alioto responded quickly to assuage Hollywood’s doubts about San Francisco’s desire for production. *Variety* reported that at *Dirty Harry*’s December 1971 premiere in San Francisco, he took the stage to say, “We’ll continue to make pictures in San Francisco, and we’re not going to worry about a couple of chipped steps in Alta Plaza.”¹³⁴ While location production irked residents, local production companies and unions lobbied city government to do more to facilitate Hollywood filmmaking. San Francisco’s IATSE Cameramen pushed for greater city assistance. Representative Gerald Smith wrote Mendelsohn that he was “perplexed by your obvious prejudice” against San Francisco filmmaking and copied Alioto on the letter. He further cited the greater incentives offered by other states and Canada, where helicopter scouting and police assistance were free, and services like cars and cheap hotel rates included.¹³⁵ Local filmmakers and officials begged the Mayor to do even more. San Francisco commercial filmmaker, Greg Snazelle, shared a letter he received from Los Angeles Mayor Yorty that established a one-stop permit office.¹³⁶ Another letter advocated for the construction of a sound stage, which would help convince filmmakers to shoot both exteriors and interiors in the city.¹³⁷

With the cooperation of Mayor Alioto, a group of local film companies and union representatives formed the San Francisco Film Committee, officially housed in the mayor’s office. Ann Brebner, who along with her husband, ran a casting agency that provided local extras for nearly every Hollywood location production shot in San Francisco, chaired the committee. A month after the Alta Plaza incident, film committee member George Burrafato outlined an ambitious proposal to streamline San Francisco’s

production policy for the immediate future. The position of a city production coordinator needed to be established and furnished with an office. The committee should prepare a directory of local production services to become, “the San Francisco bible for anything a filmmaker may need in the Bay Area.” He suggested selling ads in the directory to offset the cost and then mailing the directory with a promotional cover letter from the Mayor’s office. Finally, ads would be placed yearly in industry publications like *Variety* and *American Cinematographer*. The city gained extensive coverage in the October 1971 issue of *American Cinematographer* with a cover story and a series of articles for a special section on San Francisco filmmaking. Here a regional Kodak representative extolled the virtues of shooting in San Francisco alongside articles on American Zoetrope, *THX-1138*, and a new, filmed tourist attraction called “The San Francisco Experience.”

The committee planned a major meeting in late June of 1972 at the Fairmont hotel, assembling representatives from local unions, such as SAG and IATSE, as well as government officials from myriad local agencies, such as B.A.R.T., the Golden Gate Bridge Authority, and the Recreation and Parks Department. and put forth an ambitious agenda. The committee proposed to send a delegation to Los Angeles and provide a press conference to announce their new role as a clearinghouse for location production matters, coordinated with a mass mailing to producers in Hollywood and New York. They also planned an annual award, which first would go to Francis Ford Coppola, San Francisco’s most celebrated filmmaker.¹³⁸ In the press, Brebner promoted San Francisco filmmaking beyond credulity, citing its “hospitable climate” and frequent clear days, where available light largely sufficed, as if Los Angeles filmmakers had brought the weather north with them.¹³⁹

Despite their high aspirations, the film committee never gained the authority to centrally oversee film production. For undisclosed reasons, the Committee moved out of the mayor's office into the Convention & Visitor's Bureau by June of 1972.¹⁴⁰ Their production directory appeared by 1974, but producers still directly corresponded through the mayor. In fact Alioto's ongoing interest in networking with filmmakers, such as his proposal to tie permits to a personal meeting, suggests he never wanted to relinquish his role to a more efficient committee. Without a centrally organized film office, location production challenges and local resistance persisted, particularly following the success of *Dirty Harry*. Not only did the film depict the city awash with crime and vice, but its box office success prompted sequels and imitators that made violent police dramas a staple of location production in San Francisco throughout the 1970s. A salient example of this trend appeared on television, where *The Streets of San Francisco*, while less disturbing than *Dirty Harry*, broadcast a weekly picture of a brutal, crime-ridden city to a national audience.

***DIRTY HARRY* AND URBAN DECAY**

Upon its release, the politics of *Dirty Harry* largely shaped discussions of the film. The initial backlash came from movie critics, such as Pauline Kael, Andrew Sarris, and Roger Ebert describing the film as a fascist and paranoid portrayal of the American police and legal system. Warners expected controversy upon the release of *Dirty Harry*, and found it not only in the critical backlash, but an Oscar protest, where demonstrators held signs reading, "Dirty Harry is a Rotten Pig."¹⁴¹ Film scholars have mounted similar critiques as well. In *American Films of the 1970s: Conflicting Views*, Peter Lev nuances these arguments, but suggests that Harry Callahan personifies a simplistic version of law and order, right-wing conservatism, and the film follows this credo.¹⁴² While scholars

such as Lev tie the film's success to the rise of the silent majority, many of *Dirty Harry*'s motifs and references are multivalent, a product of the complicated interweaving of production technique, location context, and cultural context.

Writers and scholars who focus more closely on the visual style than the narrative of *Dirty Harry* tend to see the film as more complex and morally ambivalent, including those writing at the time of the film's release. As Gordon Gow cautioned in 1972, despite an undercurrent of social criticism, "the danger is that many will keep on seeing things from Harry's viewpoint."¹⁴³ Four sequels made by Eastwood's production company, Malpaso, further distorted the film's immediate context as the Dirty Harry character grew less complex as a franchise hero. The issue of political identification with *Dirty Harry* was reignited when Clint Eastwood uttered "Make My Day" to a cheering crowd at the 2012 Republican Convention. Ronald Reagan famously repeated this famous line from the fourth Dirty Harry film, *Sudden Impact* (1983), and the later identification of conservative politicians with Harry further distorts the more ambiguous characterization of Harry in the original 1971 film.

Regardless of its politics, looking at *Dirty Harry* as a San Francisco film shot largely on location places it more squarely in the specific production context of its era. The successful transformation of America's most scenic city into a shadowy cesspool shows how determinant the new semi-documentary urban aesthetic became by the early 1970s. The city government's active participation in its own image destruction also follows a larger trend. Where *Dirty Harry* proves rather unique is collapsing so many elements of location shooting, urban form, and national crises into violent set pieces. Loaded symbols that doubled as production elements, such as zooms paired with snipers' rifles and helicopters provided loaded symbols associated with Hollywood, riots, and Vietnam. As the urban crisis created central loci for cultural anxieties, *Dirty Harry* built

a thrilling city of action where the urban nightmare comprised the totality of San Francisco.

Dirty Harry follows Detective Harry Callahan's as he tracks Scorpio, a sniper who kills random victims and taunts the police with cryptic notes, similar to the actual Zodiac Killer who killed several people in and around San Francisco between 1968 and 1969. Between a series of encounters with Scorpio, Harry fights other crimes that appear to be daily chores for San Francisco police, including a bank robbery and an attempted suicide. Harry finally captures Scorpio in a deserted Kezar Stadium, shooting him and digging his foot into the wound hoping to find the whereabouts of a kidnapped girl. Harry is too late to save the girl and charges of police brutality improbably free Scorpio on all charges. Scorpio eventually captures a bus full of school children. Harry confronts Scorpio at an industrial plant on the outskirts of the city, kills him, and throws his badge into a wastewater pool where Scorpio floats dead. In this troubling portrait of a San Francisco, the forces of law and order fail to protect San Francisco or restrain Harry and Scorpio's violence. *Dirty Harry* made a profound impact on Eastwood's career and San Francisco filmmaking, but the script originated with a different star and a different setting.

Dirty Harry began as a Frank Sinatra star vehicle set in New York, an appropriate follow-up to his 1968 film, *The Detective*. After four drafts, Sinatra withdrew from the film, leading Clint Eastwood and Don Siegel to develop the project at Warners. A location change to San Francisco would help distinguish the film from *Coogan's Bluff* and allow Eastwood to shoot close to his Carmel home, both a convenience and a promotional angle for the local press.¹⁴⁴ The location shift also gave Siegel and writer Dean Reisner, who rewrote the script for *Coogan's Bluff*, to travel to San Francisco and incorporate actual locations into the finished screenplay, such as Kezar Stadium and

Mount Davidson Park, striking locations for Harry's violent, physical encounters with Scorpio.¹⁴⁵ Less spectacular locations proved key as well because with the exception of an early scene where Harry confronts a bank robber (with the famous line, "Do you feel lucky?"), the entire film was shot on location. This was typical for Eastwood's production company, Malpaso, which by 1973, had shot over two hundred days in four years and spent only six in studio.¹⁴⁶

Despite the logistical complications, Malpaso producer Robert Daley felt crews worked more efficiently on location due to an "esprit de corp." Using the same key technicians on several productions maximized this team building. For instance, Bruce Surtees worked as a camera operator on *Coogan's Bluff* before becoming a Director of Photography for *The Beguiled* (1971) and *Dirty Harry*. *Dirty Harry* would be Don Siegel's fourth Malpaso picture, while editor Carl Pingitore edited all three of Malpaso's 1971 productions.¹⁴⁷ The production company also paid higher rental fees to gain newer technologies, particularly from Panavision; these upfront costs for faster lenses and later, the flexibility of the Panaflex camera, were a smart investment for Malpaso, which distinctively shot in low lighting conditions. Bruce Surtees gained a reputation as the "Prince of Darkness" for his dark cinematography with minimal fill lighting, and this aesthetic became practically a house style for Malpaso productions.¹⁴⁸

Dirty Harry relied extensively on city owned locations in San Francisco, including subway and streetcar stations, two city hospitals, Mt. Davidson Park, and Kezar Stadium. The biggest show of city support came while shooting at three City Hall locations, including three days in the mayor's reception room. Location manager Harry Zubrinsky not only secured these requests directly with the Mayor's Executive Deputy, John De Luca, but requested additional services from the city. They asked the city to clear both the Emergency Room at San Francisco General and the City Hall Rotunda for

their own actors and extras. They also requested ambulances and hospital police for the hospital scene, and motormen for the subway and streetcar chase. While the 49ers had finished their season at Kezar Stadium, *Dirty Harry* requested yard line markers drawn and goal posts erected. The city also cleared a wider area around the stadium for the ascending helicopter shot and allowed the production full control of the stadium lights.¹⁴⁹ While the police department ostensibly had to approve scripts shot on location in the city, they cooperated fully on *Dirty Harry* while the San Francisco government helped prepare locations for one of the city's most controversial films.¹⁵⁰

Some areas proved impossible to secure, such as the Hall of Justice. Rather than return to the studio, the production rented a floor in the Pacific Gas and Electric Building. Ironically, *The Organization* recreated the same exact setting on another floor of the building.¹⁵¹ Freed from the power consumption and physical size of larger lighting units, productions could readily use empty floors in local buildings and warehouses as location sound stages. These locations had the added attraction of only requiring set dressing rather than the actual construction or assembly of a standing set. One particularly challenging scene, a shootout with bank robbers on a crowded street, proved easier to attain on the back lot. The controlled mayhem and property destruction caused by a car crashing into a fire hydrant proved too unwieldy for location shooting (Figure 5.3).



Fig. 5.3. The one scene shot on the backlot in *Dirty Harry* (Warners, 1971).

Despite similar complications, Siegel managed to capture a rooftop shootout between Harry and Scorpio on location. The neon “Jesus Saves” sign, constructed atop the Blue Shield office high-rise in North Beach, could be seen for blocks by perplexed local residents. Until midnight, gunfire rang out from the rooftops while floodlights lit several buildings around Washington Square Park.¹⁵² Siegel recalled using seven cameras for a particularly difficult rooftop shot, while lighting cables ran for blocks below. The lights appeared to blind drivers, causing a few minor accidents, and Surtees worried about the further danger of shattered glass and wires falling from the neon sign (Figure 5.4). His attention to safety pushed the shooting well past midnight, as police handled an endless barrage of neighbor’s complaints.¹⁵³ This commotion was only a local interest story, whereas the Alta Vista steps generated government hearings, suggesting an ancillary benefit of Hollywood’s infatuation with seedy urban locations, such as the North Beach area. Wealthy neighborhoods had the political voice to threaten local shoots, while filmmakers intruded upon downtrodden neighborhoods in the name of economic development.

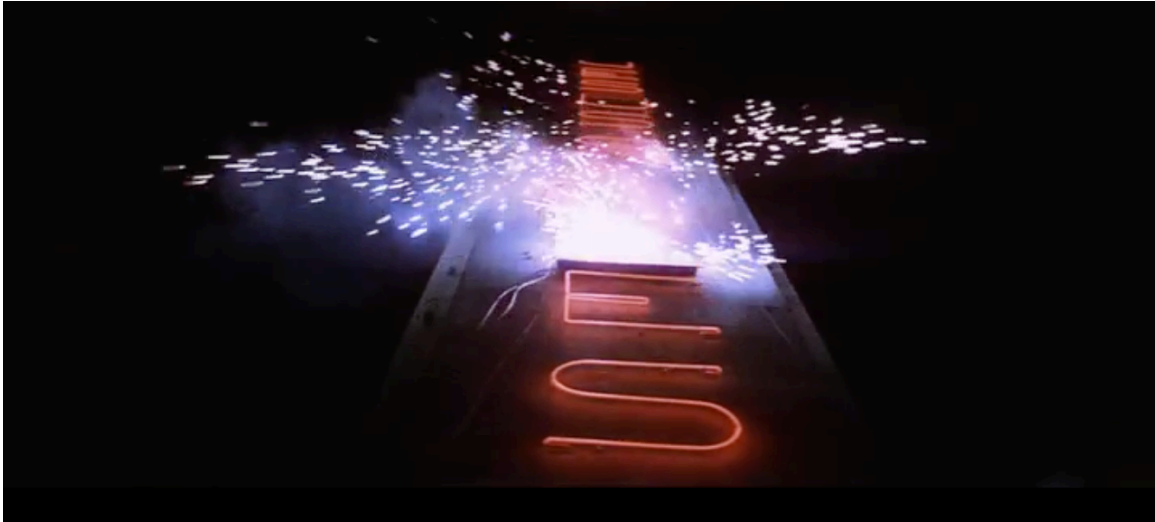


Fig. 5.4. Dangerous location shoot for *Dirty Harry*.

While the Mayor's office facilitated filmmaking, the police force provided the direct assistance to filmmakers, not only in securing locations but as they did in North Beach, quelling resident complaints. During the production of *Dirty Harry*, police chief Alfred Nelder expressed disapproval for segments of a script for a featurette to promote *Dirty Harry*. It is hard to imagine that policemen were thrilled with the depiction of crime, bureaucracy, and rogue police work in *Dirty Harry*, particularly while they directly assisted the roughly two-month shoot in San Francisco. Yet Claude Jarman, Alioto's appointed head of the film festival, directly chastised the police chief for his remarks in a March 1971 letter. He concluded that in the future, Warners should instead coordinate production with "the men in your department who are more familiar with the details." In other words, not even the chief of police should raise objections to filmmakers, and the head of the film festival could bluntly say so, copying Alioto on the letter.¹⁵⁴ Nonetheless, the stress that location production placed on San Francisco police helps explain the tribute to fallen policemen at the opening of *Dirty Harry*, which was pilloried by liberal critics, as well as Warners' contributions to the Police Athletic League.¹⁵⁵ Police cooperation and enthusiasm remained of vital assistance to location

filmmakers, and these gestures proved particularly important when *Dirty Harry* spawned several sequels, all shot in San Francisco. Don Siegel had thanked the San Francisco Police Department years earlier on *The Lineup* and in 1971 *The Organization* also thanked the police department for their assistance. *Dirty Harry* effectively quelled complaints from San Francisco police officers over their screen depiction, but trade papers like *Variety* and San Francisco newspapers fretted the violent portrayal of the city.

Variety saw limited box office potential for *Dirty Harry*, less for its politics than its graphic attention to brutality by both police and criminals. Its review of the film suggested it spoke to extremists across the political spectrum, such as “sadists, revolutionaries and law-and-order freaks.” The reviewer acknowledged the film’s striking technique, including Siegel’s “flair for hard-hitting urban cinematics,” as well as Surtees’ cinematography and Lalo Shifrin’s eerie score. Yet the plot seemed like television pulp rather than a feature-worthy story, like “an updated, freaked-out Peter Gunn episode.” *Variety* predicted the film would be a serviceable programmer.¹⁵⁶ The film was “a major surprise,” a hit release that helped lift Warners’ fortunes under the new Ted Ashley-Kinney Services regime.¹⁵⁷ Part of the appeal of the film lay in its successful transplantation of the Western genre, where Eastwood rose to fame, onto the violent frontier image of the American city in the early 1970s.

During the shooting of *Dirty Harry*, a San Francisco journalist asked Eastwood about the lack of a female lead. Eastwood explained, “It’s kind of a western.”¹⁵⁸ While this genre reference neatly ties the film into Eastwood’s early career, it more immediately places *Dirty Harry* in the context of Siegel’s first collaboration with Eastwood and writer Dean Reisner on *Coogan’s Bluff*. *Rawhide* writers Herman Miller and Jack Laird first developed the story for television—and after *Coogan’s Bluff*, developed the same concept for television for the long running series, *McCloud* (1970-1977).¹⁵⁹ In the feature,

Eastwood plays Coogan, a cowboy-hatted, Arizona deputy chasing a fugitive (Don Stroud) in New York City. Here his independent, violent approach to justice clashes with the police bureaucracy of New York City, where dozens of criminals lounge about the precinct and harass Eastwood's love interest, a forgiving social worker (Susan Clark). The villain is a violent hippie, drawing Coogan further out of his element into the psychedelic scene. In many ways, *Dirty Harry* is also the story of a cowboy cop operating in a city that resents his violent but effective crime fighting. Harry wears no cowboy hat but the killer wears a peace sign belt, combining a symbol of youth liberation with the violence of assassinations and Vietnam, all forces that appear to throw the city into chaos.

Coogan's Bluff also sets up visual contrasts between rural landscapes and urban areas, reasserting the critical geography of the Hollywood Western. The opening sequence is a modern Western showdown, as Coogan arrests a half-naked Native American criminal who nearly kills him with a sniper rifle from the high rocks above the Arizona desert. The open landscape juxtaposes the cramped interiors and crowded streets of New York, where Coogan's cowboy stands out just as sorely as Joe Buck in *Midnight Cowboy*. Later in the film, a scene staged at one of New York City's protected natural spaces, the Cloisters, creates a visual link between the Western and the urban crisis. The scene opens on a low angle shot of an American flag before the camera moves to cover Coogan and the social worker entering the plaza. The camera continues to pan as they stroll past the Hudson River, lined with trees in the foreground and the deep background of the far bank. They pause in a postcard composition, the space between them revealing the Cloisters in the background, an apparent Medieval abbey resting in a sylvan riverside. Coogan stalks away from this vista towards a view of the larger city. The dense urban texture appears nearly monochromatic in beige and brick. Massive housing projects and

smoke stacks dominate the frame. Coogan tells Julie, “I’m trying to picture it the way it was, just the trees and the river, before people came along and fouled it all up.” Like the gunfighters of a Peckinpah Western, the frontier has closed on Coogan. The civilization that mythical cowboys helped forge has overtaken all but the remnants of a virgin territory. However ugly this landscape may be, it has achieved the totality of the Western landscape; like the opening shots of Manhattan, urban space appears to blanket the realm as endless Megalopolis.

Dirty Harry would deepen this pessimistic vision of the Western hero in the urban landscape, consonant with the American crises of its era. In *Gunfighter Nation*, Richard Slotkin details the persistent American frontier myth of the savage war, fought away from the established city as a form of American expansion and masculine, cultural regeneration and redemption. In literature and on film, this western mythos plays out until reaching a crisis point during the Vietnam Era, where fighting in what soldiers dubbed “Indian Country” proved not only futile but also morally corrupt.¹⁶⁰ Slotkin also explores how the Vietnam and urban crises bled into one another. He quotes one Chicago resident who says that thousands of Mylai massacres happen each day in America, where brutal racial urban conflicts make the killing of civilians or a Black Panther leader is an everyday reality.¹⁶¹ Slotkin analyzes two related critical inversions in the frontier myth occurring in late 1968. The first, suggested by the riots, frames racial conflict not as the foundational triumph over savagery but the fundamental flaw of American culture. The second, based on the urban locus of violence, shifts the center of conflict from the frontier to the metropolis.¹⁶²

There is yet a third inversion inherent in *Dirty Harry*, one that inscribes the mythical inversion in physical space. The central city is not only the new center of violence, but the new frontier. After decades of post-war suburbanization, business

decentralization and white flight, the central city was no longer the central locus of many Americans' lives. Hollywood was acutely aware of this trend, particularly when fear over muggings and racial unrest further eroded early 1970s downtown movie attendance in favor of neighborhood theaters.¹⁶³ The rural frontier had long served as the distant, fantasy realm of action and violence. Now, a central city populated by African-American "savages" and social outcasts took its cultural place, evidenced by the decline of the Western and rise of the police film in the early 1970s. *Dirty Harry* depicted the city as a frontier without redemption; while still an arena for violence and sadism, the urban frontier resisted civilization. The fallen city offered a space where a cowboy cop fights for his own edification in a lawless wilderness, futilely policing a frontier that no one cares to re-civilize.

By shooting the bank robbery shootout on the Universal lot, San Francisco briefly resembles a Western town with a central street. Harry cockily strides across the street to playfully threaten the African-American robber into submission. The scene plays out on a back lot street where certainly dozens of Westerns had been staged, and where the law is enforceable on foot. The robbery also occurs across the street from Harry's favorite hot dog joint, suggesting that even the brief safe spaces in Harry's world are just a step away from violent crime. Scorpio suggests the same with his first victim, a beautiful woman blithely swimming on a rooftop pool on a sunny day. Senseless violence can strike anywhere, whether in the neon squalor of North Beach or the rooftop of a tony high-rise. Unlike *Bullitt*, we never see *Dirty Harry*'s home; he even sleeps off his injuries on a police office couch. There is no home front or family to protect; there is only a fleeting reference to another random crime, a drunk driver who killed Harry's wife.

Invoking the Western provides a critical context for the image of the badge scenes that bookend *Dirty Harry*. A police badge appears at the center of the backdrop for the written police tribute that opens the film. At the close of the film, Harry throws his badge into the murky water of an industrial site where he killed Scorpio. Writing on the Western, André Bazin argues that, “the sheriff’s star must be seen as constituting a sacrament of justice, whose worth does not depend on the worthiness of the man who administers it.”¹⁶⁴ This observation underlies the bleakness of Harry’s urban frontier, where not only the authority but also the city itself seems unworthy of justice. This gesture references the ending of *High Noon* (1952), where Marshall Kane (Gary Cooper) throws his badge in the dirt in front of the townsfolk who failed to support him. For all their failings, some townspeople at least supported Kane’s work without joining his posse, and Kane saves the city before abandoning his job. In *Dirty Harry*, the city disparages his methods and famously leaves him to the “dirty jobs,” such as pulling a suicidal jumper off a rooftop ledge. Every urban space in the film appears dangerous and perverted. Eastwood and Siegel argued over the ending, with Eastwood worried that Harry was quitting, while Siegel suggested he was merely rejecting the city’s bureaucracy.¹⁶⁵ The corrupt city on screen suggests an even worse possibility: there is no city left to save.

The location of the final confrontation between Harry and Scorpio reinforces the sense of a lost urban core. Rather than battling over downtown, Harry battles Scorpio in an abandoned rock quarry whose conveyor belts continue to run without human supervision (Figure 5.5A). In late 1960s Westerns like *The Wild Bunch* (1968), the presence of industrial products like cars suggest the end of the Western frontier. The conclusion of *Dirty Harry* suggests the opposite, as the remnants of a productive society rot away and civilization returns to seed against an empty frontier. While many 1970s

films feature the ruined factories of a deindustrialized urban core, *Dirty Harry* ends in the wasteland that surrounds a declining city. Rather than a final image of San Francisco, a wide, ascending helicopter shot reveals a dull plain crisscrossed by concrete overpasses and industrial water channels. This murky industrial site that dwarfs Harry is a place that is the forgotten detritus of the city and a reminder of the absence of an urban society worth fighting for (Figure 5.5B).



Fig. 5.5A & B. *Dirty Harry*. Top: Rock Quarry. Bottom: Postindustrial wasteland.

Harry not only lacks a place to defend but also struggles to retain visual mastery over the city. *Dirty Harry* opens with Scorpio's omniscient view from a sniper's nest, and he will continue to assert his visual dominance over Harry. Sensitive color film stock

helps reinforce the police's marked lack of vision. While Harry drives after a suspect through dark streets, the suspect appears as a nearly imperceptible flash of motion in the night. Windows offer a seductive visual agency that consistently undermines Harry. For example, he steals a peak at an unconventional domestic scene including an Asian man and a large topless woman in a skid row apartment. After stumbling from his perch, a gang of street dwellers assaults him for peeping at "Hot Mary." Later, on a stakeout, Harry peers through binoculars and lingers on a naked hippie woman. This voyeuristic indulgence nearly prevents him from spotting Scorpio entering the rooftop.¹⁶⁶ Scorpio shoots out the neon "Jesus Saves" sign above Harry and his partner, reclaiming his cover of darkness. The shattered glass rains upon the police as the source of light is annihilated by the killer's machine gun.

North Beach, with its strip clubs and neon signs, provides not only derelict urban settings but also an ideal streetscape for Surtees' cinematography. The neon lights provide just enough available light to capture figures but leave swathes of dark shadows. Uncorrected fluorescent, used for realist expediency in *Bullitt*, point up the seedy landscape of the city by bathing Harry in sickly colored light, particularly when he stands beneath the "Jesus Saves" sign. Even the choice of props, such as a yellow bag to bring Scorpio's ransom money, provides just enough color to remain barely visible as Harry runs through a darkened tunnel. During this exceptionally dark foot chase, phone booths serve a similar role, again creating a small pool of colored light in a shadowy urban landscape.

Other elements of Harry's footrace from phone booth to phone booth highlight the unique urban geography employed in *Dirty Harry*. Throughout the chase, Harry moves from car to train to streetcar to finally running on foot. Analogous to Scorpio's manipulation of Harry and the rest of the city, Harry's mode of transportation gradually

weakens. On foot, the full decline of the city becomes readily apparent. The obstacles that deter Harry from reaching his destination are all symbols of urban blight. A gang of young, leather-clad thugs tries to mug Harry for his bag of ransom money. A drunk picks up the phone despite Harry's protests. Finally, in the forest of Mt. Davidson Park, a gay hustler tries to pick up Harry, a scene Herb Caen wryly described as "a bit of local color."¹⁶⁷

As Scorpio directs Harry from place to place, Harry crisscrosses San Francisco, the darkness of the images helps smooth the creative geography. Surtees' ability to create a disturbing environment largely through lighting was particularly useful in San Francisco, where few locations resembled the dilapidated buildings, stained walls, and trash-strewn streets of Manhattan featured in *Midnight Cowboy* and *The French Connection*. Harry descends from downtown streets into tunnels, back alleys, and finally, an urban wilderness, where Scorpio assaults him under a giant concrete cross. As he delves deeper into the city under Scorpio's command, he moves from civilization to wilderness, where an older sign of civilization, the cross, provides no protection. *Vertigo* offered a tourist journey through San Francisco's scenic public sites and cultural institutions. Harry's nightmare tour reveals the backside of the city, full of interstitial pathways and threatening subcultures. Just as *Vertigo* preserved its cine-tourist aesthetic by avoiding eyesores like the Embarcadero Freeway, *Dirty Harry* painstakingly avoided shooting in the picturesque districts that still flourished in San Francisco in the early 1970s. A grim story, shadowy lighting, and a careful choice of locations created a facsimile of New York's urban decay in San Francisco.

Surveillance is a major motif of *Dirty Harry*, beginning with the opening scene, where Scorpio kills a swimmer with a sighted rifle, displaying visual authority over the police and presenting one of the era's dominant criminal archetypes: the sniper. Snipers

appeared in several urban and ex-urban thrillers of the era, including *Targets* (1968), *The Organization*, *The French Connection*, *Across 110th Street*, and *Get Carter* (1971). Snipers were not only a threat in Vietnam, but frightening figures sensationalized in the coverage of urban riots for shooting at police. The initial shock of the sniper assassination of John F. Kennedy would become a recurring trauma, with the Charles Whitman tower shootings of 1966 and Martin Luther King's assassination in 1968. Not coincidentally, the recently improved zoom lens became a frequent analogue of the sniper's scope. In *Dirty Harry*, we first see a telephoto image of the female swimmer before Siegel slowly zooms out to reveal Scorpio taking aim from another rooftop. This scene would also perversely take advantage of San Francisco's growing skyline. Several scenes in *Dirty Harry* filmed on high-rise rooftops reveal broad scenic vistas that would be the envy of 1950s cine-tourist films; yet the broader view reveals a broader kill zone, and the beautiful, sunlit scenery provides a false sense of security from the imminent threat.

The pairing of the zoom lens and sniper scope is both an optical equivalency of distant vision and a continuation of the link between visual technology and military force explored by Paul Virilio in *War and Cinema*.¹⁶⁸ The presence of a sniper militarizes both point-of-view shots and telephoto shots of the city, equating the ability to see with the ability to kill. By point of contrast, Scorpio remains impossible for Harry to see for much of the film, disappearing into the shadowy streets or hiding behind a mask in the Mt. Davidson confrontation. Finally, the practice of dominating the landscape with a rifle from the high ground or rooftop is another Western trope, notably appearing in *Winchester '73* (1950), the *Wild Bunch*, and the modern Western opening of *Coogan's Bluff*. The ability of the zoom lens to capture both the distant detail and the wider scope of the urban landscape extends the scope of danger from the street to the city at large.

Scorpio's visual technology proves far more effective than a police technology equally loaded with symbolism: the helicopter. The first news helicopter, a former Korean-War unit adapted as a "telecopter" for KTLA new in Los Angeles, covered its first major story in 1965, the Watts riot. For four days of national coverage, the helicopter overlooked blocks of bungalows covered in smoke and flames.¹⁶⁹ The equivalent abroad would be Vietnam, where similar to urban race riots, helicopters soared above the destruction but failed to understand the complex reality below. Helicopters emerged as a technologically advanced tool for military surveillance, but soon came to represent the failure of technological might and vision to control the confusing violence on the ground. Furthermore, the Air Cavalry would emerge from the same division that had won the West from Native-Americans.¹⁷⁰ The failures, horrors, and historical parallels of Vietnam would be played out not only in Hollywood Westerns like *Soldier Blue* (1970) and *Ulzana's Raid* (1972), but in the present urban frontier of *Dirty Harry*.

Helicopter shots provided stunning overhead views of locations and became more popular with the mid-1960s, Oscar-winning development of a helicopter camera mount that minimized vibration.¹⁷¹ Aerial shots would become a staple of the *Dirty Harry* series, and provide some of the brief touristic views of the city. Footage of the helicopters swirling past San Francisco's skyscrapers with the bay in the background, as well as views from the cockpit show that the urban crisis had hardly damaged the city's beautiful vistas. As Harry scours a rooftop for the sniper shells, the helicopters circle above a dense urban landscape they can encompass but not penetrate. Later, a police helicopter swoops down on Scorpio, foiling his attempt at another rooftop murder. Yet as they plead with him to desist over a microphone, he disappears through a door as the helicopter fails to bridge the distance between the sky and ground. Siegel cuts to the cost of this failure, as a

policeman lies sprawled in the dim street, shot to death by Scorpio. Unlike the sniper's rifle, helicopter vision lacks lethal force.

By contrast, in the conclusion of *Experiment in Terror*, the state-of-the art police helicopter tracks Red Lynch's car to Candlestick Park. Police surround Lynch on the pitcher's mound as the helicopter descends upon him as he points his gun up in futility. The helicopter traps Red Lynch from above as officers on foot surround him from below. The sequence ends with two smooth, ascending helicopter shots, separated by a dissolve that allows a seamless transition to an extreme wide shot high above the stadium, an island of light and activity within the night sky. Institutional authority has eliminated the insidious criminal and restored its command of this vast visual landscape.

In *Dirty Harry*, Don Siegel chooses an identical camera movement to punctuate a similar event: Harry apprehends Scorpio in a deserted Kezar Stadium.¹⁷² After shooting Scorpio, Harry grinds his foot into the gunshot wound in a desperate attempt to discover where Scorpio has hidden a kidnapped girl. Scorpio bleats and protests the excessive use of force. Authorities move towards the field, policing Harry from administering vigilante justice. The camera rapidly jags away from the empty stadium while Lalo Schifrin's discordant score heightens a palpable sense of uneasiness. While the majestic swoop of Blake Edwards' camera in *Experiment in Terror* appears to reestablish order, here the speed and agitation of Siegel's camera depicts a city spinning out of Harry's violent grasp. As described earlier, the final shot of *Dirty Harry* is also an ascending helicopter shot that reveals the desolate landscape of San Francisco's exurbia. In an inversion of *Experiment in Terror*, Harry becomes the tarnished symbol of authority floating in a filthy, chaotic urban landscape.



Fig. 5.6. Golden Gate Bridge at dawn in *Dirty Harry*.

One scene in particular summarizes how directly *Dirty Harry* mobilizes new cinematic technology to directly attack San Francisco's historical cinematic beauty. Shooting the Golden Gate Bridge in extremely low light, the shining red beams turn black and the gorgeous view of San Francisco beyond the bay grows dull blue and hazy. Despite the muted colors, Harry standing in the foreground overlooking the bridge forms a postcard composition. Yet such careful framing merely sets up a contrast with the following shot, as a handheld camera with a telephoto lens roughly follows the motion of workers pulling the nude corpse of Scorpio's fourteen-year old victim out of a drainage ditch (Figure 5.6). As San Francisco's touristic beauty turns monochromatic, the semi-documentary camerawork shows the interstice below the urban splendor, a police scene of macabre, senseless violence.

TV COPS DURING THE URBAN CRISIS: *THE STREETS OF SAN FRANCISCO*

Dirty Harry cost \$3 million. By point of comparison, a typical half-hour television show cost just over \$100,000 in the early 1970s, and two-hour television pilots came in under \$1 million.¹⁷³ Thus *Streets of San Francisco* could not emulate the action

spectacles of *Dirty Harry*. Nor could it air the film's graphic violence and teeming sex districts on network television. Nonetheless, *The Streets of San Francisco* distinguished itself from older network series with extensive location shooting. While including scenic shots of the city, the series similarly gravitated towards seedy areas and decrepit districts, a badge of gritty television realism. While crime shows demanded a weekly crime, like *Dirty Harry*, the investigations in *The Streets of San Francisco* often implicated the city itself.

Quinn Martin, the successful producer of long-running television crime series such as *The Fugitive* (1962-1967) and *The F.B.I.* (1965-1974), shot a handful of productions in San Francisco in the early 1970s. He shot the pilot for *Incident in San Francisco* in the city in 1970, and followed it up with a one-week shoot in 1971 for his crime series, *The F.B.I.* The promise of a regular series shooting largely in San Francisco quickly connected Mayor Alioto and Quinn Martin. In the summer of 1973, as *Streets* began its second season, Alioto thanked "Quinn" for the personal favor of having Karl Malden speak in his place at the Robert Kennedy Club. He ended his letter, "Please do not hesitate to call on my office if we can be of any assistance to you."¹⁷⁴ In turn, Quinn Martin became a regular participant and contributor for the summer San Francisco Film Festival, beginning in 1973.¹⁷⁵ More importantly, after the first season of 1972-1973, *Streets* began shooting entirely on location in San Francisco.¹⁷⁶

Location shooting in various cities was a distinct new trend for urban police shows debuting in 1972, such as *Streets*, *The Rookies* (Los Angeles), *Banacek* (Boston), and *Jigsaw* (Sacramento). San Francisco became the most crowded with television cops, and *Variety* joked about Karl Malden, Raymond Burr (*Ironside*), and Rock Hudson (*McMillan and Wife*) all working out of the same office.¹⁷⁷ *Ironside*, which in two years (1970-1971) spent only a week shooting in San Francisco, looked increasingly dated as

location shooting became a staple of television police shows.¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, as television shows grew more action-oriented, Ironside's wheelchair became a ratings handicap, preventing Burr from regularly engaging in car chases and fights. *Ironside* was a staple of NBC's Thursday lineup, but by 1973, failed to attract new viewers.¹⁷⁹ A top-ten rated show in 1972, *Ironside* fell out of the top twenty-five the following year, when *The Streets of San Francisco* first cracked the top twenty-five.¹⁸⁰

For the first season, the *Streets* crew hopscotched between shooting exteriors in San Francisco and interiors in Los Angeles. In order to do so efficiently, they would shoot two episodes of interiors followed by two episodes of exteriors. While the practice saved money, star Karl Malden recalls how the practice hurt performances as actors alternated scenes for different episodes.¹⁸¹ The Cinemobile helped reduce the below-the-line costs of location shooting, and as Cinemobile proudly claimed in a full-page *Variety* ad, the production vehicle was as dependable as the trolley, logging over 1800 hours of shooting for the series by the end of 1973.¹⁸² *McMillan and Wife*, also shooting in San Francisco throughout the early 1970s, would be another television customer for Cinemobile.

Variety appreciated *Streets of San Francisco's* two-hour pilot, but questioned whether the location aesthetics were sustainable: "It's hard to judge this cop meller off a splashy two-hour premiere with all that location detail when it all may wind up between interiors on the Warners' lot and a Nob Hill phone booth come midseason." The reviewer described the San Francisco locations and Karl Malden as the show's two biggest production assets.¹⁸³ Rather than retreat after the pilot, the production spent close to three weeks each month shooting in San Francisco for the first season, between June 1972 and January 1973.¹⁸⁴ For season two, they rented a warehouse in San Francisco where they built the interior sets. The show continued to favor exteriors that showed off

San Francisco locations over interiors, which made quality sound recording more difficult. The production simply set up a looping facility in the warehouse to efficiently record and post-dub dialogue compromised by location sound.¹⁸⁵

By 1973, *The Streets of San Francisco* shot twenty-six episodes between June and February in San Francisco. This rapid television pace necessitated thirteen-day schedules for each one-hour episode, split between six days of preparation and seven shooting days. While crews shot one episode, other production personnel planned the next episode. A great deal of the preparation, work was location scouting, led by series location manager Tom Piskura. The day the script arrived, Piskura listed potential locations for every scene, both exterior and interior. He spent the remaining days evaluating locations and building a shooting schedule. Locations were evaluated under three criteria: photographic concerns, local, cooperation, and logistical concerns. Ideal locations not only fit the story but facilitated quick lighting setups and camera dollies. Piskura also favored locations with helpful owners or administrators as well as locations with available parking for production vehicles and in close proximity to other locations. For an episode involving exterior shots of six churches and two church interiors, Piskura spent nearly a full day visiting numerous San Francisco churches with a member of the Archdiocesan Communications Office before settling on the ones that best fit all the criteria.¹⁸⁶

While the Archdiocese clearly showed support for the production, Piskura had to carefully prepare location owners and residents for the realities of location production. He compared the arrival of the production company to “a band of gypsies bringing a side show,” which could shock location owners expecting less equipment, crew members, and oftentimes, a chance to somehow participate in the production.¹⁸⁷ Despite taking advantage of the Cinemobile, the production company still travelled with as many as eight trucks, half a dozen cars, a handful of buses and twenty to fifty people. A reporter

documenting the process referred to the “familiar white signs announcing ‘No Parking.’”¹⁸⁸ In a dense city of narrow streets, frequently tying up parking spaces and traffic could quickly effect local residents, and became a source of irritation that contributed to a backlash against location production.

The Streets of San Francisco's sustained engagement with the city not only helped the crew develop a familiarity with the specifics of San Francisco locations but also with San Francisco's daily life. Piskura noted a difference in the portrayal of the extras whom the detectives often questioned. Rather than occupying anonymous places, they worked on cable cars or sold flowers, adding appropriate local activities to distinctive San Francisco locations. Local details proved easier to achieve for these brief scenes than during major dialogue scenes, written in Hollywood and sent north to San Francisco. Full day shoots in the warehouse studio also offered a welcome respite from the logistical difficulties of location shooting, but interior sets were no more distinctively San Francisco than their Hollywood counterparts.¹⁸⁹ As with *Dirty Harry*, the producers of *Streets of San Francisco* never let their appreciation of the city soften the gritty depiction of a violent and illicit urban realm popular among early 1970s police dramas.

In its initial review, *Variety* aptly described *Streets* as a modernized version of *The Lineup*, the earlier San Francisco cop series that relied far more extensively on locations than shows like *Peter Gunn* and *Ironside*. A police car turning atop a hill to reveal a scenic view was the backdrop for *The Lineup* opening credits. *Streets of San Francisco's* credits also favored scenic spots, but proceeded in a modern montage of snap zooms towards myriad tourist sites, similar to the famous opening credits of *Hawaii-5-0* (1968-1980). However, the pilot episode already exhibited a visual fascination with urban blight and gore.

The pilot opens on a stretch of dirt and asphalt by the bay, where a dead woman floats. Other locations include a seedy motel in a North Beach-like vice district, the underside of the Embarcadero, and various dockside warehouses. In a clever zoom shot, the camera opens on a moving dumpster before zooming out to reveal a beautiful San Francisco vista. More often, the ugly settings are not visually connected to the cine-tourist images that also appear, such as the Golden Gate Bridge and Chinatown. Scenic views often appear as establishing shots or transitional images when the show returns from commercial. Like *Bullitt* and later, *Dirty Harry*, *Streets of San Francisco* also featured several on-location driving sequences revealing larger stretches of urban backgrounds. These included rear-mounted camera shots, as well as shots from the backseat of the squad car, made possible by smaller cameras. Like Eastwood's *Malpasso*, the series relied on Panavision cameras and lenses to efficiently shoot these sequences.

While locations oscillated between gritty urban districts and scenic views, the crime stories would be particularly grim. The first case soon leads Detectives Stone (Malden) and Keller (Michael Douglas) into the local drug scene, where San Francisco aristocrats take advantage of young runaways. Stone references another unsolved set of child murder and molestation cases in the city. A final confrontation pits the cops against a Satanist, loosely modeled on San Francisco's notorious Church of Satan founder, Anton Levey, whose mansion brims with black magic décor. They realize he not only killed the young hippie, but the children as well. Rather than emphasizing the successful resolution of the case, the show ends with a haunting image of the two victims at the center of the case holding a "California or Bust" sign. While runaway youth meeting bad consequences was a crime television staple, it's hard to imagine a bleaker television reflection on the California dream.¹⁹⁰



Fig. 5.7. Macabre scene in *The Streets of San Francisco* (ABC, 1972)

The pilot was hardly the exception to downbeat urban stories, particularly crimes that challenged the partners' professional restraint, as if threatening to push them to become Harry Callahan. The first regular episode featured Stone out for justice for the shooting of his best friend, while the second drew Keller into a romance with a prostitute. Other first-season episodes featured crazed Vietnam veterans, cop-killers, rapists, and political assassins. In a direct nod to *Dirty Harry*, "The Albatross" involved a burglar who kills a child but is released on a technicality. Television lacked the budget to rely on the extensive night exteriors and the elaborately degraded cinematography that set the tone for the cinema of the urban crisis. Yet *Streets* brought a similar definition of gritty urban realism through depictions of horrific crimes and stark settings. A half-blighted, crime-ridden San Francisco became a weekly television setting.

While other series shot in San Francisco briefly or sporadically, such as *San Francisco International Airport* (1970-1971) and *McMillan and Wife*, *The Streets of San*

Francisco became San Francisco's only resident television production, shooting for months on end, frequently enough to further desensitize San Francisco residents to the presence of professional film crews. Unique location incidents, such as when actual police responded to a crime nearby the University of San Francisco location set, or when the series constructed a one-day mock cemetery for an episode, appeared frequently in local columns.¹⁹¹

As San Francisco's influx of film production continued into the mid-1970s, residents' enthusiasm for film and television production continued to wane. Some San Franciscans simply became inured to movie making, and like New Yorkers and Angelenos, barely paused to notice production crews. Others raised tougher questions about the results of San Francisco's Hollywood occupation. Was San Francisco developing a local production industry or merely selling its sites to Los Angeles workers? And how would the ongoing, imaginary crime wave affect San Francisco's carefully cultivated image? This was no minor concern for a city whose film committee was part of its tourist bureau. Yet while San Francisco grappled with its production boom, Hollywood reassessed its production strategies, as blockbuster pictures and new technologies began to pull film production back to the lot.

In 1974, both *The Conversation* (1974) and *The Towering Inferno* (1974) were set in San Francisco. *The Conversation* was the first studio release to be set, shot, and edited entirely within San Francisco. By contrast, *The Towering Inferno* staged a disaster too large and too dependent on special effects to mount on location, spending far more time and money shooting on Hollywood backlots than on San Francisco locations. Despite its local origin, *The Conversation* said more about America's deep disillusionment with its cities than San Francisco itself; San Francisco largely served as a local back lot for Coppola's personal vision. The high concept-blockbuster *The Towering Inferno*

reasserted the advantages of the sound stage while making only cursory use of its San Francisco setting. The film's tremendous box office success indicated that fantastical effects held more box office appeal than real locations, signaling the end of a thirty-year expansion of Hollywood location shooting.

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Chapter 6: Hollywood North/Hollywood Resurgence: *The Conversation* and *The Towering Inferno*

The Godfather dominated the 1972 box office and won best picture, establishing Francis Ford Coppola as San Francisco's first filmmaking superstar. Irwin Allen's disaster film, *The Poseidon Adventure* came in at number two and earned the third most Oscar Nominations.¹ For the 1974 Oscars, Allen and Coppola squared off again with two films set in San Francisco, *The Towering Inferno* and *The Conversation*, nominated for best picture along with Coppola's *Godfather Part II*. Coppola took best picture for *Godfather Part Two*, but even the combined gross of his two Best Picture nominees paled in comparison to *The Towering Inferno*, the top-earner of 1975. By early 1977, *The Towering Inferno* had become one of the ten highest grossing films of all time and, with \$55 million in domestic rentals, had out-earned *Godfather II* by \$16 million.² While including the requisite mafia violence, *Godfather II* focused more intently on family and personal struggles. *The Conversation* was an even more intense character study of a reserved surveillance expert that earned critical claim but on a \$1.6 million budget, merely broke even. *The Towering Inferno* was *The Poseidon Adventure* with bigger stars, bigger explosions, and more complex special effects.

Both films shot in San Francisco, but in an entirely different fashion that indicated a sea change in location shooting. With *The Conversation*, Coppola proved that a major studio release, from pre- through post-production, could be entirely crafted in San Francisco. *The Towering Inferno* proved that a new scale of spectacle could only be accomplished on the back lot. No filmmaker could build a set for the tallest building in the world and burn it to the ground in the middle of downtown San Francisco. Thus while awash in film and television production, San Francisco courted a film that not only staged

the city's destruction, but heralded the city's eventual decline in location production. Meanwhile, citizen support for Hollywood filmmaking continued to erode as San Francisco residents tangled with location filmmakers and while their city's onscreen image continued to suffer.

While employing vastly different production strategies and location shooting practices, San Francisco was remarkably incidental to both films. Unlike *Bullitt* and *Petulia*, which shot on location with the specific goal of capturing San Francisco, Coppola treated the city like an urban backlot for his interiorized story. *The Conversation* reflected American disillusionment with the central city, but despite being a resident filmmaker, Coppola's story could have taken place in almost any major American city. *The Towering Inferno* minimized location shooting to focus on spectacular pyrotechnical effects and physical sets built on Fox's sound stages and backlot. Similarly, the film minimized the role of San Francisco, which served generically as an urban background for scenic establishing shots and the climactic rescue. *The Towering Inferno* said nothing about San Francisco beyond Mayor Alioto's continued ability to attract producers, despite growing dissatisfaction with film production by San Francisco residents.

Allen's disaster pictures, as well as others like *Airport* (1970), *Earthquake* (1974), and the semi-disaster picture, *Jaws* (1975), pointed towards a future of crowd-thrilling, mass-audience blockbusters that came to define post-1975 Hollywood. As Charles Champlin observed in early 1975, "It has been a time of blockbusters and small, hard gems, with not much in the middle."³ *The Conversation* was one of those inexpensive, incisive pictures with fading box office appeal. As the American film industry recovered from the Hollywood Recession, a handful of phenomenal hits appealing to wide audiences proved a far more profitable risk than the early 1970s production slate of downbeat, low-budget and young-adult oriented features. Similarly, the bleak realism of

early 1970s hits like *The French Connection* and *The Godfather* gave way to the adventure fantasies of *The Towering Inferno*, *Jaws*, and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977). While location shooting remained a requisite component of feature filmmaking, the specificity of place receded into the background. Locations like San Francisco ceased to offer the same box office appeal they held for films like *Vertigo* or *Bullitt*. San Francisco would be as insignificant to *The Towering Inferno*'s success as Martha's Vineyard would be for *Jaws*.

The second-half of the 1970s brought far greater developments in special effects than in location shooting. While the Steadicam, introduced in 1975, facilitated smooth camera movement on the uneven surfaces of various locations, this technology had a minimal effect on the expansion of location shooting compared to Eastman 5254 stock, Panavision cameras, and the Cinemobile. By contrast, the optical effects employed on *Star Wars* (1977) and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* changed the paradigm for special effects, moving past the reliance on physical effects, as in *The Towering Inferno*, while expanding the role of special effects throughout Hollywood cinema. In the early 1970s, cinematographers aspired to depict things as they actually appeared. combined location footage and optical effects to depict impossible things as if they actually existed. The growing emphasis on special effects pulled production work back to the controlled environment of both the back lot and the high-tech post-production studio. Even spectacular real locations, such as Devil's Peak in *Close Encounters*, needed to be recomposited in post-production with the overwhelming illusion of an alien spaceship.

In the early 1970s, as Hollywood appeared on the point of collapse, San Francisco dreamt of luring the film industry northward. Hollywood's blockbuster success ensured that San Francisco primarily remained what it always had been, a location for Los Angeles filmmakers. Television series, movies, and commercials ensured that San

Francisco's nascent production industry did not entirely collapse. The city continued to draw feature filmmakers for prolonged location shoots, but with less regularity. By the mid-1970s, San Francisco faced greater competition from other cities, states, and countries aggressively seeking location production dollars. By 1975, San Francisco's boom in location shooting had subsided, and while the city remained a popular site for film and television producers, Hollywood paid far less attention to its specific culture and its less familiar sites.

With two best-picture nominees shot in San Francisco, 1974 appeared to be a marquee year for Mayor Alioto's campaign to draw Hollywood filmmakers to the city. Yet as the novelty of film production wore off, residents began to question the urban impact of Hollywood location crews and the negative impact of Hollywood depictions of the city. Both *The Conversation* and *The Towering Inferno* revealed that San Francisco was still a location, not a self-contained film industry. A landmark for San Francisco film production, *The Conversation* was perhaps the closest Coppola came to his goal of personal filmmaking achieved entirely in his adopted city. But the film offered a desolate view of urban life that was hardly specific to San Francisco. Coppola extends urban dread beyond crime in the streets, building a felt sense of spatial alienation and social collapse. *The Towering Inferno's* production demands and emphasis on spectacular disaster relegated San Francisco to a scenic backdrop that was largely recreated on the Fox lot. The qualities that made the *Towering Inferno* a proto-blockbuster hit checked the steady expansion of domestic location shooting that had benefited San Francisco since the late 1960s.

“LET THEM MAKE THEIR MOVIES SOMEWHERE ELSE”

In 1973, Alioto’s efforts to lure film producers paid off, with seven features shooting in the city. Yet such success came at a price, particularly with a boom in gritty police films that portrayed the city rife with violent crime. In 1968, San Francisco high society enjoyed the influx of filmmakers, appearing as extras in *Bullitt* and *Petulia*. By the mid-1970s, a growing number of residents and downtown businessmen questioned the value of location shooting. San Franciscans felt betrayed by Hollywood companies that took advantage of local cooperation and caused traffic and other disruptions, only to negatively depict San Francisco onscreen. Popular columnist Herb Caen supported and publicized the Downtown Business Association’s rebuke of Hollywood filmmakers: “Let them make their movies somewhere else.”⁴

Alioto and leaders of the local film industry responded to complaints by trumpeting the annual \$10 million or more that Hollywood production brought in San Francisco jobs and services. In 1973, Jesse Unruh, a candidate for mayor of Los Angeles, suggested, “San Francisco probably has more production right now than we have down south.”⁵ Such rhetoric imagined San Francisco as an emerging film industry center to rival Los Angeles, but the reality was that San Francisco was by and large a location, reliant on projects originating from Hollywood studios and following principal photography, edited and processed in Los Angeles. Unlike pre- and post-production, phases that provided regular work and few logistical challenges, San Francisco rarely had enough feature production to provide full-time employment for local film workers; meanwhile, unlike sprawling Los Angeles, San Francisco’s tightly-packed downtown struggled to accommodate multiple productions without inconveniencing a number of residents. American Zoetrope was the key exception, but Coppola’s facility could only accommodate small, location-shot films like *The Conversation*, the type of films that Hollywood increasingly ignored in favor of blockbusters like *The Towering Inferno*.

Through the mid-1970s, Hollywood location shooting in San Francisco was frequent enough for local columnist Jack Rosenblum to run a recurring column titled “Hollywood North” about major movie companies shooting in town. At least two columnists, Rosenblum and Judy Warrenfeltz, worked as extras on a location feature, providing additional publicity for Hollywood production, which was now an everyday event in the city.⁶ That same year, with the premiere of a CBS show about a Chinese detective, each major network had a series shooting in San Francisco (*Streets* for ABC and *Amy Prentiss* for NBC).⁷ A 1975 clipping mentioned a Hitchcock movie scheduled for a San Francisco shoot and epitomized the cities’ increasingly blasé response to Hollywood production: “Ho, hum, another big-budget movie will be filmed here.”⁸ As San Francisco residents grew more accustomed to Hollywood location shooting, they also became less tolerant of it.

A wave of police films set in San Francisco, inspired by both *Bullitt* and *Dirty Harry*, created both representational and logistical problems for the city. A *Los Angeles Times* article on San Francisco’s film popularity identified John DeLuca, the deputy mayor, and Police Sergeant Bill McCarthy as the key people to call in order to stage a difficult scene. The two examples were “a school bus full of children crashing into a city playground” (featured in *The Laughing Policeman*, 1973) and “a sniper spraying bullets around campus” (featured in an episode of *The Streets of San Francisco*). Of the six theatrical films shot in San Francisco through July of 1973, three were police films, one was an Italian produced mafia film, and the other, *The Conversation*, involved a murder investigation. Disney’s sequel, *Herbie Bug Rides Again* (1973), was a rare, non-violent depiction of the city, although like *Bullitt* and its myriad imitators shooting in the city, featured a wild car chase through the city.⁹ Such car chases closed off local streets and

occasionally, highway sections and tunnels, causing traffic and parking problems for hundreds of residents in the tightly packed downtown core.

In the opening scene of *The Laughing Policeman*, a masked gunman kills eight bus passengers with a machine gun. As a reporter observed, “if Hollywood film companies are keeping score, the statistics of ‘crime victims’ in San Francisco should be impressive.”¹⁰ This police film, based on a novel set in Stockholm, Sweden, capitalized on the success of *Dirty Harry* by changing the setting to San Francisco and providing even more gruesome violence. *Laughing Policemen* also outdid *Dirty Harry*’s depiction of vice and urban decay. The list of locations for approval included three topless bars, a porno theater, boarding houses, and a massage parlor.¹¹ The plot involved pornographic pictures taken by a cop’s widow, a cop cruising a gay bar to follow the killer, and scenes staged in both Hispanic and African-American ghettos. In the strip club scene, a patron obscures an image of a bottomless dancer lifting her legs in front of the crowd. From explicit sex districts to downtrodden ethnic neighborhoods, the film portrayed San Francisco as an amalgamation of settings that symbolized the fears, fantasies, and moral outrage of the urban crisis.

Television series such as *Ironside* and *The Streets of San Francisco* also grew more violent, like the films that followed *Dirty Harry*, *Magnum Force* and *The Laughing Policeman*. As Herb Caen griped, a *Streets* episode featured a sniper randomly shooting across the University of San Francisco campus, and the university and San Francisco police provided production support for this frightful image of the city.¹² The frequent depiction of a crime-ridden city weakened the argument that location production was a positive publicity source. Caen, who had long complained about Hollywood filmmaking in the city, would publicize the growing opposition of other civic groups. In 1974, The San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR) protested directly to

MPAA head Jack Valenti about the number of violent movies begin shot in the city. A few months later, the Downtown Association echoed these concerns, saying that the glut of crime films gave San Francisco “an undeserved Chicago-like reputation.”¹³ In 1968, the Chicago convention riots appeared as the antithesis to San Francisco’s Summer of Love; by 1974, Hollywood’s gritty crime aesthetic applied to both cities, with the exception that far more films shot in San Francisco.

Although San Francisco’s onscreen boom in crime began with *Bullitt* in 1968, the city now faced an actual series of salacious crimes that blurred fiction and reality. Between late 1973 and early 1974, San Francisco would see the reappearance of the Zodiac Killer, the kidnapping of Patty Hearst by the SLA, and the Zebra Murders, which described the random killing of several white victims by a radical offshoot of the Nation of Islam. In January 1974, San Francisco’s streets were empty at night as racial tensions openly seethed.¹⁴ Some critics even blamed violent films about San Francisco for inciting actual urban crime, or at the very least, causing just as much damage to San Francisco’s image.¹⁵ A *Variety* article asked whether several incidents of police violence in San Francisco might be in response to “San Francisco’s new popularity as a beautiful bloody backdrop for two-fisted police films.” The reporter noted the popularity of several brutal police films with local police officers, as well as two premieres that benefited police causes.¹⁶ While advocating against outright censorship, the Downtown Association pressed city government to more closely vet scripts that discredited San Francisco. Businesses earned far more from tourists than Hollywood crews, and had little tolerance for Hollywood exacerbating the negative publicity from San Francisco’s recent spate of shocking crimes.

Complaints about screen content were intimately tied to off-screen problems caused by location shooting. The Downtown Association asked, “Why should traffic on

Broadway, for instance, be detoured for an hour, requiring the presence of dozens of police, so that movie can be made showing a daredevil, law-defying motor chase?”¹⁷ The car chase, a staple of the police film since *Bullitt*, created the greatest logistical problems for urban productions. *Freebie and the Bean*, a police comedy featuring three wild car chases, ran into major production problems not only for its location demands but its unflattering script.

Like *What's Up, Doc?* a year earlier, *Freebie and the Bean* caused more public and private outrage than violent police films like *The Laughing Policeman*. Producer-director Richard Rush openly acknowledge that *Dirty Harry* and *The French Connection* had inspired dozens of cop films, particularly in San Francisco. The initial script was set in Cleveland, but Rush shifted to San Francisco for what he called, “obvious reasons,” implying San Francisco’s clear association with police films and car chases. Yet while police officers could enjoy a tough cop bending the rules, Sgt. McCarthy took exception to scripts showing police as “hopelessly inept or corrupt.”¹⁸ Freebie (James Caan), the lead character, gained his nickname by abusing his position as a detective to pocket items such clothes and alcohol during investigations. He and the Bean (Alan Arkin) are equally corrupt and inept, suggesting police involvement in graft and prostitution while starting a street fight with a woman. The partners were not only profane, but not surprisingly for a film with a racial slur for Mexican-Americans in its title, spewed racial epithets throughout the film.

Deputy Mayor DeLuca, McCarthy, Richard Rush, and *Freebie* production manager Anthony Ray, met privately to discuss police concerns about the script. While Sgt. McCarthy publicly suggested that the police department offered suggestions and technical advice rather than censorship, he voiced strong and specific objections to various parts of the script during the closed-door meeting. Rush argued nearly all of these

scenes where comedic embellishments, but McCarthy flatly suggested that no police officer would do such things. In the end, San Francisco achieved a type of censorship similar to that deployed by Warner Bros. for *Dark Passage*. No mention of the city was made and references to local newspapers and utility companies were omitted. The police department withheld the official decals that they issued to productions, forcing Freebie and Bean to drive unmarked cars and use non-San Francisco badges. Producers even agreed to avoid key San Francisco landmarks, such as bridges, while acknowledging that it would be impossible to hide the San Francisco location.¹⁹ As McCarthy later stated publicly, clearly referring to *Freebie and the Bean*, films that showed police officers in a bad light could shoot in the city, but the fictional setting would be “Anywhere, U.S.A.”²⁰

The film’s production demands reinforced McCarthy insistence on script changes. He specifically worried about the major chase sequence, which involved a car crashing over the lower deck of the Embarcadero Freeway. Facing a tight schedule, Rush quickly worked out a feasible route for the major chase, which was Warner Bros.’ primary reason to shoot *Freebie and the Bean* in San Francisco.²¹ Rain delays pushed the schedule even tighter. Whether it was time pressure or a poor decision by one of the dozens of agencies overseeing production, in this case the Department of Public Works, the production closed traffic through the Stockton Tunnel during morning rush hour.²² The major traffic jam launched another Herb Caen broadside and a potential investigation by the Board of Supervisors.

Caen began his column with a description of “honest taxpayers” delayed from reaching work. He then described another day when *Freebie and The Bean* parked ten wrecked cars at another location, preventing residents from pulling out of their parking spaces. Caen added: “Fumed one irate woman, ‘who needs these people, anyway?’ Cop: ‘Alioto.’” He posed her question to his readers at the close of his column, in light of both

the ugly depiction of San Francisco police in films like *Dirty Harry* and the commuter problems caused by location shooting.²³ Caen challenged Alioto's production policies on both the publicity front and the economic front, highlighting incidents where location shooting directly harm local businesses and employees. New York, teetering on the brink of bankruptcy, gladly accepted traffic problems in exchange for production jobs and revenue; yet San Francisco, a thriving tourist economy with financial stability, could reasonably question whether hosting Hollywood was worth the trouble.

Soon after the *Freebie* incident, Supervisor Dianne Feinstein, future San Francisco mayor, contemplated new legislation governing location production. Members of the Film Committee and local labor leaders helped dissuade her from pursuing new laws. They later persuaded Supervisor Dorothy von Beroldingen not to hold public hearings on location filmmaking in the city. While the Film Committee remained at arm's length from the Mayor's Office, they collaborated closely whenever the Board of Supervisors attempted to wrest control over location shooting.²⁴ Occasional threats by the Board of Supervisors to regulate location shooting reflected the fragility of San Francisco's production economy, predicated on local cooperation by both residents and several of government offices rather than direct financial incentives for Hollywood filmmakers.

Alioto weathered public outcry over location shooting, and his active involvement in recruiting Hollywood filmmakers to shoot in and return to shoot in San Francisco remained an effective method for luring major producers through the end of his term in 1976. In a 1973 publicity piece for *The Towering Inferno*, producer Allen twice cited a "marvelous mayor" as the key reason he would shoot the film in San Francisco, as well as consider the city for a future project.²⁵ Alioto gained private shows of support from Hollywood as well in exchange for his strong cooperation with filmmakers. Malpaso

producer Robert Daley sent along location audits for *Magnum Force* to document the over \$1 million spent in the city as evidence against critics of location shooting. The production team for *The Killer Elite* (1975) met with both Alioto and DeLuca, who offered not only to help clear locations but also to suggest alternatives for potential problems.²⁶

The centerpiece of Alioto's production campaign continued to be the San Francisco Film Festival. In June 1973, festival head Claude Jarman hosted a Los Angeles luncheon to honor Alioto and ostensibly to promote the event. The guest list placed a greater emphasis on promoting production in San Francisco than film appreciation. The list of invitees included studio executives such as Peter Bart and Peter Guber, television executives like John Mitchell of Screen Gems, Steve McQueen's power-agent, Freddie Fields, *Streets of San Francisco* producer Quinn Martin, and *The Towing Inferno* producer Allen and screenwriter Stirling Silliphant. Jarman promised Alioto that he would follow up with Allen and a few months after the luncheon, Allen announced his plans to shoot in San Francisco.²⁷

The actual festival, financed by donations from major productions that shot in the city, provided ample publicity for features and series shot in San Francisco. In an aptly titled *Variety* item, "Frisco Fest Name-Drop," the featured stars, such as Gene Hackman, Michael Douglas, Stacy Keach, and Jack Lemmon who were all working on San Francisco-based productions. Francis Ford Coppola received a new award, previously suggested by the film committee, which was a magnet shaped like St. Francis of Assisi, a symbol of his unique ability to draw creative filmmakers to the city.²⁸ The star attendees attracted local ticket buyers while the mayor's office focused entirely on celebrating and extending partnerships with Hollywood producers.

With Alioto's support, urban renewal continued to provide attractive opportunities for filmmakers, offering city controlled, depopulated structures that required little heed for property damage. For scenes featuring gunfights and explosions in *The Killer Elite*, buildings slated for demolition were "a place that doesn't have to be reconstructed after we have had a shoot up in it."²⁹ With help from City Hall, the filmmakers substituted dynamite for the wrecking ball and blew up a firehouse scheduled for redevelopment for an action scene.³⁰ *The Laughing Policeman* sought to use an abandoned police station for a principal set.³¹ The ease and limited liability of shooting in urban development zones gave filmmakers further incentive to shoot in the most blighted areas of the city. Similarly, the double decker highway structure that made the Embarcadero an eyesore and hastened the decline of its surrounding streets had a production advantage: the city simply closed the lower deck for filmmaking, providing producers with a sheltered area for car chases.³² Thus unlike *Bullitt's* scenic tour, chases in *The Laughing Policeman* and *Freebie and the Bean* both featured a dingy underpass.

By the mid-1970s, San Francisco offered many more production services for location filmmakers than they had in the late 1960s, as detailed in the Film Committee's twenty-four page, "Location: San Francisco" informational booklet, which appeared in July of 1974.³³ The city now boasted four equipment rental companies, seven film labs, six recording facilities, and two small sound stages. Nonetheless, locations were the key selling point for shooting in the city, with a third of the booklet devoted to lists of locations, along with contact information for the dozens of municipal offices and private businesses that managed landmarks, districts, transportation, and surrounding Bay Area counties and cities. The booklet concludes with a summary of San Francisco's history and geography, including the optimistic description of nearly year round "springtime," despite a cool average temperature range of 50-63 degrees. While these facts were widely

known by Hollywood filmmakers, the last page of the booklet addressed international producers, mentioning Rome and Tokyo alongside New York and Hollywood.³⁴

This comprehensive booklet gave the appearance of industrial stability to what remained a patchwork set of practices and facilities for shooting Hollywood features in the city. While in New York, Mayor Lindsay established a “one-stop” film permit office in the late 1960s, it took until 1976 for San Francisco to claim to have the same system. Months later, *The Hollywood Reporter* discovered this was merely a new way of describing the film committee office, as the city charter divided permit authority between agencies, such as police, airport, and parks.³⁵ While local agencies including the committee covered smaller filmmakers, all feature filmmakers reported directly to the mayor’s office.³⁶ San Francisco still had a reputation as “a great place to shoot but a lousy place to get any film work done.”³⁷ In other words, cast and crew enjoyed their stay and the scenery looked beautiful, but despite its recent efforts, San Francisco remained a relatively inefficient filmmaking site.

While San Francisco boasted a growing number of production facilities, these were far better suited for non-theatrical work, such as commercials. Coppola bragged that American Zoetrope had better editing equipment than Hollywood, but it lacked certain essential post-production tools.³⁸ Sam Peckinpah began a scouting trip for *The Killer Elite* at American Zoetrope, noting the impressive sound facilities and adequate editing rooms. Yet the small studio lacked an A.D.R. system, the primary tool for fixing dialogue recorded on location. Peckinpah looked forward to using Zoetrope for a production office, screening room for dailies, and editorial work during shooting. While Coppola cut his low-budget, personal features at Zoetrope, Peckinpah found the facility insufficient for post-production of a major studio film, and completed *The Killer Elite* in Los Angeles.³⁹

Without the ability to offer comparable post-production facilities to Hollywood, San Francisco remained primarily a location, not a feature production center, with the exception of a handful of films by Coppola and George Lucas. As a location, they faced growing competition from national rivals. Below a tiny item in *Variety* announcing the new location booklet ran a quarter-page ad for shooting in Texas, sponsored by the Texas Film Commission.⁴⁰ Like San Francisco, the Texas ad boasted the wide range of geographical settings available in the region. Filmmaking in Florida gained a multi-article section in the June 1973 issue of *American Cinematographer*, similar to San Francisco's spread in October 1971.⁴¹ While San Francisco's proximity to Los Angeles and picturesque settings remained advantageous to producers, the city faced steadily growing competition from other scenic corners of the country.

Labor leaders continued to aggressively push location filmmaking, but despite the early 1970s boom in Hollywood production, San Francisco film and television production rarely offered full time work for residents. Ann Brebner, Film Committee leader and head of the largest local casting agency, overwhelmingly supplied local actors with work as extras. Such jobs were short term, paid modestly, and required actors to respond at a moment's notice. The only steady production remained *Streets of San Francisco*, which was by far the biggest employer of extras.⁴² Nonetheless, Jim Bloom, the *Streets* assistant director who hired extras, admitted, "there's nothing more degrading than working as an extra." He added, "It's inane for extras to think they can get a break working in San Francisco."⁴³

For crewmembers, the situation was even more despairing. Despite Malpas's local ties to San Francisco, *Magnum Force* rented a hundred rooms at the Quality Inn for three months, a sign of how many production jobs were occupied by out-of-towners. In 1971, a peak year for location production, local film workers protested "foreign white

hunters who use San Francisco as a game preserve, bag some scenery and hire a few native bearers.”⁴⁴ Little had changed by 1975, and aside from local workers with Teamster or IATSE contracts, the major beneficiaries of location revenue would be restaurants, hotels, and local production service companies.

As one of the first North American capitals of location filmmaking, San Francisco learned what other cities such as Toronto, Vancouver, and New Orleans would learn in the future. Cooperation and financial assistance could lure producers to town, but converting revenue and experience from professional location shooting into a stable local film industry remained a nearly impossible goal. In San Francisco, local objections to filmmaking threatened to send Hollywood filmmakers elsewhere. By the second half of the 1970s, lower bids from other cities threatened to do the same. Despite building more production facilities and services, San Francisco still lacked the professional production resources of New York or Los Angeles. Filmmakers rarely stay beyond production, the shortest phase of filmmaking.

Despite its limitations, American Zoetrope offered the best hope for a local, professional film industry. If Coppola completed a successful studio film entirely in San Francisco, he would demonstrate that location filmmaking, supported by a small post-production facility, gave filmmakers complete independence from Los Angeles’ studio facilities. *The Conversation* was conceived, shot, and edited in the city, and unlike *THX-1138*, took place in present-day San Francisco. Rather than reviving the vibrant culture of the city, Coppola’s film revealed a sinister urban landscape defined by surveillance, deception, and alienation. The personal, understated film gained more critical accolades than box office returns, a far cry from the enormous success of the two *Godfather* films that bookended it. Despite the director’s avowed love for San Francisco, his film matched the defeated tone of Hollywood and American urbanism. Moreover, it revealed the fading

box office prospects for modestly budgeted, personal films that relied heavily on locations like San Francisco.

ZOOM AND GLOOM

The Conversation was the ultimate San Francisco film and ultimately not about San Francisco. Location technology allowed Coppola to shoot practically anywhere in the city. Yet aside from an ambitious opening sequence in a San Francisco plaza, Coppola largely favored interiors for his guarded protagonist, Harry Caul (Gene Hackman). San Francisco locations met all of the production needs of a film that expressed a larger American urban anomie rather than a story specific to San Francisco. Coppola's choice of locations, including his omissions, suggests the mutability of San Francisco as a location, which provided a cold, paranoid setting for a paranoid personal story. San Francisco's most famous filmmaker cast the city as a bleak landscape of corporate sangfroid and urban decay.

The Conversation opens with Harry Caul leading a complicated audio surveillance operation in order to record a couple's personal conversation in a public plaza. As he scours the recordings working to improve the audio quality, he becomes convinced that the corporate director who hired him (Robert Duval) plans to kill the couple. As he continues to work on the tapes, his elaborate personal security erodes. Following a security convention at a San Francisco hotel, Harry hosts an impromptu after party for fellow male security experts and female conventioners. He wakes up after sleeping with one of the women to find the recordings stolen. In an ambiguous scene, Harry either overhears a murder at the Jack Tar Hotel or suffers a paranoid delusion. At the end of the film, Harry realizes he misinterpreted the conversation; the couple plotted

together and murdered the director. In the final scene, Harry rips apart his apartment when he realizes he has been bugged.

The downbeat and ambiguous narrative was born out of the Hollywood Recession but *The Conversation* was released in the early blockbuster era. In January 1969, before purchasing facilities for American Zoetrope, Coppola (then insignificant enough to be spelled “Cuppola” in *Variety*) planned for *The Conversation* to be the first film produced there.⁴⁵ By late 1969, when Zoetrope became operational, the only project ready for production was *THX-1138*. The failure of Lucas’ debut caused Warners to divest Zoetrope and push the fledgling studio towards financial ruin.⁴⁶

The enormous success of Coppola’s *The Godfather*, as well as films directed by young directors Peter Bogdanovich and William Friedkin, led Paramount chairman Charles Bluhdorn to form the Director’s Company, a production company where these three promising filmmakers would have creative freedom, provided they kept their pictures budgeted under \$3 million. Plans for a future stock issue served to keep the highly sought directors’ fees in check.⁴⁷ Soon the choice of personal films such as *The Conversation* and Bogdanovich’s *Daisy Miller* rankled not only Friedkin but also Paramount executives, who saw little box office appeal. Coppola scholar Gene Phillips suggests that disaster films, such as *The Poseidon Adventure*, dimmed studio interests in the personal films that had proved a desirable, low-cost risk during the Hollywood Depression. Nonetheless, the success of *The Godfather* and the promise of its sequel gave Paramount sufficient reason to finance *The Conversation* at a reasonable budget of \$1.6 million, roughly half of the budget ceiling for the ill-fated Director’s company.⁴⁸

Zoetrope’s early investment in editing equipment would have a profound effect on *The Conversation*, which relied on complex cuts between sound and image to convey Harry Caul reconstructing a murder from a distorted set of audio tracks. Coppola’s first

major purchase for Zoetrope in 1969 would be the newest flatbed editing equipment, featured at a German trade fair, Photokina.⁴⁹ As independent equipment companies boomed in the 1970s, Photokina, the annual trade fair for photography, approached 100,000 visitors by 1974.⁵⁰ The surveillance trade show attended by Harry Caul in *The Conversation* provides a corollary for Photokina, where technical experts pursued the latest high-tech equipment. For *The Conversation*, Coppola enlisted Walter Murch, a sound engineer on *The Rain People*, as both a sound and picture editor. Murch had the audio expertise to structure a film centered on audio surveillance, while utilizing the full potential of the new equipment, which included an eight-track KEM system and a six-track Steenbeck. These new machines also helped Zoetrope's bottom line, renting for \$1200 and \$600 per month respectively, much higher than the \$120 per month rate for the industry-standard Moviola.⁵¹ Thus while *The Conversation* was a small, personal film, its reliance on technically advanced post-production was one similarity with *The Towering Inferno*. Both films' most distinctive effects came well after shooting wrapped: a complex soundscape for *The Conversation* and a skyscraper-scale illusion for *The Towering Inferno*. This growing emphasis on post-production technology set the stage for an industry-wide expansion of post-production work, brought about by American Zoetrope veteran George Lucas for *Star Wars*.

Another key collaborator was Haskell Wexler, who shot the opening scene, the Union Square recording of the couple that recurs in image and sound throughout the film. At USC, George Lucas became friendly with Haskell Wexler, who helped the young student filmmaker and later, did some consultation and shooting for Lucas during the Los Angeles shoot for *THX-1138*.⁵² Wexler would go on to shoot Lucas' low budget hit, *American Graffiti* (1973), in the Northern California suburbs. In late 1969, Wexler even considered making an unrealized project about a prison farm, "Santa Rita," at Zoetrope.⁵³

However early in the filming of *The Conversation*, Coppola fired Wexler and shut down production for ten days. Wexler accepted the firing as Coppola's way of buying time for a production quickly running over schedule, and Coppola used the time to work on the script. Yet the two argued throughout their brief working relationship, primarily over locations.⁵⁴



Fig. 6.1. Sniper-style microphone in *The Conversation* (Paramount, 1974).

The opening scene, which begins with a three-minute zoom over San Francisco's Union Square Park, represented the height of the film's logistical, technical, and artistic challenges. Wexler, who had effectively used hidden cameras in Boston for *The Thomas Crown Affair*, appeared to be the perfect cinematographer for the shoot, which would feature perhaps hundreds of pedestrians unaware that their lunch break in the park would be filmed. The ambitious sequence would also feature six cameras and various long-range shotgun microphones, with sound recordists appearing in actual footage and cameramen occasionally walking through each other's shots. While Coppola had police permission, officers still arrested some of the sound recordists who appeared to be snipers

(Figure 6.1).⁵⁵ While in less dangerous circumstances, the strategy was not unlike *Medium Cool*, where actors walked through crowds of event participants. Once Wexler had five cameras strategically concealed, he told Coppola to “have the actors do just what they would do in the park, and to let the park go.”⁵⁶ The semi-documentary sequence relied on several independent cameramen shooting the couple as if they were unaware subjects, a corollary to the narrative audio surveillance by Caul and his associates.

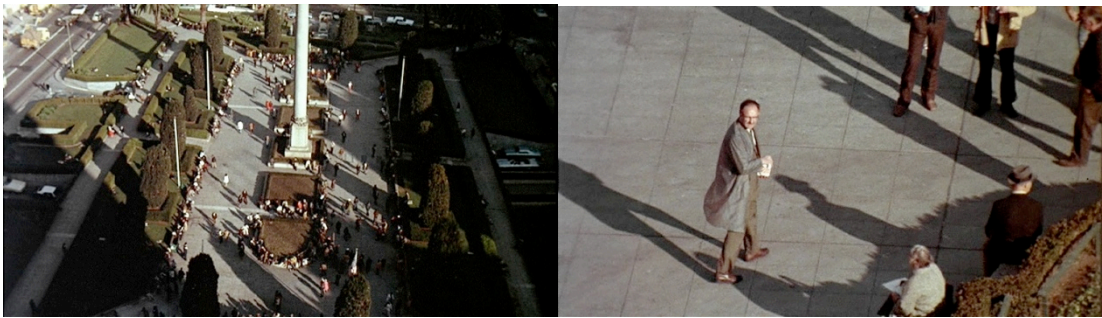


Fig. 6.2. Start and end frame of the opening zoom in *The Conversation*.

The zoom lens offered a visual counterpart to the long-distance microphone surveillance. Before the sound recordist appears on a roof in the second shot of the film, an inexorable zoom bridges the distance between an overview of the entire square to detailed shot of individual figures (Figure 6.2). Wexler had a 20:1 zoom lens built for the shot, far longer than the 10:1 zoom that became standard equipment in the early 1970s. In fact, with zooms becoming so prevalent, he felt that audiences could anticipate where a zoom would end; by zooming far past this perceived limit, Wexler created an unnerving effect of surveillance over a seemingly impossible distance. Ordinarily, sound matches focal length, so that a close-up sounds closer than a wide shot. Yet with the distorted, distant sound of the crowd and dialogue below, the camera distance in the scene is emphasized rather than hidden. The effect is a frightening scale of surveillance and a powerful invasion of privacy, the themes that define the remaining film.⁵⁷

The tight budget for *The Conversation* helped exacerbate the conflict between Wexler and Coppola. Wexler later claimed that his careful preparation allowed him to shoot the opening sequence in a day and a half instead of the scheduled ten or more days.⁵⁸ Aside from *The Godfather*, Coppola worked on low budget productions that shot first and gambled with the results, such as *You're A Big Boy, Now*, *The Rain People*, and *THX-1138*; he faulted Wexler for spending too much time on preparation. Wexler replied by criticizing Coppola's choice of locations.⁵⁹ Despite San Francisco's welcoming stance to filmmakers, particularly Coppola, the production lacked the budget to work in locations with difficult lighting and logistical concerns without falling behind schedule. Coppola hoped to make up time by suspending production and hiring a younger, easier to manage cinematographer, Bill Butler, who had shot *The Rain People*. However Coppola lost every day that he waited to resume production after firing Wexler. Murch later estimated that ten shooting days, roughly fifteen script pages, were never shot.⁶⁰

Murch spent nearly a year in post-production, often meeting with Coppola only once a month while Coppola started pre-production for *The Godfather II*. Murch built new plotlines and changed emphasis on existing narrative threads. Coppola preferred few costume changes, not only as a mark of realism and characterization (Harry's drab raincoat), but as a way to provide greater flexibility intercutting footage intended for different scenes.⁶¹ Near the close of *Classical Hollywood Cinema*, David Bordwell analyzes how *The Conversation* incorporates art cinema strategies into a classical detective story, particularly through ambiguous montage sequences and subjective images cued by listening to the recording.⁶² Production dynamics helped necessitate such a strategy. A script still under revision during production, multiple camera shooting, missing scenes, an absent director, and high-end editing equipment all encouraged art cinema solutions to restructure a film out of disparate and incomplete footage. Like

Petulia, *The Conversation* stylistically resolved the vagaries of shooting on location with frequent and non-linear cutting.

One of Coppola's location choices proved particularly damaging: Alta Plaza, the site of the public outcry over chipped steps during the shooting of *What's Up, Doc?* Smoke machines, employed to create the atmosphere for a dream sequence, drew neighborhood complaints as oily smoke wafted through the area. A local reporter appeared at the scene, to which Coppola responded, "Stop taking pictures – you're making me look bad." Coppola soon looked worse when he assaulted the reporter in an effort to disable his news camera; the reporter filed a \$300,000 suit against Coppola and Paramount. *The San Francisco Examiner* noted two ironies: A filmmaker who refused to be filmed, and *The Godfather* director acting like a mafia thug.⁶³ The third irony would be Coppola's St. Francis award at the annual Film Festival, despite his violent treatment of a local reporter. Despite being a resident of San Francisco, Coppola acted just as heedless of city residents as any Hollywood location crew.



Fig 6.3. The only bay view in *The Conversation*.

Coppola avoided further incident throughout shooting by making a remarkable choice for a San Francisco film: shooting almost entirely interiors. With the exception of San Francisco films based on stage plays, such as *Butterflies Are Free* (1972) and *Play It Again, Sam* (1972), filmmakers came to the city for the scenery. Whether shooting seedy vice districts for police films or famous landmarks for romances, filmmakers frequently shot on the streets and parks. By contrast, *The Conversation* takes place almost entirely in a sparsely lit warehouse, cramped apartment buildings, and a windowless convention hall. The only clear view of the bay, a feat for a film shot in a peninsular city, appears through the windows at the top of the office tower run by Harry's sinister employer (Figure 6.3). Here the vertical risers of the tower and a shadowy balcony that bisect the screen place Harry more in limbo than in a position of scenic mastery. The cramped interiority of the settings provides a fitting mise-en-scene for Harry's guarded personality. They also suggest an urban disillusionment that extends across San Francisco's rising downtown.



Fig. 6.4. Urban renewal imagery in *The Conversation*.

Like other filmmakers shooting in San Francisco, Coppola realized that urban renewal sites held economic and aesthetic value. He took advantage of low-priced, available real estate in declining districts. Harry's office was an empty warehouse blocks away from the former Zoetrope warehouse in the Mission district. Harry's apartment

house was part of a district designated for redevelopment.⁶⁴ While offering clear advantages for location shooting, Coppola ties these abandoned, post-industrial urban sites to Harry's own alienated existence. Twice urban decay becomes a visual symbol of Harry's psychological decline. Discovering the murder site, a room in the Jack Tar Hotel, Harry sees (or imagines) blood pouring out of the toilet. A hard cut reveals a nearly demolished building as Harry hurries away from the disturbing scene, as if the collapse of the neighborhood mirrors the collapse of his attempts to prevent a murder. The final denouement has Harry frantically tearing apart his apartment in a failed search for a surveillance bug. (Figure 6.4). Thus Harry tears down his private space in a teardown neighborhood, as physical space betrays his every precaution, leaving him vulnerable and unsheltered.

The corporate executive skyscraper has the opposite effect, as shiny pillars and glass walls create a hygienic, geometrical space. The choice of odd angles and underexposure present the office space not as a brighter alternative but as a different force of alienation. As the skeletons of new skyscrapers rise in the distance, the audience glimpses the orderly business structures overtaking the older, fading architecture of Harry's world. The mid-century modern style of the Jack Tar Hotel provides a similarly rational and sanitary space, down to the paper seal over the toilet (Figure 6.5). In both spaces, violence punctures the architectural order, from the menace of the Doberman at the CEO's side to the clumsy, bloody murder at the Jack Tar. Meanwhile, as Harry toils away in his shabby surroundings, he gropes for meaning and safety without understanding the danger towering above him.



Fig. 6.5. Modernist buildings as sinister sites in *The Conversation*.

San Francisco's resident auteur stages both the old city and new city as incompatible traps, with Harry's demolished city divorced of human community, and San Francisco's rising business hub devoid of human compassion. Subjective editing further distinguishes Harry's mental image of doomed lovers from the cold reality of corporate

assassins. The one key public space in the film, Union Square, becomes both encompassed and truncated by camera and audio surveillance. For both the corporate executives and Harry, it stands as an obstacle to private intrusion. The party after the trade fair, the film's only moment of levity, merely opens a similar intrusion into Harry's realm, as he is first bugged and then seduced by a woman who steals the recording. San Francisco was a home but also a set for Coppola, who took advantage of San Francisco's rising and falling districts to shape a desolate portrayal of urban anomie. The scenic city would be left to the car commercials.

Despite its bleak depiction of the city, *The Conversation* gained critical acclaim for local filmmaking, winning the Palme d'Or at Cannes and several filmmaking awards. Released during the Watergate scandal, which revealed Nixon's secretive tape-recording and political espionage, the surveillance plot grew far more topical due to the production delay; *Variety* suggested the film might have played as science fiction five years earlier. Neither Watergate nor Coppola's peak celebrity overcame the quiet, cerebral tone of the film. While calling *The Conversation* "Coppola's most complete, most assured and most rewarding film to date," the reviewer suggested a platform release, relying on "intimate, sophisticated situations" to drive interest in the film before general release.⁶⁵ While garnering near unanimous critical acclaim, the quiet film found a quiet box office, and did little more than break even.⁶⁶

The Conversation might have been a sleeper hit during the Hollywood Recession. It looked nothing like the record-breaking *Towering Inferno*, the paradigmatic blockbuster for 1974. This disaster film provided San Francisco with its biggest hit, but a parade of stars and pyrotechnics fully overshadowed the city setting. And while the enormous budget offered an attractive source of location revenue, the complexity of the film signaled a recession from the location heyday of the early 1970s. A movie that size

could afford to shoot anywhere, but more importantly, required teams of professional technicians and studio facilities that could only be found in Los Angeles.

DOUBLE FANTASY

The *Towering Inferno* required two studios, two source novels, two leading men, two directors, and two cinematographers (three counting effects specialist L.B. Abbott). Both the film and its production conjured the lavish spectacles of yesteryear, as one reviewer compared producer Irwin Allen to Cecil B. DeMille.⁶⁷ The implications for Hollywood would be the long dreamt of return to the back lot, providing jobs for craft workers and less uncertainty for producers returning from locations. This was not a return to the studio Golden Age but a readjustment of the location vs. sound stage calculus. The realist aesthetic of location shooting continued to shape the look of studio-shot films. Meanwhile, improvements in special-effects technology offered more realistic depictions of spectacles impossible to capture on location, such as the overturned ocean liner for Allen's earlier hit, *The Poseidon Adventure* (1972), and the burning skyscraper for *The Towering Inferno*.

The Towering Inferno took almost nothing from its San Francisco setting, other than requisite shots of the Golden Gate Bridge. The story concerns a massive fire in a brand new, record-high skyscraper, which menaces a cross-section of characters that could be drawn from any city or town. New skyscraper construction suggested San Francisco and New York as the two most likely settings, and with the clear reference to the World Trade Center, the choice of San Francisco diffused the complaints about the film's depiction of unsafe high-rise buildings.⁶⁸ Alioto's hospitality, the city's proximity to Hollywood, and gorgeous locations for aerial footage made San Francisco an obvious choice of location. While the film begins with a stilted philosophical talk by the architect

on the opposition between rural and urban regions, the city is merely a pretext for the disastrous tower, a vertical version of the doomed ship in *The Poseidon Adventure*. The *Towering Inferno* said little about San Francisco or American urbanism but revealed a great deal about how the tide of blockbusters threatened the city's role as a location.

Thus while *The Towering Inferno* was another success story for Alioto's ambitious campaign for location production, the film signaled the beginning of the end of San Francisco's feature film prominence. The prevalence of special effects, first in the 1970s disaster cycle and later, in *Jaws* (1975) and *Star Wars*, could both leech into location budgets and as in *Towering Inferno*, render extensive location shooting impossible. The disaster film's reliance on thin characterization and "high-concept" narrative left little room for the nuances of San Francisco's urban culture. The spectacle of films like *Bullitt* and *Dirty Harry* played out entirely in the streets, while disaster films like *Poseidon* and *The Towering Inferno* relied on voluminous sets rigged with mechanical tools to simulate destruction and instability; even disasters staged in the streets, such as *Earthquake*, relied heavily on sets to achieve a scale of destruction beyond what could be achieved on actual city blocks.

In late 1968, Mark Robson shot part of *Daddy's Gone A-Hunting* in San Francisco, including the climax at the panoramic Top of the Mark. However, *Variety* reported his prediction that "the days of extensive shooting on location are numbered." His observation had little to do with current complications, but rather the groundbreaking use of front-projection in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968).⁶⁹ While exceptional locations still offered production value, more realistic studio recreations offered greater control for filmmakers. By 1973, Robson's prediction was coming true, not only in regards to technological improvements but a reassessment of the economics of location production. Rather than shooting at the top of an actual hotel, *The Towering Inferno* constructed a

panoramic Promenade Deck on a Fox sound stage, a 11,000 square set surrounded by a 340-degree cyclorama reproducing the San Francisco skyline (Figure 6.6).⁷⁰



Fig. 6.6. Promenade set with cyclorama for *The Towering Inferno* (Fox–Universal, 1974).

Other economic and stylistic factors began to rein in extensive location shooting by 1973. The declining dollar hampered foreign runaways, while cities, as evidenced by San Francisco, grew less cooperative with filmmakers. Directors trained on location shooting both realized the ease of studio shooting and methods how to avoid a “back lot look.” Finally, the most successful rental studios, such as Universal and the new Burbank Studios, offered modernized facilities that streamlined operations better than facilities built for classical mass production.⁷¹ While studio operators gladly exaggerated the decline of location shooting, the process was subtler, with many pictures returning to the hybrid studio-location practices of the 1950s and earlier 1960s. Like *Vertigo*, location shooting for *The Towering Inferno* focused entirely on images that could not be captured as effectively in Los Angeles, such as helicopter footage of San Francisco and exteriors of characters and emergency vehicles in the plaza outside the San Francisco Bank of

America Building, which offered a realistic urban setting for the ground floor of the tower.⁷²

Another factor in the return to the lot was the declining returns abroad for the culturally incisive, location-based features that defined the New American Cinema. In a 1974 *Variety* article titled, “U.S. Anti-Hero Films Flop Overseas,” a foreign sales veteran rapped Hollywood for abandoning escapist pictures. He blamed *The Graduate* and *Easy Rider* for sparking a wave of alienating pictures, and cited the success of *The Poseidon Adventure* and the sunny projections for *The Towering Inferno* as a realization of Hollywood’s strengths. Audience reactions at FilmEx suggested that even young viewers, the target audience for the “anti-hero” pictures, preferred generic entertainment to “innovative (if boring) pix.” While films like *The Conversation* won awards at Cannes, viewers flocked to action pictures starring Clint Eastwood and Steve McQueen.⁷³

The rise of large-budget, technically ambitious productions also suggested that during the youth film excitement and the Hollywood Recession, American studios had forgotten their greatest advantage over their competitors: their ability to mount grander spectacles than any other national film industry. *American Cinematographer* praised the “genius of Hollywood set builders” who constructed an enormous ocean liner set capable of being inverted 180 degrees and restaged for the capsized boat in *Poseidon Adventure*.⁷⁴ A *Variety* reviewer of *The Towering Inferno* crowed, “Nowhere else in the world does a pool of talent like this exist, and nowhere else in the world can a physical production achievement like this be made.”⁷⁵ Like Coppola for *The Conversation*, producers working on location for smaller budget films preferred small crews to minimize expense and in public locations, minimize crowds and capture residents unaware. Yet such an approach failed to distinguish Hollywood methods from filmmakers working abroad. While throughout the 1960s, foreign filmmakers could match Hollywood’s small, artistic

efforts, they could never mount a production on the scale of *The Towering Inferno*, with a \$12 million budget that went about \$3 million over.⁷⁶

The Towering Inferno starred Steve McQueen and Paul Newman, but also featured William Holden, Faye Dunaway, Fred Astaire, Jennifer Jones, and O.J. Simpson, among other household names, drawing comparisons to the all-star cast of MGM's *Grand Hotel* (1932).⁷⁷ Ironically, as MGM lay in ruins, Hollywood revived the studio's old strategy for not just out-staging but out-starring its worldwide competitors. *Towering* screenwriter Stirling Silliphant openly admitted that the disaster formula left little room for "meaningful characters and complex emotional relationships." With fourteen stars in the cast, even five minutes of screen time each would chew through half of the 140-page script.⁷⁸ Like television guest stars, the characters had to quickly appear as recognizable types with obvious points of conflict. Nothing could be further from the opaque anti-heroes of films like *The Last Picture Show* (1971) *Five Easy Pieces* (1971) and *The Conversation*. As reviewer Dorr observed, with thrilling action scenes, "it hardly matters that the characterization is scanty and contrived."⁷⁹

Irwin Allen's mega-productions provided welcome opportunities for Hollywood's beleaguered labor force that struggled through the early 1970s. A IATSE bulletin triumphantly described the labor scale of *The Towering Inferno*. Set builders constructed 57 sets, including five floors of the skyscraper built to scale on Fox's old Malibu Ranch and the enormous Promenade Deck set, 150% larger than the ship reproduced for *Poseidon*. Allen employed four complete camera crews working simultaneously, and to meet the tight deadline for a Christmas release, hired double the usual number of crewmembers. Over 200 stunts and a "huge staff" of special effects workers further added to the manpower assembled for the complex production.⁸⁰ Rather than demanding concessions from local labor leaders, as producers had done throughout previous runaway

production crises, Allen invested heavily in Hollywood craftsmen who offered the best chance of realistically staging scenes with myriad technical challenges. Other disaster films, such as *Earthquake*, which required 96 sets, provided similar opportunities for legions of workers.⁸¹

These expensive sets and disaster effects proved every bit as valuable as the all-star casts. As *Hollywood Reporter* reviewer John Dorr observed about *Towering Inferno*, “Movie technology is the star of this awesome Irwin Allen production, a formula disaster picture made into an event by the sheer size of its inflating production values.”⁸² Realistically photographed urban locations became commonplace the mid-1970s, losing the distinctive appeal they held for 1970s police films like *Dirty Harry* and *The French Connection*. But more realistic depictions of spectacular events, like a massive high-rise fire, held tremendous box-office appeal. Recovering from the Hollywood Recession, studios reinvested production capital into elaborate sets and practical effects, and this technological shock and awe generated substantial profits for disaster films. San Francisco remained an attractive location, but no location could compete with or accommodate the spectacular onscreen destruction that *The Towering Inferno* achieved on sound stages and back lots.

The Towering Inferno's daunting \$15 million cost reflected Hollywood's renewed willingness to invest in expensive features as well as new financing strategies. From script acquisition to completion, studios had every incentive to spend heavily on the picture. Successful films like *Airport* and *The Poseidon Adventure* drove Hollywood studios to bid highly on disaster film properties. As the construction of the World Trade Center raised popular fears of high-rise safety, two novels capitalized on the theme, *The Tower* and *The Glass Inferno*, both featuring a catastrophic high-rise fire. Warners snapped up *The Tower* for \$400,000, but weeks later, Irwin Allen convinced Fox to buy

The Glass Inferno, yet to be published, for \$410,000. After arranging for artists to illustrate a vision of the combined stories, Allen set up a meeting between the two studios.⁸³ Convincing both that it would be “suicidal” to make competing pictures with identical stories, the studios agreed to equally co-finance the film.⁸⁴ The industry recognized it as the first major-studio co-production deal, a financial arrangement for mitigating risk that would later become commonplace.⁸⁵ The co-financing decision also facilitated a larger budget for the film than either studio could have justified on its own; *Variety* praised the collaboration, where “for the price of about two average pix each, they have what looms as an international blockbuster.”⁸⁶ Finally, it revealed how completely the major studios had emerged from the recession as financiers instead of active producers, allowing the successful Allen near-complete autonomy over the production.

Despite the expensive production demands of the script, the \$12 million budget left enough leeway to hire two leading men. In early talks between Steve McQueen and agent Freddie Fields, McQueen agreed to play the architect with Ernest Borgnine playing the fire chief as a supporting role, similar to his role in *Poseidon Adventure*. McQueen grew more interested in the firefighter, and after another Fields client, Paul Newman, accepted a contract for \$1 million plus 7.5% of the gross, McQueen agreed to an identical contract to play the firefighter. The remaining problem would be the issue of top billing. As he had for *Butch Cassidy and The Sundance Kid*, Fields had his clients agree to have their names appear at the same time, with the order reversed for American and European prints. McQueen also insisted that writer Sterling Silliphant, already working to combine two novels and over a dozen name actors into one film, now had to ensure that the fire chief had the same number of lines in the script as Newman’s architect.⁸⁷

Silliphant, a veteran television writer who had written *The Poseidon Adventure* (as well as *The Lineup* feature film), peppered the script with both escapist adventure segments and as Dorr criticized, “weak liberal posturing.” Like *The Poseidon Adventure*, a greedy businessman ignores safety for profits, in this case, construction kickbacks, like the lone rogue banker of the Production Code Era films who undermines the other hardworking Americans. Thus *Towering Inferno* made important concessions towards the mass market by acknowledging but isolating the social critiques that helped define America’s countercultural cinema. Peter Biskind describes the audience for the film as “Nixon’s *Towering Inferno* middle-Americans,” but like *Jaws*, the film offered soft critiques of profit motives, exemplified by the corrupt builder, who serves a similar narrative function to the mayor obsessed with tourist-profits in *Jaws*.⁸⁸ Not only countercultural films like *Petulia* but also genre films like *Bullitt* and *Dirty Harry* took advantage of their San Francisco setting as a site of cultural revolution. By neutralizing political differences for a mass audience, Silliphant effectively neutralized San Francisco’s contribution as a unique cultural setting.

Towering Inferno had enough money but barely enough time. With a 70-day production schedule, principal photography would stretched into early August, leaving less than five months to edit and distribute the film for a Christmas 1974 release date. With costumes and sets progressively deteriorating under flames and waters, Allen had to shoot in sequence, as he had on *The Poseidon Adventure*, further prolonging the schedule.⁸⁹ In order to save time, Allen relied on four separate crews shooting simultaneously, including two major units led by different directors and cinematographers. The 1st Unit, directed by John Guillermin and shot by Fred Koenkamp, covered the dialogue scenes, including three weeks of location shooting in San Francisco, largely devoted to scenes outside the Bank of America building. Koenkamp was an accomplished cinematographer

(Patton, 1970) with experience shooting special effects dating back to his work on *Dark Passage*. The 2nd unit was the “action unit,” directed by Allan and shot by Joseph Biroc, and spent only a few days in San Francisco. The 3rd-unit shot special effects sequences at Fox, supervised by L.B. Abbott, a key collaborator on *Poseidon*. The 4th-unit shot aerial footage by helicopter in San Francisco and Los Angeles.⁹⁰



Fig. 6.7. Miniature tower matted into location footage for *The Towering Inferno*.

Like the script, the tower itself was a composite, comprised of different locations, miniatures and mattes. The only complete version of the tower would be a 100-foot high miniature. For establishing shots, Abbott used a matte to combine the model tower with helicopter footage shot in San Francisco (Figure 6.7). While the exterior of the Bank of America Building served as the hotel entrance, producers used the architecturally stunning lobby at the Regency-Hyatt Hotel for the interior. Along with five complete floors built on the Fox Ranch, 19 other floors and the Promenade were built on studio sound stages. The computer control center of the tower was staged in the basement of a Century City office in Los Angeles.⁹¹ Like *The House on Telegraph Hill*, San Francisco

buildings provided only the bottom floors of the composite edifice to be optically completed in post-production.

Similar to Eastwood's Malpaso production company, Allen relied on regular collaborators to delegate responsibilities across the demanding production; but while Malpaso reemployed directors and cinematographers on location, Allen's team strength was pre-visualization, production supervision, and spectacle. Over 50 crewmembers for *Towering* had worked on *Poseidon*, including associate producers, production managers, art department heads, stunt and mechanical effects supervisors, and Production Designer William Creber. He supplied hundreds of storyboards prior to shooting in order to ensure proper construction of the multi-story illusion onscreen.

Perhaps the hardest facet to coordinate would be a consistent look for the cinematography shot by four-crews in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Most often, Koenkamp's drama unit shot first before Biroc's action-unit damaged the set with various forms of destruction. Biroc typically consulted with Koenkamp as he finished shooting and watch most of his dailies to adopt a consistent look.⁹² While Koenkamp focused primarily on figure lighting for the stars, Biroc concerned himself with lighting large areas of the set to contain characters in action.⁹³ *Variety* praised the film's stylistic consistency across multiple units, and Biroc and Koenkamp shared the Oscar for Best Cinematography.⁹⁴ Creber and the art department received Oscar nominations as well. These awards spoke to how convincingly *The Towering Inferno* integrated San Francisco locations, standing sets, practical effects, and optically-printed composites. For decades, studios and filmmakers cited an audience demand for realism as the driver of runaway production and location shooting; *The Towering Inferno* reasserted the value of studio-manufactured realism and found a large audience willing to suspend disbelief.

San Francisco received more attention from the helicopter unit, including a cine-tourist opening to the city. Notes from a meeting with Irwin Allen suggest the soaring aerial shot, where a helicopter breaks the fog to reveal the flashing lights atop the Golden Gate Bridge followed by the bridge span itself. The storyboards ensured that the lights would create a visual match with a beacon atop a composite image of the tower.⁹⁵ Allan cleverly tied the real engineering model of the bridge to the special effect engineered image of the tower, selling the illusion with San Francisco's dreamy infrastructural monument. Other aerial POV shots would be achieved entirely through an optical printer, which hired effects specialist Linwood Dunn utilized to mimic the motion of a smooth, twisting helicopter descent.⁹⁶ As in the 1950s and 1960s, location footage established and reestablished a photographic realism through wide shots, creating a sense of real place that could carry over into studio sets and matte composites.

The film's emphasis on complex sets and pyrotechnics rendered extensive location shooting in San Francisco by the first and second units both unfeasible and superfluous. The action unit shot only one day in San Francisco, capturing fire engines racing down the streets in "documentary style." Entire sound stages had to be fireproofed and ceilinged for the myriad fire sequences, making it impossible to capture much of the disaster in San Francisco.⁹⁷ During its three-weeks in the city, the dramatic unit primarily focused on an urban spectacle, large crowds surrounding dozens of emergency vehicles descending upon the Bank of America plaza (Figure 6.8).⁹⁸ For the largest crowd scene, 350 of the "Brebner Commandos," a nickname for her extras, shot from 7pm to well after midnight. Curious onlookers joined the extras, but complained when they realized Robert Vaughn rather than Paul Newman would be the star of the scene.⁹⁹ Despite the scale of the picture, its presence in San Francisco was short and contained compared to the recent

spate of police films. And with a 120-person cast and crew required for the large crowd scenes in the city, even such a well-funded production could not afford to stay for long.¹⁰⁰



Fig. 6.8. Tower exteriors at the Bank of America Building in *The Towering Inferno*.

Despite the film's escapist story and reliance on mechanical and optical effects, the filmmakers were carefully attentive to the wave of location shooting that preceded them. According to *American Cinematographer*, Biroc had to contend with "audiences which have been fed a steady diet of realism during recent years and know how to recognize fakery."¹⁰¹ Koenkamp similarly emphasized naturalistic lighting for the dialogue scenes due to audience familiarity with location shooting. For wide shots of the crowd of people and service vehicles outside the Bank of America Building, he had to light nearly a whole city block for night cinematography. Unable to rely on the low-key lighting associated with location realism, Koenkamp shot with multiple cameras and zoom lenses while pushing the film in development, giving the arrival of emergency crews and vehicles a semi-documentary feeling. Back at the studio, Koenkamp shot with both Panavision cameras on dollies and hand-held Arriflexes, alternating polished pans

and tilts with rough, semi-documentary camera movements that fit the panicked immediacy of the action sequences.¹⁰²



Fig. 6.9. Location shooting style navigated the chaotic sets of *The Towering Inferno*.

Biroc also relied on tools and techniques associated with location shooting to navigate massive sets constructed entirely for visual emphasis rather than camera and lighting concerns. The need for fire-safe ceilings left Biroc without room to hang lights, so he often relied on smaller quartz lights. Fast film and fast Panavision lenses also allowed him to shoot some sequences with merely the fire illuminating the actors and set. The controlled chaos of the fire and the need to capture the reactions of a large cast pushed Biroc to also use multi-camera setups; he used eight cameras to capture water flooding the enormous Promenade set, where multiple takes would be expensive and time consuming. With camera movement often obstructed, zoom lenses added dynamic movement under difficult conditions.¹⁰³ The disaster effects and ambitious settings that necessitated the studio also made it difficult to take advantage of studio efficiencies, from hanging lights to executing camera movements. Yet the practices developed on location allowed cinematographers to navigate these difficult setups. In turn, producers could

focus on the appearance and mechanical effects of a set rather than its suitability for photography (Figure 6.9).

While minimizing location production in San Francisco, *The Towering Inferno* made typical concessions to the city, particularly local firefighters who provided assistance and technical advice. Allen agreed to donate \$20,000 to the annual Film Festival.¹⁰⁴ While initially galled at a “horror story” for the city’s fire prevention work, firemen happily promoted the film after premiere screenings were scheduled to benefit the Fire League Athletic and Musical Events (FLAME).¹⁰⁵ Allen made a gesture equivalent to *Dirty Harry* with a visual dedication to fallen firefighters at the opening of the film and further thanks for Los Angeles and San Francisco fire crews in the closing credits.

As anticipated, *The Towering Inferno* was a phenomenal box office success. Debuting on Christmas, it earned \$16.5 million, more than its extraordinary budget, in only 17 days.¹⁰⁶ Bringing in \$55 million domestically and at least as much abroad, the film was the biggest hit of the year and quickly climb the all time box office list. Meanwhile, widespread critical acclaim suggested that Hollywood could once again make well-crafted, mass-market pictures for a global audience. Coppola’s personal film, *The Conversation*, would be overshadowed both at the box office and the Academy awards not only by *Towering Inferno*, but by his own mega-production with extravagant sets, *The Godfather II*.

BACK LOT REVISITED

American Cinematographer observed that *The Towering Inferno* represented a change of tack in Hollywood. “[The film] is in a large sense a throwback. During recent years most of the big money-making pictures have strived for the economies and reality

of location filming.”¹⁰⁷ By the end of the 1970s, *Towering Inferno* proved to be not only a return to the studio-bound spectacles of the classical Hollywood system but a glimpse of the future. With unprecedented box-office returns for wide releases of high-concept films, the money spent on elaborate but thrilling productions seemed more than worth the cost. In San Francisco, George Lucas reaped enormous profits by investing in studio fantasy over location realism with *Star Wars*. With rising budgets and greater industry stability, extensive shooting in popular locations like San Francisco was no longer an obvious source of production value or economic savings. The ability to shoot anywhere once again had to contend with the ability to shoot anything, from a skyscraper holocaust to an inter-galactic war, on the back lot.

In less than a year, the record-breaking profits for *Jaws* dwarfed the financial success of *The Towering Inferno*. While sharing key similarities, a major difference between the two production strategies was that Spielberg’s breakout hit shot extensively on location, although like *Towering’s* San Francisco setting, the Martha’s Vineyard locations were the least important aspect of the prototypical “high concept” production. A quarter of *Jaws’* \$12 million production cost went to special effects.¹⁰⁸ Unlike *Towering Inferno*, the special effects technology proved inadequate, in part due to the difficulty of working on location. The mechanical shark malfunctioned and looked unrealistic on film, while *Conversation* cinematographer Bill Butler struggled to match backgrounds shooting in the unpredictable New England weather. Inconsistent lighting and cloud cover presented an editing challenge while rendering one solution to the special effect problems, using documentary footage of sharks, practically impossible.¹⁰⁹ Like *Towering*, *Jaws* rushed into production to target a holiday release and to best capitalize on publication of its source material, further exacerbating production problems; *Jaws*.¹¹⁰ The experienced Allen went 20% over budget; Spielberg, on his first major-budget film, went

300% over budget and 104 days over schedule, pushing the film's cost close to *The Towering Inferno* without the benefit of an all-star cast.¹¹¹ Ultimately, the studio had to delay *Jaws*' premiere until the summer, which following the film's success, became Hollywood's prime window for blockbuster releases.

As with *Bullitt* and *The Conversation*, the effectiveness of *Jaws* only emerged during post-production. Following a Dallas sneak preview, run after a showing of *The Towering Inferno*, *Jaws* became an epochal blockbuster and its problematic production history became another part of its lore.¹¹² Yet the lesson in location production was not be lost on Spielberg. He shot much of his next blockbuster, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, on the back lot and in the Los Angeles suburbs, while relying on optical effects and set pieces over mechanical monsters. The film's most famous image, a monumental spaceship hovering over a towering mesa, artfully combined a spectacular location vista with a physically impossible special effect. Like Hitchcock's meticulously-planned matte shots for *Vertigo*, Spielberg's composite images required careful pre-visualization and composition, precluding the improvisation on location that defined the influential style of *Bullitt* and helped make San Francisco a site of cinematic exploration and experimentation through the mid-1970s.

The Conversation and *The Towering Inferno* both arrived in 1974 like two ships passing in the night. Coppola rode towards the horizon of location shooting, perhaps reached with the monomaniacal location productions of his *Apocalypse Now* (1979) and Michael Cimino's *Heaven's Gate* (1980), although ironically, both pictures required major sets to be built on real locations. *The Towering Inferno* beat a path back towards the controlled environment and mechanical prowess of the physical studio. The decline of Hollywood's popular art cinema and the rise of the escapist blockbusters was clear-cut, but the changes in location production were subtle. As innovations in location shooting

technology plateaued, special effects technologies rapidly improved. As blockbusters inflated production budgets, filmmakers could again enjoy the competing spectacles of unique locations and studio apparatus. *Star Wars* shot in Death Valley and Tunisia to simulate the terrain of distant planets, but Lucas created his most memorable scenes with studio sets, miniatures, and optical special effects.¹¹³

San Francisco struggled to attract a declining number of feature films released by the major studios. In 1974, Hollywood released roughly 240 films, but for the rest of the decade, released fewer than 200 features each year.¹¹⁴ As high-budget blockbusters devoted more days to studio production and a choice of world locations, San Francisco's advantageous position during the 1970s declined, and its feature production schedule returned to the norm of the 1950s and 1960s, with a handful of pictures shooting in town each year and a few mid-budget pictures like *Foul Play* (1976), *High Anxiety* (1977) and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978) shooting extensively in the city. San Francisco remained a desirable location for television commercials, particularly car ads, and occasional television series, with the end of *Streets of San Francisco* in 1977 dealing another blow to the city's production economy.¹¹⁵

A gritty aesthetic for urban pictures such as *The Conversation* persisted through the 1970s, appearing in Philadelphia for *Rocky* (1976), New York for *Saturday Night Fever* (1977), and San Francisco for *The Enforcer* (1976), the third *Dirty Harry* film. But as the disaster genre "mutated" into *Jaws* and *Star Wars* precipitated a boom in adventure and science fiction pictures, the city ceased to be Hollywood's new frontier, with the exception of the police genre.¹¹⁶ Nonetheless, the location techniques honed in the tight, dim urban quarters and public streets of cities like San Francisco proved readily adaptable to the complicated setups of the new blockbusters. On *The Towering Inferno*, multiple cameras, zoom lenses, fast film stock, portable equipment, and ad-hoc

compositions allowed cinematographers to navigate scenes rife with obstacles to lighting and camera movement, such as swirling helicopters, tilting sets, pyrotechnics and water pumps,. With a shift in place and emphasis, the production methods that helped build the introverted nightmare of *The Conversation* on location enhanced the extravagant nightmare of *The Towering Inferno* on the back lot. A key consequence of this production strategy was San Francisco's highly diminished role in both the production and the narrative.

While the urban location aesthetic of the late 1960s and 1970s had a tangible impact on the look and method of studio shooting, the economic advantage of location shooting proved to be short lived, except of course for the lower budget pictures that historically, could never afford the cost of prolonged studio rentals and expensive soundstage technologies. Under Alioto, San Francisco effectively parlayed the media attention of the Summer of Love into a filmmaking boom that perfectly coincided with a high water mark of Hollywood location shooting. San Francisco became one of the most filmed cities in the world, first as an embellishment of its own urban image and then as a prime setting for the urban crisis that arguably left a greater mark on the city onscreen than off-screen. San Francisco soon regained its cine-tourist image as America's picturesque urban gem. But to the disappointment of local boosters and industry workers, the city receded from the foreground of film production to the background of Hollywood features.

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Conclusion: Hollywood's San Francisco

A 'SAN FRANCISCO' STYLE?

This thirty-year study of Hollywood films shot in San Francisco follows the development of location shooting from a minority to a majority practice for American filmmaking in the postwar era. Between the 1940s and mid-1960s, every attempt to shoot outside of the studio had to be justified against the efficient standard practices of sound stage and back lot production. By the late 1960s shooting a film entirely on the lot was the rare exception, with major set building confined to those scenes impossible to capture on location. Across the American film industry and specifically in San Francisco, location shooting peaked in the first half of the 1970s, towards the end of Hollywood's rocky transition from a relatively stable mass-production economy to a relatively stable blockbuster economy. Following *The Towering Inferno*, San Francisco locations resumed a supporting role for both Hollywood narratives and visual-effects spectacles. While location shooting remained standard practice for Hollywood productions, the city of San Francisco ceased to be a steady hub of film and television production less than a decade after the boom began in 1967.

Throughout the three decades following World War II, Hollywood filmmakers often exploited nearby San Francisco's scenery, topography, and culture for many different narrative and aesthetic ends. Even during its peak years as a location, 1967-1973, *Variety* observed: "There simply is no common thread running through the many films shot here in recent years... There's never been, for example, a 'San Francisco' film style to equate with the San Francisco sound that swept the music industry in the 1960s."¹ On the surface level of film narrative, this is an accurate critique, but it fundamentally

confuses subject and object. San Francisco's music scene was a product of world-famous local bands; San Francisco's onscreen image was a byproduct of Hollywood shooting practices. By analyzing San Francisco as an object of Hollywood production, not a subject capable of determining its own depiction, this dissertation identifies the common threads that drove certain types of films to construct the city in a certain way. Every scene shot in San Francisco reflected industry-wide changes in production economies, technology, style, and logistics that made shooting in San Francisco a favorable alternative to shooting in the sound stages, back lots, and surrounding neighborhoods of Los Angeles.

The dramatic fluctuation in San Francisco's film image over three decades reveals a complex but rather unidirectional relationship between location shooting and urban depiction. First, filming on location in a given place has an implicit relationship to its alternatives, shooting on the sound stage or shooting in a different location. Onscreen images of San Francisco are by and large those that studio-backed filmmakers could not more effectively or more affordably capture elsewhere. Secondly, production technology and aesthetic norms circumscribe the potential set of film images for a given place. Despite San Francisco's famed eccentricity, Hollywood's depiction of the city largely followed industry-wide production trends and popular perceptions of the American city in general. Visiting filmmakers seeking to authentically capture San Francisco still chose and cut together locations to fit the mind's-eye view of the city that drew them there in the first place. Even resident filmmakers like Clint Eastwood and Francis Ford Coppola staged dark fantasies of San Francisco to match the nation image of the 1970s American city in crisis.

FROM SET TO SITE

San Francisco crossed a key threshold in 1968 when *Bullitt* proved that a film shot entirely in the city could offer far greater production value than a film shot on a studio lot with a comparable budget. This milestone productively divides Hollywood location shooting in San Francisco into two distinct periods. During the first, roughly from 1945-1967, filming on location was a supplement to production on the studio lots. From 1968-1975, it was an alternative to studio-centered production. During both periods, location shooting was an experimental practice but with a different goal in sight. Prior to the late 1960s, filmmakers tried new production methods on location hoping to achieve aesthetic and economic outcomes comparable to sound stage production. Once the economics shifted in favor of location shooting in the late 1960s, filmmakers worked to sharply distinguish location aesthetics from sound stage production.

The major studios did not directly pursue this transition from sound stage to location production as the primary mode of Hollywood filmmaking. Rather this sea change occurred as a consequence of industrial, technological, and logistical developments. Expanded location shooting was a side effect, not a goal of the lurching changes in American film production during thirty years of industry instability. San Francisco proved a useful location throughout, but never for quite the same reasons, playing a different role to suit changes in location shooting practices.

The rise of runaway production in the postwar era forced many American filmmakers to adapt to shooting outside of the efficient system of Hollywood studio production. While the vast majority of productions still depended on studio facilities both domestically and abroad, location shooting both justified shooting in foreign countries to Hollywood unions and compensated for the lack of Hollywood-caliber facilities outside of Los Angeles. At the same time, the studios' growing reliance on independent features and telefilm production transformed the physical plant from primarily an in-house

production facility to a rental facility by the mid-1960s. Both of these developments severed the production of a studio-financed film from the use of that studio's production space. For independent producers, shooting in locations such as San Francisco offered an alternative to the exorbitant rental fees and expensive process shots that could only be achieved on the studio lot. Meanwhile, without regular feature production, Hollywood facilities shed personnel and physically deteriorated, reducing the inherent advantages of back lot production, except for the active television stages. By 1968, location shooting more often proved cheaper and more efficient than set construction.

The greatest check on the expansion of location shooting was production technology designed almost exclusively for shooting on the lot. In the 1950s and 1960s, the transition to widescreen and the expansion of color filmmaking, both of which required higher light levels, reduced most location shooting to daylight exteriors. But in the second half of the 1960s, the efficiency of location shooting improved dramatically in no small part due to the adaptation of documentary filmmaking practices to feature location shooting. Films like *Bullitt* and *Petulia* adapted tools and production practices developed for television documentaries, television commercials, and European art cinema, not merely as an aesthetic choice but as a cheaper method of shooting extensively on location.

Studio-based production focused on building sets to appear like locations; location shooting focused on making built and inhabited sites behave like sets. Densely populated urban areas like San Francisco provided a special challenge. The semi-documentary boom of the late-1940s revealed Hollywood's inexperience in controlling crowds, coordinating with municipal governments, dealing with inclement weather, and in general, preparing for the unexpected. Television-trained directors like Blake Edwards proved better equipped to change schedules and scripts on the fly, minimizing the impact

of inevitable delays due to logistical problems like weather and crowds. Ad-hoc setups were a necessary compromise on location, but by 1968 they became an essential component of a new semi-documentary style. In a subtle but momentous shift, cinematographers began to embrace capturing the moment over perfecting the image.

Acknowledging the major changes in production practice that divide these two periods of location shooting improves our understanding of Hollywood's production approach in San Francisco and other major cities. Prior to 1968, location shooting was with rare exception considerably more expensive, more time consuming, and more unpredictable than shooting on the lot. In order to compensate for this added expenditure, scenes shot on location were by definition exceptional. Changing trends in the depiction of San Francisco pointed to industry-wide reassessments of the inherent production value of location shooting. The choice of locations also reveals clear limits of what Hollywood filmmakers could capture on location in a given era.

By the late 1960s, the choice of film locations in San Francisco spoke far more directly to aesthetic intentions than practical limitations. This was a result not only of developments in location shooting but the direct cooperation of the city government under Mayor Alioto. The entire city was now effectively available for Hollywood filmmakers, and as the scope of location work expanded, the depiction of San Francisco grew unstable. While Hollywood continued to associate location filmmaking with aesthetic realism, filmmakers effectively transformed San Francisco into a scene of urban ruin contrary to its actual thriving urban culture. Ironically, the more Hollywood shot on actual locations, the more they succeeded in manipulating them like constructed sets. By the late 1960s, urban realism onscreen became synonymous with urban decay, and filmmakers stayed far more faithful to the national image of the urban crisis than the local condition of San Francisco.

In the first period of postwar location shooting, Hollywood carefully captured real places to conform to established methods of establishing city settings on the studio lot. From 1968-1975, Hollywood primarily shot in real locations, but developed a style of urban depiction that was often as illusory as the studio-built cities. Throughout both periods, San Francisco represented a utopian symbol in American urbanism. Journalists, urban theorists, tourists, and the young people who flocked to the city in the late 1960s all viewed San Francisco as America's salient exception to urban decline. The city's onscreen demise in the early 1970s is a testament to location shooting's ability to transform the places it appears to document.

While industry-wide changes in Hollywood filmmaking largely shaped San Francisco's screen image, the growth of location shooting in cities like San Francisco also redefined the meaning of Hollywood. As fewer films shot exclusively on studio lots or in surrounding Los Angeles over the first period of location shooting, the concept of the Hollywood studio film became an abstraction. Like other businesses during America's postwar transition towards a postindustrial economy, the manufacturing of feature films gradually separated from the managerial functions of production deals and distribution. Long defined as factories employing legions of movie craftsmen, Hollywood studios appeared as empty shells, and Los Angeles film workers, who had fiercely protected their positions in the prewar era, were nearly powerless against the global economic forces that drove independent producers to shoot in European cities, New York, and by the late 1960s, San Francisco. At the same time, industry-wide policies grew increasingly difficult to achieve. Finding consensus among a small cadre of moguls proved much easier than forming agreements among dozens of executives, agents, stars, and producers with competing agendas.

San Francisco's emergence as a location shooting hub in the later period of this study uniquely challenged Los Angeles' self image as a production center. The two major California cities were historic rivals, but more importantly, San Francisco lacked the studio facilities that made not only Hollywood, but also ancillary production centers like New York, Rome, and London viable sites for filmmaking. The successful development of location production in San Francisco proved that by using new production techniques and technologies, principal photography could take place entirely outside of the studio lot without sacrificing economy or aesthetics.

The classical Hollywood film style was defined in no small part by the production efficiency of Los Angeles studio facilities, allowing American films to achieve greater production value at a lower cost than other national film industries. The unpredictability of working in real locations promoted a less rigid system of lighting, composition, and continuity editing. San Francisco's proximity to Los Angeles provided a safe proving ground for *Bullitt's* experimentation with a new, semi-documentary shooting style, while its avant-garde counterculture helped justify *Petulia's* experimental location montage. As San Francisco boomed with location production in the early 1970s, a new stylistic flexibility informed even more conventional genre films like *Dirty Harry*. While Hollywood narratives still largely relied on generic and story conventions, Hollywood style began to sacrifice spatial clarity and polished cinematography for the thrilling sense of immediacy offered by semi-documentary action sequences captured on location. This emergent practice of urban location shooting even affected studio-bound spectacles like *The Towering Inferno*, which incorporated stylistic elements of location shooting to lend realism to a fantastical back lot production. As a prominent location during this stylistic transition, San Francisco played a crucial role in shaping a new aesthetic for American films, one that ironically countered San Francisco's enviable visual harmony.

EVERYBODY'S FAVORITE CITY

The central contradiction of this dissertation is that San Francisco was both a unique and a typical location from 1945 to 1975. The city was unique for its proximity to Los Angeles, its distinctive scenery, and its cultural prominence in the late 1960s. These specific qualities made San Francisco the most popular American city for Hollywood filmmaking except for Los Angeles and New York, the two cities with established production industries, and during its boom years in the late 1960s and early 1970s, San Francisco appeared nearly as essential as a Hollywood location. San Francisco's prominence in American culture peaked just as American films first began shooting primarily on location. Filmmakers approached this exceptional city with a typical calculus, choosing sites and stylistic practices that maximized the production values of a given era under the economic and technological constraints of location shooting.

In the early 1970s, the San Francisco Convention and Visitor's Bureau letterhead touted "Everybody's Favorite City."² This boast rang true in different ways in the decades following World War II. For American urbanists, San Francisco sites often served as paradigms for city form, scenic downtown pedestrian districts seemingly immune to the threat of rundown housing and highway traffic. San Francisco was a booming tourist location, which reinforced its image as an urban playground while smoothing its economic transition to a post-industrial city. By 1967, San Francisco gained strong utopian associations as the capital of the counterculture, a new Jerusalem for disaffected youth. While San Francisco appeared to be building a new urban society, the old one seemed to be collapsing. Waves of race riots swept through most American cities, and by the mid-1970s, major cities like New York, Chicago, and Detroit appeared on the verge of economic, physical, and cultural collapse. Other than major financial

problems, San Francisco quietly struggled with all of these issues that plagued other cities. But the city's national image remained the exception to postwar urban decline and crisis, except on film.

No city experienced such a sudden and thorough destruction of its urban image than San Francisco at the hands of Hollywood location filmmakers in the early 1970s. The widening gap between the city's actual urban culture and its onscreen depiction reveals fundamental aspects of Hollywood cinema's approach to urban location shooting. First of all, a filmed city is the sum of its urban locations and studio sets. Filmmakers often chose to construct San Francisco entirely out of its tourist districts but as in *Dirty Harry*, they could also build its urban image entirely out of red light districts and blighted exurban zones. In either case, Hollywood films divorce a given location from its actual urban context and reconfigure it among other locations to build their own onscreen city.

Hollywood's depiction of San Francisco was strikingly similar to its depiction of other cities across both periods of postwar location shooting. Through the mid-1960s, whether in film noir or Cinerama travelogues, filmmakers overwhelmingly favored San Francisco's scenic views and urban landmarks. This served two purposes. First, by capturing the most distinctive sites of the city, Hollywood minimized the expense of distant location shooting. Why spend more to capture a place that was indistinguishable from Los Angeles or a studio set? Secondly, these images efficiently communicated an authentic San Francisco setting, a sense of real place that imbued the majority of scenes shot on the studio lot. This was not only Hollywood's standard location practice in San Francisco but in New York, Rome, and various cities throughout the globe.

Once location shooting grew cheaper than shooting on the studio lot, filmmakers gained far greater flexibility. They could shoot anywhere in the city, although the tight budgets of the late 1960s and early 1970s forced them to move through locations at a

rapid pace. With access to the city beyond the tourist districts, one might expect Hollywood films to gain a more nuanced view of the city, but in fact the opposite was the case. Freed from the requirement to capture well-known urban sites, filmmakers sought the locations that best suited the tone of their films, which during San Francisco's location boom, was direly bleak. Thus in *The Conversation*, Francis Ford Coppola helped convey a gloomy San Francisco by never providing a clear view of the bay or the Golden Gate Bridge. In fact viewers unfamiliar with San Francisco's Union Square might forget the film was even set there.

SAN FRANCISCO AND THE IMAGE CRISIS OF THE AMERICAN CITY

Despite San Francisco's urban exceptionalism, Hollywood's depiction of the city said as much about public perceptions of the American city as San Francisco itself. The first phase of postwar location shooting covered a period of urban decline for most major American cities, while the second occurred during a national urban crisis. In *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity* Edward Dimendberg traces the decline of the modern city in films shot in postwar Los Angeles. In a fleeting reference, he contrasts Los Angeles with San Francisco's persistent association with the past. Postwar urban decline took the form of fading neighborhoods, urban renewal projections, population loss to the suburbs, and highway expansion. But onscreen, a utopian San Francisco so often resisted these threats to the modern city, combining the scenic grandeur of the City Beautiful movement with the bustling urban life of most prewar cities. Urban blight intruded upon San Francisco, from the killer tourists and highway ramp of *The Lineup* to the bar districts of *Days and Wine and Roses*. But these forces never overwhelmed San Francisco in Hollywood films where the city was the definition of Kevin Lynch's imageable city.³

At the onset of San Francisco's location shooting boom, Hollywood experimented with documentary techniques in an attempt to capture San Francisco's late 1960s zeitgeist. The growing reliance on rapid editing both to simulate San Francisco's psychedelic style and to stitch together improvised footage shot on location began to fragment the image of the city, both within films and across different films. In particular, *Bullitt* conveyed a dynamic San Francisco, but as an automotive-oriented action landscape, a utopian vision of Los Angeles car culture tearing through San Francisco's distinctive topography. The ambivalent film oscillated between an exhilarating portrait of a vibrant city and a bleak portrayal of rundown buildings, gruesome crimes and political corruption.

The explosion of the urban crisis in the late 1960s prompted filmmakers to further degrade the image of San Francisco to fit the perceived reality of the American city descending into a wasteland. In three short years, the vibrant San Francisco of *Petulia* became the dystopian urban landscape of *Dirty Harry*. The felt death of the American city overwhelmed San Francisco despite its remarkable success in comparison to most major cities in the first half of the 1970s. From 1945-1967, San Francisco's screen image denied the actual decline of the American city; between 1968 and 1975, onscreen San Francisco became quickly overwhelmed by the prevalent imagery of the urban crisis. Off screen, San Francisco remained a metropolitan utopia compared to most American cities. This reality was anathema to Hollywood's new urban realism, strongly influenced by the blighted image of New York depicted in *Midnight Cowboy* and *The French Connection*. On location in San Francisco, filmmakers sought out the darkest corners of the city, turning their backs to the city's still extant urban beauty.

San Francisco's particular attractiveness as a location for crime genre films also had a profound impact on its urban image. As a dense, downtown alternative to Los

Angeles, it became a convenient site for film noirs reliant on an earlier form of concentrated urbanism increasingly absent from Southern California. The city offered numerous distinctive settings for violent action sequences, such as the Embarcadero Freeway in *The Lineup* and the hilly streets in *Bullitt*. San Francisco's image of a bustling urban core made it a more viable alternative to New York than Los Angeles, a factor that prompted *Days of Wine and Roses*, *Dirty Harry*, and *The Towering Inferno* to adapt their stories from New York to San Francisco for both economic and narrative reasons, including the need to distinguish *Days of Wine and Roses* from its television original and to distinguish *Dirty Harry* from *Coogan's Bluff*. Following *Bullitt's* tremendous box office success, San Francisco boomed with gritty police films that also incorporated a scenography of urban decay strongly associated with New York police films like *The French Connection* and *Serpico* (1973). Lacking the extensive physical signs of an urban crisis apparent in New York, San Francisco films such as *Dirty Harry* and *The Conversation* used graphic violence, a dim palette, and carefully chosen locations to build a popular image of urban realism that was strikingly absent from much of San Francisco.

A great deal of the scholarship at the intersection of film and urban studies focuses on cities that are also production centers, such as New York, Los Angeles, and Rome. In these places, the cinema of resident filmmakers provides a local perspective on the real city. This was rarely the case in San Francisco, and even natives of the city had limited experience shooting there. Rather than depicting the city, filmmakers built the city out of available locations and available assumptions about San Francisco and American cities in general. They performed urban design, not urban documentation, and theories of urban design provide a useful method for future scholarship that analyzes the urban form of onscreen cities as distinctive from their actual settings. I hope that

approaching location shooting as a constructive rather than a reflective process helps reorient scholarship towards cinema's unique ability to construct urban space rather than its apparent fidelity to real cities.

END OF AN ERA

By 1975 San Francisco had passed its peak as a Hollywood location. San Francisco never again approached the volume of film and television production in the city during the boom years of 1967-1973.⁴ San Francisco also became increasingly non-competitive with North American cities offering greater financial incentives, such as Toronto and Vancouver. Finally, like *The Towering Inferno* (1974), the vast majority of popular films and television series shot and set in San Francisco after 1975 had little or nothing to do with the actual city.

As location shooting ebbed in 1974, *Variety* offered a cold assessment of the state of San Francisco production titled, "Frisco Filmmaking Largely Transient." Following a six-year boom in location production, San Francisco still lacked key facilities, such as a professional-quality film lab, and key personnel, including enough skilled production workers and experienced film and television actors. Meanwhile the influx of Hollywood production had all but exhausted the novelty of San Francisco locations.⁵ *Variety* suggested that San Francisco was an attractive place for filmmakers and actors "to spend the company's money," not an effective alternative to Los Angeles or locations with stronger financial incentives.⁶ As San Francisco became an increasingly expensive city to visit, Hollywood location shooting soon boomed in cheaper locations, including foreign countries like Australia and states with tax incentives like Louisiana.

Over the thirty-year period covered in this dissertation, films shot in San Francisco reflected fundamental changes in Hollywood production methods, and the

city's decline as a location in the mid-1970s was no exception, as Los Angeles faced similar challenges. In 1975, *Variety* ran a nine-page article that painstakingly detailed the advantage of shooting in Greater Los Angeles. Mayor Tom Bradley wrote a preamble to the article, comparing Hollywood's infatuation with other locations, such as San Francisco, to temporary love affairs. He insisted, "The cameras always come back home to Hollywood," but the concerted effort to remind filmmakers of the advantages of shooting in Los Angeles suggested this was no longer a foregone conclusion.⁷

In 1976, California formed the Motion Picture Development Council headquartered in Los Angeles, providing assistance to filmmakers in a direct response to "the pressures of growing competition from other states."⁸ San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the government of California all hoped to attract productions by providing greater assistance and reducing bureaucratic processes that slowed location filmmaking. But California and its cities could not offer the low wages and direct financial incentives that had driven runaway production since the 1950s. Los Angeles remained essential to American filmmaking, providing a business center and state-of-the-art facilities to meet the technical challenges of blockbuster productions. As a location, Los Angeles no longer offered an unparalleled advantage. In similar fashion, San Francisco's popular appeal and cooperative government provided an attractive environment in the late 1960s and early 1970s for filmmakers to hone their location production methods. These refined practices soon proved adaptable to other cities, states, and countries that offered greater financial rewards.

By 1975, San Francisco's only major assets as a location were once again, its scenic values and proximity to Los Angeles. As a result, the city largely resumed the ancillary role it had played in Hollywood films of the 1940s and 1950s, providing a picturesque backdrop for film narratives disengaged from any San Francisco urban

culture beyond the postcard tourist sites. A San Francisco setting was one of the least memorable elements of hits like *Foul Play*, *48 Hours* (1982), *Jagged Edge* (1985), *Basic Instinct* (1992), *Mrs. Doubtfire* (1993), *Doctor Doolittle* (1998), and *Cheaper by the Dozen* (2004). Two famous locations on the outskirts of the city, the Golden Gate Bridge and Alcatraz, remained prevalent as action set-pieces, serving much the same purpose as they had in the 1950s. Like the octopus in *It Came From Beneath the Sea*, creatures in *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* (2011) and *Pacific Rim* (2013) continued to spectacularly destroy the landmark bridge, which also became a site for action spectacles, such as a sequence in the James Bond film, *A View from a Kill* (1985), *Hulk* (2003), and *X-Men: The Last Stand* (2006).⁹ Similarly, Alcatraz provided a dramatic location to stage a prison breakout for *Escape from Alcatraz* (1979) and a prison break-in for *The Rock* (1996).

Adaptations of historical-fiction and true events, including the television mini-series *Tales From the City* (1993), *The Joy Luck Club* (1993), *Zodiac* (2007), and *Milk* (2008), were with rare exception, the only productions to engage San Francisco's specific urban culture, albeit its culture of the past.¹⁰ Once *Streets of San Francisco* ended in 1977, the only long-running television series to regularly exploit San Francisco locations were the crime-series *Nash Bridges* (1996-2001) and *Monk* (2002-2009). Other series set in San Francisco rarely shot on location in the city, including *Trapper John M.D.* (1979-1986), *Hotel* (1983-1988), *Too Close For Comfort* (1983-1986), *Full House* (1987-1995), and *Charmed* (1998-2006).¹¹

This brief survey of the last forty years of Hollywood depictions of San Francisco suggests a rather stable and superficial image of the city related to changes in both Hollywood production and urban discourse. Hollywood's blockbuster strategy included location shooting, but favored action set pieces over the exhaustive exploration of San Francisco locations provided by early-1970s features. Once again, unique sights like the

Golden Gate Bridge that instantly conveyed a San Francisco setting became the primary focus of location production—although like *The Towering Inferno*, action sequences grew far too elaborate to actually execute on location. In the decade following this study, 1975-1985, the rise of postmodern architecture, gentrification and Rousification, the construction of pseudo-historical urban tourist districts, redefined central city districts as a realm for affluent lifestyles and urban set-pieces. As San Francisco boomed as a business hub in the 1970s and later in the 1990s, as a technopolis, the city lost some of its contradistinction from the other shiny new downtowns devoted to finance, tourism, and wealthy residents. San Francisco remained popular onscreen, but played a far more limited role. *View to a Kill* is a salient example, because like the world cities appearing in other James Bond films, San Francisco has largely served as a site for scenic shots and action spectacles in Hollywood cinema since 1975.

The industrial tension between location shooting and studio-based production remains at the heart of today's Hollywood production strategies. Improvements in digital effects technology over the past two decades expanded the role of high-tech production and post-production facilities, located in and around Los Angeles and San Francisco. Just as the reliance on practical effects for *The Towering Inferno* required sound stage and back lot technology, Hollywood's reliance on digitally rendered settings required further studio-based production work, where actors performed in front of green screens and donned motion-capture suits to record the movements of digitally animated characters. Bay area companies like Pixar and Lucasfilm thrived in this new digital production field, drawing local talent from Silicon Valley. The films they produced had little if anything to do with the city itself.

The expansion of CGI effects work came at the expense of location production. A 2014 *Variety* article revealed how little time recent movies set in San Francisco spent

shooting in the actual city. *San Andreas* (2015), a \$100 million movie about a 10.0 earthquake hitting San Francisco, spent only six days shooting in the city. *Godzilla* (2014), also set in San Francisco, spent four days in town, while the two recent *Planet of the Apes* sequels (2011,2014) grabbed establishing shots in the city before heading to Canada.¹² As in the mid-1970s, improvements in location technology allowed Hollywood studios to follow financial incentives without sacrificing production quality or efficiency. Weta Digital, Peter Jackson's New Zealand-based digital effects company, developed new technology to perform motion-capture on location. Thus for *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (2014), Canadian forests doubled for Northern California and New Orleans doubled for post-apocalyptic San Francisco, letting filmmakers shoot in cheaper locations while completing the illusion of San Francisco locations with CGI.¹³ Australia devoted part of its \$20 million production fund to *San Andreas*, which shot in Queensland and is currently building San Francisco through digital effects.¹⁴ Like the disaster in *The Towering Inferno*, intelligent monkeys or an enormous earthquake destroying San Francisco cannot be captured entirely on location. Yet as digital effects technology grows more portable and creates more convincing illusions of real places, Hollywood gains further independence from working in specific real places, such as San Francisco and even Los Angeles. Just as in the 1960s, Hollywood union leaders are currently lobbying the state government to save their jobs from the eternal threat of runaway production.¹⁵

As of 2014, San Francisco provided a rebate of up to \$600,000 to entice Hollywood filmmakers to shoot in the city hoping to revive location filmmaking in the city. Commenting on San Francisco's current production slump, *Variety* noted the city's former prominence in Hollywood cinema: "San Francisco has a tradition as an iconic film location, with such titles as 'Bullitt, 'Dirty Harry' and 'Vertigo.'"¹⁶ The fact that

these films, shot between 1958 and 1971, remain the salient San Francisco titles decades later underscores how the rise of Hollywood location shooting in the postwar era dramatically expanded the potential for filmmakers to explore San Francisco onscreen. Yet these definitive San Francisco films could only emerge under industry conditions that promoted more extensive location work in the city. As Hollywood location shooting and blockbuster production strategies matured, San Francisco was no longer a uniquely attractive site for location production. Like the prewar sets that limned San Francisco on the back lot, digital reproductions of the city now provide an economic and aesthetically convincing substitute for the difficult business of urban location shooting.

This dissertation suggests several paths for future research. The question remains how closely the boom in location shooting in San Francisco relates to other cities that have experienced an influx of location shooting, or whether it is a largely unique historical case. For instance, cities like Toronto and Vancouver experienced more sustained booms in Hollywood location shooting, but unlike San Francisco, these cities rarely played themselves onscreen, often doubling for New York and other cities. In general, Hollywood's widespread practice of shooting entirely on location by the late 1960s deserves greater scrutiny. While location shooting ebbed in San Francisco by 1975, it persisted as a practice elsewhere, particularly for certain genres like police films. Yet less than a decade later, shooting entirely outside of the studio was once again an alternative practice, not a standard one.

This study demonstrates how Hollywood location shooting inherently reenvisioned rather than reflected the city of San Francisco. This raises the question to what extent this is true for filmmakers shooting in familiar territory. Documentaries like Thom Anderson's *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (2003) suggest how thoroughly Hollywood filmmakers have distorted their home city. Perhaps this is not a willful act of betrayal but

a fundamental consequence of location shooting methods. Urban film scholars have thoroughly examined what films reveal or ignore about real cities. Future scholarship can productively examine location production not as a recording process but as a building practice.

Notes:

¹ Jim Harwood, "Frisco Filmmaking Largely Transient," *Daily Variety*, October 29, 1974, 98.

² Kathy Ryan to John DeLuca, 4 December 1974, Alioto-Comm.

³ Kevin Lynch, *Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960), 10.

⁴ Harwood, "Frisco Filmmaking," *Daily Variety*, October 29, 1974, 98.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Tony Scott, "The World in Hollywood's Backyard," *Daily Variety*, October 28, 1975, 25-36.

⁸ Liz Brady, "California's New Motion Picture Development Council," *AC* (June 1976): 678, 695-697.

⁹ A YouTube compilation highlights how frequently the Golden Gate Bridge appears under assault in Hollywood cinema: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jw7K6zg3fhI> (Last accessed July 23, 2014).

¹⁰ Much of *Zodiac* and *Milk* take place during San Francisco's location-shooting boom of the 1960s and 1970s, and reproduce certain film aesthetics of the period, including low-key night cinematography in *Zodiac* and desaturated color in *Milk*.

¹¹ All of the series listed above ran at least 100 episodes.

¹² Dave McNary, "Set in California, but Shot Where it is Cheap," *Variety*, March 15, 2014, 33-34.

¹³ Michele Manelis, "How Weta Digital conquered 'Planet of the Apes' Again," *The Queensland Times*, July 18, 2014, <http://www.qt.com.au/news/how-weta-digital-conquered-planet-apes-again/2315993/> (last accessed July 25, 2014).

¹⁴ McNary, "Set in California," *Variety*, March 15, 2014, 33-34.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Appendix: Films Set in Contemporary San Francisco and Chicago, 1945-1975

The following is as close as possible to a comprehensive list of wide-release Hollywood films (distributed by either major studios or independents like American International Pictures) set and/or shot in San Francisco during this 30-year study, a total of 117. This list relies on several different sources, including archival research, databases like the AFI catalog and imdb.com, a published guide to San Francisco movie locations, and fan sites listing films shot in San Francisco. I crosschecked less reliable sources against more reliable ones, including *Variety* reviews that confirmed the film was set or shot in San Francisco. I further verified the list by watching most of the films available on video. Because this study focused on films with contemporary San Francisco settings, I omitted depictions of historic San Francisco, such as *I Remember Mama* (1948) and *How the West Was Won* (1962). I only included titles where at least a full scene took place in the city.

For the list of 117 San Francisco titles, I've also included the name of the director, leading actor(s), and studio, which helps distinguish whether these were major or minor box office releases. As a point of comparison, I've included a second table of the 27 major studio films set and shot in Chicago culled from a list provided by the Chicago Film Office. Chicago was the largest American city without a feature film industry for the period of the study, but only Hollywood films were shot in the city between 1945-1975. One caveat worth noting is that the list does not include films set in Chicago but shot elsewhere, but nonetheless gives a picture of how prevalent San Francisco location shooting was than in other major cities without production facilities. The sources are listed at the end of each table.

**A. HOLLYWOOD FILMS SET OR SHOT PARTIALLY OR COMPLETELY IN SAN FRANCISCO
(1945-1975)**

<i>Title</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Director</i>	<i>Star</i>	<i>Studio</i>
Fallen Angel	1945	Otto Preminger	Dana Andrews	Fox
Shadows Over Chinatown	1945	Terry Morse	Sidney Toler	Monogram
The Falcon in San Francisco	1945	Joseph Lewis	Tom Conway	RKO
Shock	1946	Alfred Werker	Vincent Price	Fox
That Brennan Girl	1946	Alfred Santell	James Dunn	Republic
The Well-Groomed Bride	1946	Sidney Lanfield	Olivia de Havilland	Paramount
Born to Kill	1947	Robert Wise	Claire Trevor	RKO
Dark Passage	1947	Delmer Daves	Humphrey Bogart	Warners
My Favorite Brunette	1947	Bob Hope	Elliott Nugent	Paramount
Night Song	1947	John Cromwell	Dana Andrews	RKO
Out of the Past	1947	Jacques Tourneur	Robert Mitchum	RKO
The Chinese Ring	1947	William Beaudine	Roland Winters	Monogram
The Lady from Shanghai	1947	Orson Welles	Orson Welles	Columbia
Every Girl Should Be Married	1948	Don Hartman	Cary Grant	RKO
Nora Prentiss	1948	Vincent Sherman	Ann Sheridan	Warners
Race Street	1948	Edwin Marin	George Raft	RKO
The Time of Your Life	1948	H.C. Potter	James Cagney	UA
Walk a Crooked Mile	1948	Gordon Douglas	Louis Hayward	Columbia
Chinatown at Midnight	1949	Seymour Friedman	Hurd Hatfield	Columbia
Impact	1949	Arthur Lubin	Brian Donlevy	UA
Johnny Stool Pigeon	1949	William Castle	Howard Duff	Universal
Million Dollar Weekend	1949	Gene Raymond	Gene Raymond	Eagle-Lion
Mr. Soft Touch	1949	Gordon Douglas	Glenn Ford	Columbia
Red Light	1949	Roy Del Ruth	George Raft	UA
Story of Molly X	1949	Wilbur Crane	June Havoc	Universal
The Sky Dragon	1949	Lesley Selander	Roland Winters	Monogram
The Woman on Pier 13	1949	Robert Stevenson	Rober Ryan	RKO
Thieves' Highway	1949	Jules Dassin	Richard Conte	Fox

Take One False Step	1949	Chester Erskine	Willaim Powell	Universal
Born to Be Bad	1950	Nicholas Ray	Mel Ferrer	RKO
D.O.A.	1950	Rudolph Mate	Edmond O'Brien	UA
Key to the City	1950	George Sidney	Clark Gable	MGM
The Man Who Cheated Himself	1950	Felix Feist	Lee J. Cobb	Fox
Where Danger Lives	1950	John Farrow	Robert Mitchum	RKO
Woman on the Run	1950	Norman Foster	Ann Sheridan	Universal
Pat and Mike	1951	George Cukor	Tracy/Hepburn	MGM
Starlift	1951	Roy Del Ruth	Doris Day	Warners
The House on Telegraph Hill	1951	Robert Wise	Richard Basehart	Fox
The Raging Tide	1951	George Sherman	Shelley Winters	Universal
Sudden Fear	1952	David Miller	Joan Crawford	RKO
The Sniper	1952	Edward Dmytryk	Adolphe Menjou	Columbia
This is Cinerama	1952	Merian Cooper	Lowell Thomas	Cinerama
No Escape	1953	Charles Bennett	Lew Ayres	UA
The Bigamist	1953	ida Lupino	Joan Fontaine	F.R.O.
The Caine Mutiny	1954	Edward Dmytryk	Humphrey Bogart	Columbia
Cinerama Holiday	1955	Robert Bendick	Cinerama	Cinerama
Hell on Frisco Bay	1955	Frank Tuttle	Alan Ladd	Warners
Hit the Deck	1955	Roy Rowland	Debbie Reynolds	MGM
How to Be Very, Very Popular	1955	Nunnally Johnson	Betty Grable	Fox
It Came From Beneath the Sea	1955	Robert Gordon	Kenneth Tobey	Columbia
Flight to Hong Kong	1956	Joseph Newman	Rory Calhoun	UA
Julie	1956	Andrew Stone	Doris Day	MGM
Serenade	1956	Anthony Mann	Mario Lanza	Warners
The Rack	1956	Arnold Laven	Paul Newman	MGM
Kiss Them For Me	1957	Stanley Donen	Cary Grant	Fox
Crime of Passion	1957	Gerd Oswald	Barbara Stanwyck	RKO
Pal Joey	1957	George Sidney	Rita Hayworth	Columbia
The Midnight Story	1957	Joseph Pevney	Tony Curtis	UA
The Gift of Love	1958	Jean Negulesco	Lauren Bacall	Fox
The Lineup	1958	Don Siegel	Eli Wallach	Columbia
Vertigo	1958	Alfred Hitchcock	James Stewart	Paramount

On the Beach	1959	Sidney Kramer	Gregory Peck	UA
Portrait in Black	1960	Michael Gordon	Lana Turner	Universal
The Facts of Life	1960	Melvin Frank	Bob Hope	UA
The Subterraneans	1960	Ranald MacDougall	Leslie Caron	MGM
Flower Drum Song	1961	Henry Koster	Nancy Kwan	Universal
Go Naked in the World	1961	Ranald MacDougall	Gina Lollobrigida	MGM
Man-Trap	1961	Emund O'Brien	Jeffrey Hunter	Paramount
Swingin' Along	1961	Charles Barton	Tommy Noonan	Fox
The Pleasure of His Company	1961	George Seaton	Fred Astaire	Paramount
Birdman of Alcatraz	1962	John Frankenheimer	Burt Lancaster	UA
Days of Wine and Roses	1962	Blake Edwards	Jack Lemmon	Warners
Experiment in Terror	1962	Blake Edwards	Jack Lemmon	Columbia
A Gathering of Eagles	1963	Delbert Mann	Rock Hudson	Universal
The 3 Stooges Go Around the World in a Daze	1963	Norman Maurer	Three Stooges	Columbia
The Birds	1963	Alfred Hitchcock	Rod Taylor	UA
Good Neighbor Sam	1964	David Swift	Jack Lemmon	Columbia
Man's Favorite Sport?	1964	Howard Hawks	Rock Hudson	Universal
Where Love Has Gone	1964	Edward Dmytryk	Susan Hayward	Embassy
Guess Who's Coming to Dinner	1967	Stanley Kramer	Spencer Tracy	Columbia
Point Blank	1967	John Boorman	Lee Marvin	MGM
The Graduate	1967	Mike Nichols	Dustin Hoffman	Embassy
The Love-Ins	1967	Arthur Dreifuss	Richard Todd	Columbia
Bullitt	1968	Peter Yates	Steve McQueen	Warners
Head	1968	Bob Rafelson	The Monkees	Columbia
Petulia	1968	Richard Lester	Julie Christie	Warners
Psych-Out	1968	Richard Rush	Susan Strasberg	AIP
Skidoo	1968	Otto Preminger	Jackie Gleason	Paramount
The Love Bug	1968	Robert Stevenson	Dean Jones	Disney
Yours, Mine and Ours	1968	Melville Shavelson	Lucille Ball	UA
Daddy's Gone A-Hunting	1969	Mark Robson	Carol White	National General

Eye of the Cat	1969	David Lowell Rich	Michael Sarazzin	Universal
Machine Gun McCain	1969	Giuliano Montaldo	John Cassavetes	Columbia
The Picasso Summer	1969	Serge Bourguignon	Albert Finney	Warners
Fools	1970	Tom Gries	Jason Robards	Cinerama
The Strawberry Statement	1970	Stuart Hagmann	Bruce Davison	MGM
They Call Me Mister Tibbs!	1970	Gordon Douglas	Sidney Poitier	U.A.
Dirty Harry	1971	Don Siegel	Clint Eastwood	Warners
Harold and Maude	1971	Hal Ashby	Ruth Gordon	Paramount
The Organization	1971	Don Medford	Sidney Poitier	UA
The Return of Count Yorga	1971	Bob Kelljan	Robert Quarry	AIP
Vanishing Point	1971	Richard Sarafian	Barry Newman	Fox
Butterflies are Free	1972	Milton Katselas	Goldie Hawn	Columbia
Play It Again, Sam	1972	Herbert Ross	Woody Allen	UA
The Candidate	1972	Michael Ritchie	Robert Redford	Warners
What's Up, Doc?	1972	Peter Bogdanovich	Barbra Streisand	Warners
Little Cigars	1973	Chris Christenberry	Angel Tompkins	A.I.P.
Magnum Force	1973	Ted Post	Clint Eastwood	Warners
Superdad	1973	Vincent McEveety	Bob Crane	Disney
The Laughing Policeman	1973	Stuart Rosenberg	Walter Matthau	Fox
Freebie and the Bean	1974	Richard Rush	Alan Arkin	Warners
Herbie Rides Again	1974	Robert Stevenson	Helen Hayes	Disney
The Conversation	1974	Francis Ford Coppola	Gene Hackman	Paramount
The Towering Inferno	1974	John Guillermin	Steve McQueen	Warners
Mr. Ricco	1975	Paul Bogart	Dean Martin	UA
The Black Bird	1975	David Giler	George Segal	Warners
The Killer Elite	1975	Sam Peckinpah	James Caan	MGM/UA

Table A1: Contemporary S.F. Films, 1945-1975

Abbr: F.R.O: Film Releasing Organization; UA: United Artists.

Sources:

American Film Institute Catalog, www.afi.com; CinemaToast, “The San Francisco List,” www.cinemat toast.com/sanFranciscoList.asp; Internet Movie Database, www.imdb.com; San Francisco Film Museum, www.sanfranciscofilmmuseum.org/films. San Francisco Public Library, Joseph Alioto Papers; Jim Van Buskirk and Will Shank, *Celluloid San Francisco: The Film Lover’s Guide to Bay Area Movie Locations*, Chicago Review Press: Chicago, 2006.

B. HOLLYWOOD FILMS SHOT PARTIALLY OR COMPLETELY IN CHICAGO (1945-1975)

The Babe Ruth Story, 1948, Allied Artists
Call Northside 777, 1948, Fox
The Golden Gloves Story, 1950, Eagle-Lion
Union Station, 1950, Paramount
Chicago Calling, 1951, United Artists
The City that Never Sleeps, 1953, Republic
The Joe Louis Story, 1953, United Artists
Chicago Syndicate, 1955, Columbia
Beginning of the End, 1957, Republic
North By Northwest, 1959, MGM
Raisin in the Sun, 1961, Columbia
Tomboy and the Champ, 1961, Universal
Mickey One, 1965, Columbia
Fearless Frank, 1967, Trans-American Films
The Busy Body, 1967, Paramount
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