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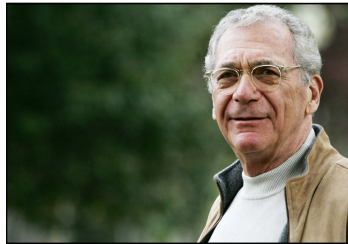
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# THEFILMSCHOOL

SPRING 2010



## Sydney Pollack, Filmmaker/Storyteller

Written by Tom Skerritt

I first met Sydney Pollack in 1962. I was a student at UCLA film school when I was hired to act in a film, a very small independent film which included four other actors. One was Sydney Pollack, another, Robert Redford. Although I never developed the relationship with Sydney that he had with Redford, whenever the occasion we happened to meet, it was always warm and connected to the beginning of long and successful careers for the three of us.

A few years ago, TheFilmSchool was privileged to have Sydney Pollack participate in the program's Speakers Series. We screened TOOTSIE. Sydney spoke of the evolution of the material and its execution...and the things he had, yet, to accomplish. He knew the core of creativity, human complexity, was an endless source of material. Sydney loved the imagery of words. Undiscovered intrigue and

glory realized through the imagery and magic of words, puts wind in our sails, harbors us in new worlds... his films have always been real characters carrying an audience through well endowed stories that make two hours in the dark of a theatre worthwhile, giving the audience something to take home and savor.

In the May 27, 2008, New York Times writer A.O. Scott's eulogy to Sydney Pollack, Scott suggested, "His death is a reminder that things have changed, that the kind of movie he made, which used to be the kind of movie everyone wanted to make and to see, may be slipping into obsolescence."

Storytelling, fundamental to the human psyche and experience, is in the air we breathe and in the silence of an exhale. It sparks our imagi-

nation, reveals the frailty of our existence, tells us who we are, from where we come. Stories bring us together in a way nothing else does. Stories are the fabric of society.

We simply can't let, 'the kind of movie...that used to be the kind of movie everyone wanted to make and see,' slip into obsolescence!

One of the most literate cities, Seattle also has the most sophisticated film-going audience, created by the largest truly Independent International Film Festival, in North America. Proportionately, more independently funded films emerge from this film community, than anywhere else. But few of these films go beyond the city limits or have a chance of reaching major markets because

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they fail in narrative Storytelling.

Putting pen to paper, fingers to keyboard, moving the story so it touches people emotionally, is a challenge. Good Storytelling assumes the agony of working story material to its best realization. One of the great storyteller/screenwriters of the 20th century, and member of TheFilmSchool faculty, Stewart Stern says, "Sitting in a room, alone, hoping for 'inspiration' is where an individual begins to be a writer." Knowing how to bring life to inspiration, or inspiration to life, is step two.

TheFilmSchool invites you to learn Step Two.....TS



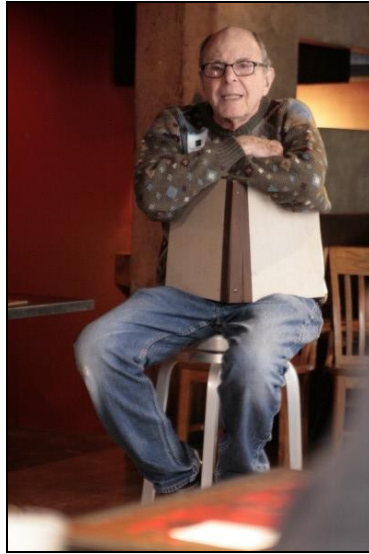
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## Stewart Stern, Storyteller

**From May 14th-18th, Seattle International Film Festival is recognizing one of the great storytellers of our time, Stewart Stern.**

Having penned screen classics such as REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE, SYBIL, THE UGLY AMERICAN, RACHEL RACHEL (all of which, among other greats, will be shown at the 5-day exhibition), Stewart is arguably one of the most influential screenwriters, and certainly one of the most tapped into that slippery kernel found somewhere between honesty and bravery that compels audiences to identify with the stories and characters he has put onto the big screen.

TheFilmSchool and its alumni are privileged to have Stewart as a faculty member.

Complete details about this event can be found at SIFF's site, [www.siff.net](http://www.siff.net).

## Another fabulous and successful Oscars Night with TheFilmSchool!

Hosted by the hilarious John Curley, held at the elegant Triple Door and catered by Wild Ginger, this was the place to be March 7th.

All manner of luxury items and one-of-a-kind experiences were up for auction, thanks to all those who donated in the name of supporting quality filmmaking in Seattle and beyond. At the end of the evening, a staggering \$100K was raised toward Seattle's planned Film Center, and TheFilmSchool's permanent space there with Seattle International Film Festival.



# SHUFFLE by Aron Michael Thompson



In the autumn of last year, I was talking with the Seattle Art Museum about co-sponsoring a film series there featuring Steve McQueen (which I sponsored as a Board Member of TheFilmSchool), and at the same time I was developing a screenplay for a feature film that had a lot in common with some of McQueen's movies. Specifically, one character in the script named Bodhi was based not only on the kind of role McQueen might have portrayed, but incorporated elements of his personal life as well.

Local director Garrett Bennett and I wanted to shoot a short film together, and so over coffee I shared with him the character of Bodhi, a hit man who has a change of heart and makes a choice to try for a better life, and has to do so against incredible odds, the most significant of which is the crime boss who saved him from the streets when very young and raised him, but also corrupted him. The key scene in the script is played out over a high stakes hand of poker. Garrett loved the idea and we co-wrote the short screenplay together, SHUFFLE, and brought in Quinn Rudee (a partner of Bennett's) as producer to build

the team to make the movie, with me filling the roles of executive producer and lead actor in addition to writing. A month after that coffee, we were shooting in Seattle, which we completed in three days. A milestone for me, the Seattle Art Museum premiered the trailer for SHUFFLE in front of THE CINCINNATI KID, one of the McQueen films we screened during the series there.

Importantly, my writing and performance in SHUFFLE is based upon and grounded within what I've learned from TheFilmSchool, the principles of story, character and audience.

I believe that screenplays written for short films are a potentially very powerful tool for students of TheFilmSchool, as a way to sharpen and hone creative writing skills that can be expanded and extrapolated to feature film scripts, prospectively. And, since it is easier to shoot a short than a feature (less time and money, et cetera), I feel that graduates of the School should consider making shorts not only to tell thoughtful short stories through the medium of motion pictures, but for demonstration effect too, to discover whether filmmaking is something they have the talent and tenacity for, in combination with the teaching that the School provides. When I say "easier" that is of course relative, for I found the experience of making my movie to be extraordinarily challenging, but equally rewarding. I'll do it again, repeatedly.

As a short film, SHUFFLE is intended to convey an old-school style that was more prevalent in feature films of the 1960s and 70s, but with a modern interpretation. I believe very strongly that there is an audience for this sort of filmmaking, driven by writing and acting as opposed to massive budgets and expensive technology. I believe in the strength of story.

*"When I believe in something, I fight like hell for it." - Steve McQueen*

Seattle International Film Festival officially selected SHUFFLE for 2010! It will be presented over Shortfest Weekend, May 21-23. More information to come on [www.siff.net](http://www.siff.net).

## Congratulations to our SPRING 2010 STUDENTS! Graduation Day, April 3rd!

Our Spring 2010 students are a talented, driven and diverse group. We thank each and every one of them for joining TheFilmSchool family, and look forward to the continuation of their creative journeys.

The Spring Session Speaker Series opened on March 13 with Sundance-winning director **Lynn Shelton** (HUMPDAY). Oscar-nominated and MacArthur Fellow filmmaker **James Longley** (IRAQ IN FRAGMENTS) joined TheFilmSchool for the second installment on March 27. The session closed with writer/director (and actor) **James Foley** (Glengarry Glen Ross, At Close Range, After Dark My Sweet).



**WHAT'S NEXT:****FIRST TUESDAYS with TheFilmSchool at Roy Street Coffee**

4/6, 6:30-8:30pm, Roy Street Coffee & Tea, 700 Broadway East, **FREE**. Join us in welcoming award-winning local filmmaker Sandy Cioffi (SWEET CRUDE), Sustainable Style Foundation co-founder Rebecca Luke, and experience a 'cupping' with Roy Street's own Major Cohen. For a full schedule of events, see [www.thefilmschool.com](http://www.thefilmschool.com) or email [jenni@thefilmschool.com](mailto:jenni@thefilmschool.com).

**Caught in the ACT—DATE CHANGE! FREE!** NOW: 4/26, 7pm, ACT Theatre, 700 Union St. Extraordinary work by TFS alumni held at ACT Theatre, read and directed by some of Seattle's top professional actors and directors. You are invited to a reception at ACT Theatre at 6pm, sponsored by Bakon Vodka.

**SUNDOWN**, by Winda Benedetti and Robert Benedetti, based on a story by John Vechev, directed by Lisa Halpern. **Please RSVP to [jenni@thefilmschool.com](mailto:jenni@thefilmschool.com)**

**Alumni Updates**

**Julio Ramirez** is at work on his film NOTHING AGAINST LIFE and has launched a website: [www.nothingagainstlife.com](http://www.nothingagainstlife.com).

**Paul Killibrew** is producing the feature documentary project AM I BROKEN? This feature length documentary, filming now, captures the passion, ingenuity and promise of newly minted special education teachers in an environment teeming with children on the verge of meltdown or shutdown. The heroic stories captured will demonstrate how the curious alchemy of brilliant detective work, unfathomable patience and boundless dedication to children in crisis results in miracles of epic proportion every day. "We are on location at the school every day for a full year. We just received our second round of funding to complete production and have signed on an Oscar-winning editor to cut the project." - Paul. For more info, visit [www.amibroken.org](http://www.amibroken.org).

**Joe Hawkins'** film SOLE HEIR was an award-winning selection at Mountain Film Festival in Mammoth Lakes, CA, in February. It is also on the program for the NEW HOPE FILM FESTIVAL in New Hope, PA. To see stills and a trailer from SOLE HEIR, visit [www.lannesproductions.com](http://www.lannesproductions.com)

**Leonie Mikele** and **Margie Slovan** won 'Best of Fest' at FREEHOLD 15th ANNUAL STUDIO SERIES for FRENCH QUARTER, written by Mikele and directed by Slovan. A reading was held at Theater off Jackson on March 27th.

**Alex Pedersen's** script ESCAPING was a Quarterfinalist in Coppola's Zoetrope Contest and was selected as one of the finalists for the 2010 Charleston International Film Festival Screenplay Competition.

**Lisa Halpern** acquired the rights and adapted into screenplay form the Stephanie Kallos' best-selling novel BROKEN FOR YOU. Two producers are interested in producing: an ex-development executive from Showtime and one with a 3-picture deal with Sony. She was also awarded a writing residency at Hedgebrook Writers Retreat and will tackle her second draft there in March.

**George Thomas Jr.** has launched his script coverage and analysis service: <http://www.georgethomasjr.com/scriptcoverageandanalysis/>

**Jessika Satori's** short film STEALING MAGNOLIAS has been accepted to The Rogue Film Festival. The Rogue is Fresno's answer to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. The Festival is March 5 through the 16th. Jessika also attended the Sundance Film Festival with several film folks from LA and London. While there, she bragged incessantly about the TheFilmSchool armed with her copy of MovingPictures Winter issue, which highlighted the program on page 61.

**Beverly Magid** has published her first novel Flying Out of Brooklyn and is now at work on the second book, working title: A Time of Terror. "I'm primarily a novelist and went to TheFilmSchool in summer 2007 because that the emphasis on Story would benefit my novel writing." - Beverly, [www.beverlymagid.com](http://www.beverlymagid.com)

**Adam Bale, Alec Whittle** and **Scott MacLaughlin's** short HEIRLOOM was accepted into The Doorpost Film Project and was selected as a 'Merited Film.'

**Elena Hartwell's** play A STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE OF BEES has been read at the Rep/Northwest Playwrights Alliance reading series and will be read at Driftwood April 11, 7pm, and was also chosen for the Last Frontier Theater Conference in Valdez Alaska in May.