

Cleveland State University

COM 493--Cleveland and Film Seminar

Master List of Questions for Guest Speakers

2/6/01

To our guests: Below are questions generated by the seminar students, addressing a wide variety of current issues in filmmaking. Please look over the questions to see how you might use your expertise to respond to some of them when you visit our class. However, do not feel that you are limited to these questions and issues--this list is meant to serve simply as an indicator of our students' interests. Thank you!

Section 1: General Questions:

1. What's your background?
2. Where did your passion for film begin?
3. Who are the people who influenced you most?
4. How would you describe your job? Has it been changing? How?
5. What are your favorite films? Which ones have influenced you the most? In what ways?
6. What's your favorite film shot in Cleveland? Why?
7. Is there a uniqueness that films shot in Cleveland have? How do audiences respond to the images of Cleveland in film?
8. Who are the main "players" in the Cleveland film scene?
9. What advice would you give to film students in Cleveland?

For filmmakers:

1. How did you get started as a filmmaker?
2. How do you get the things you need to make films in Cleveland--e.g., How do you do casting? How do you get financing? What resources are available in the area?
3. How do you respond to criticisms of your work?
4. Are there types of content that you would find unacceptable for your films?

Section 2: Decentralization: Do you feel that there is a trend toward decentralization in the film industry--away from "Hollywood" and New York, and toward a variety of other locations? What

aspects of the film industry are experiencing this decentralization?

1. Is Cleveland just a stepping stone to somewhere else? Or, is it possible to be successful as a filmmaker in Cleveland?
2. How is Cleveland perceived by people elsewhere? By filmmakers elsewhere?
2. The Cleveland film scene seems to have become more active in recent years--do you think this is so? How does Cleveland compare with other cities? What is Cleveland's greatest asset that it can offer to the film industry?
3. When film companies come in to Cleveland, do they hire local crew members? Local talent? Does this help the local economy?
4. Do you think it is easier for a commercial film company to work in Cleveland rather than in L.A. or New York? What are the advantages and disadvantages of working in Cleveland?
5. How active are minorities and women in the Cleveland film scene?

Section 3: Indie Filmmaking and Film Festivals: Do you see a trend toward indies becoming more important to the world film industry? How do film festivals relate to this trend?

1. What is your definition of an "indie" film?
2. Does an "indie" film denote low quality? And, is a rougher-looking production sometimes better in the eyes of the audience (an "aesthetic of low quality")?
3. Can you comment on the variety of methods of production and the cost of indies today?
4. Are there new forms of distribution that go along with the rise in indies? What about video rentals/sales, cable, DVD, and the Internet? How do film festivals fit into this?
5. Do you need art houses to keep indies going?
6. What's the role of the Cleveland International Film Festival both locally and in world cinema? How about the role of the Ohio Independent Film Festival?
7. Is it easier for an indie film to get exposure today, or is it more difficult because of increased competition?

Section 4: The Digital Revolution: How would you describe the digital revolution as it relates to movie production, distribution, and exhibition? How do you feel about these trends?

1. Is the art form of film being transformed by this shift?

2. What are the pros and cons of the comparatively low cost of digital cinema? Does quality suffer? Does a lower barrier to entry result in more “players” and therefore more variety, more creativity? Or not?
3. Is digital movie-making primarily for indies, or will it change “Hollywood” production as well?
4. Is digital an end point, or just a transition to something else?

Section 5: Audience Fragmentation: Do you notice a trend toward greater specialization in films, and toward audiences with particular tastes and exposure patterns? Are films likely to fill certain “niches”? In the future, will we all be “viewing alone”?

1. How about Cleveland? Could “local” films aimed at Clevelanders be successful?
2. What are some other specialties or “niches” that film can fill?
3. How does film distribution work today? For theatrical releases, what factors determine placement (e.g., number of houses, where) and length of run?