

When he was seven, he started his filmmaking career with the family's home movie camera. In 1947, at the age of seventeen, he made his prize-winning film, *Fireworks*, which became one of the classic films of the underground cinema. In 1949, he began *Puce Moment*, of which only a fragment was completed due to lack of financing.

While a teenager, Anger was introduced to and deeply influenced by the work of Aleister Crowley, legendary master of the occult and author of voluminous works on "magick." Anger has said that he means his films "to cast a spell, to be a magical invocation of his fusion of dreams, desire, myth and vision." Fully cognizant of the seductive powers of film, he used film in a ritualistic way, as a magical instrument, to communicate the power and poetry of Thelema, his religion.

In 1950, Anger moved to Paris, and began *Rabbits' Moon*, a lyrical fable of the unattainable, blending Commedia Dell'Arte with Japanese mythology, which he did not complete until 1970. In Paris, he met Piaf, Colette, Henri Langlois, Chanel, Jean Genet, and Jean Cocteau, who became a champion of his – writing that "*Fireworks* is "a film that came from that beautiful night from which emerge all true works. It touches the quick of the soul." Then, in Italy in 1953, Anger made the eerily beautiful *Eaux d'Artifice*.

In 1954 he moved back to Hollywood and made his psychedelic epic, *The Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (1954, recut as *Sacred Mushroom Edition* in 1966). Anger spent the late 1960s and early 1970s in England, where he involved British pop stars in his work. Anger inspired the Rolling Stones' hit *Sympathy for the Devil*." Mick Jagger scored Anger's 1969 film, *Invocation of My Demon Brother* (1969) using a Moog synthesizer and an atypically atonal sound.

Scorpio Rising (1964) was followed by the short, camp classic *Kustom Kar Kommandos* in 1965. From 1970 - 1980, Anger worked periodically on *Lucifer Rising*, which he has referred to as "visual music."

Until the mid 1990s, Anger, in the wake of the commercial success of his first book, *Hollywood Babylon* (1959), devoted himself to writing – as well as to his research and involvement in the occult. He resumed making short films in the last few years – a number of them being presented at REDCAT tonight.

[adapted from a text by Mystic Fire]

REDCAT is located in downtown Los Angeles at the corner of W. 2nd St. and S. Hope St., inside the Walt Disney Concert Hall complex. Tickets may be purchased by calling 213.237.2800 or at www.redcat.org or in person at the REDCAT Box Office on the corner of 2nd and Hope Streets (30 minutes free parking with validation). Box Office Hours: Tue-Sat | noon–6 pm and two hours prior to curtain.

The Jack H. Skirball Screening Series is curated by Steve Anker and Bérénice Reynaud

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UPCOMING FILM/VIDEO PROGRAMS

November 20– 22: Paul McCarthy and Damon McCarthy: *Caribbean Pirates*

Mon Nov 24: Sandra Gibson and Luis Recoder: Film Projection Performances

Mon Dec 1: Martin Arnold: Something Hidden

Mon Dec 8: Joan Jonas: Reading Culture through Dante and Aby Warburg

AN EVENING WITH KENNETH ANGER: DANGEROUS CINEMA

November 17, 2008

8:30 pm

presented by

REDCAT

Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater

California Institute of the Arts

CALARTS

REDCAT

AN EVENING WITH KENNETH ANGER: DANGEROUS CINEMA

Nov 17 | 8:30 pm
Jack H. Skirball Series

One of the towering figures of American avant-garde cinema since the mid-1940s, Kenneth Anger has posited himself at the junction between pop and underground culture, occultism and rock music. Tonight's screening presents an array of works in which Anger subjects different ideologies and subcultures to his incisive vision and the uncanny re(de)constructive power of his editing skills. *Ich Will!* montages newsreels from the Nazi era to Bruckner's music. *Mouse Heaven* "does for Mickey Mouse what *Scorpio Rising* did for neo-Nazi biker gangs" (UCLA Film & Television Archive). *Elliott's Suicide* is an elegy for the late Elliott Smith, while *I'll Be Watching You* and *Foreplay* explore two different forms of male bonding: sex in an underground parking structure and a soccer team's training session. The program concludes with the seminal *Scorpio Rising*, whose hallucinatory and campy communing with pop culture fetishes (chrome-trimmed choppers, James Dean, zippers, Jesus) has been an enduring avant-garde crowd pleaser.

In person: Kenneth Anger

"Anger forged a body of work as dazzlingly poetic in its unique visual intensity as it is narratively innovative. In many ways, these wordless films represent the resurgence and development of the uniquely cinematic qualities widely considered retarded or destroyed by the passing of the silent era, especially in the area of editing."
– *Senses of Cinema*

Ich Will! (2008, 35 min., DVD)
US premiere

"I spent ten years doing research in film archives all over the world for *Ich Will!* – a film about the Hitler Youth. My interest in archival footage was sparked by the years I spent in France, watching films in Henri Langlois's Cinémathèque. The film was commissioned by the Donau Festival in Krems, Austria and it had its premiere there last spring. The original material comes from the period of totalitarianism in Germany starting in 1933 and ending in 1938. Germany was preparing the war at that time. What I've done with the footage taken by the Nazi party was to show that they filmed everything, including things whose meaning they may not have understood. My favorite scene is when a Hitler Youth looks at the camera. I think that it's a mistake that they left him do it. But it was probably a kind of a secret love of some kind. *Ich Will!* means "I want" in German. For me, it's also a personal matter because my family comes from Germany and in Berlin you can find about thirty members of the Anger tribe. I still have a cousin living in Berlin. *Anger* is also a German word meaning the field or the meadow were the knights made their rituals. But I also like the English word and I can play with both interpretations. I can have two meanings between the peaceful meadow and the furious man."
– Kenneth Anger

Mouse Heaven (2005, 12 min., DVD)

"Cultural critics say that the two most famous and popular images of the 20th century are the face of Mickey Mouse and the swastika. In *Mouse Heaven*, which is my personal statement about the merchandising of Mickey Mouse, you will see a similar look than the one cast by the Hitler Youth in *Ich Will!* and unwittingly captured by the camera." – Kenneth Anger

Elliott's Suicide (2007, 15 min., DVD)

An elegy to the musician Elliott Smith (1969-2003), who battled alcoholism, drug-addiction and depression and died of two (self-inflicted?) stab wounds to the chest. Another tribute by Anger to men with beautiful bodies who die too young.

I'll Be Watching You (2007, 4:52 min., DVD)

A young man with a stylish crew cut watches a surveillance video monitor with great interest as a security guard makes out with a bodyguard (both with similar crew cut) among luxury cars in the underground parking of a posh building.

Foreplay (2008, 7 min., DVD)

The training practice of a soccer team – close-up of feet, body parts, muscles – entirely silent except for the noises of the ball being hit – a sort of minimalist, crisp, homoerotic version of Philippe Parreno's and Douglas Gordon's *Zidane – A 21st Century Portrait*.

Scorpio Rising (1963, 29 min., 35mm)

Anger has called *Scorpio Rising* "a death mirror held up to American culture." Set to thirteen pop songs including *He's a Rebel*, *Heat Wave*, and *Wipeout*, images of bikers, Christ and his disciples, the grim reaper, and others are interspersed to form a complex picture of what Anger saw as the violent and fetishistic obsessions of youth. It is a kaleidoscope of images, sometimes comical in tone, that expresses pop culture in a compelling and disturbing way. The film was censored for indecency, and the case went to the Supreme Court, where it was decided in Anger's favor. This took place at the same time as the famous censorship case against Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures*.

The 35mm print of *Scorpio Rising* has been restored by the UCLA Film & Television Archive; preservation funded by the Film Foundation.

It was through **Kenneth Anger's** work that raw popular culture first found its place on the big screen. *Scorpio Rising* revolutionized Martin Scorsese's use of soundtrack music. David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* bears the imprint of Anger's perversity. The exotic lighting and iconography of Fassbinder's *Querelle* has been compared to Anger's. Indeed, Anger's pioneering work in juxtaposing sound and image, his rapid editing and evocative tableaux can be cited as major influences on the shape of the commercials and music videos that permeate our culture today.

Kenneth Anger was born in 1930 in Hollywood, where his grandmother was a silent-film wardrobe mistress in the studios. At the age of four, he played the changeling prince in Max Reinhardt's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Later, he danced with Shirley Temple. This early inundation with Hollywood culture started his lifelong fascination with glamour, scandal and stars.