FILM AT REDCAT PRESENTS

Wed Feb 6 | 8:30 pm |
Jack H. Skirball Series
$10  [students $8, CalArts $5]

Alexander Mackendrick: Filmmaker, Teacher & Theorist
A Centennial Celebration

The esteemed director of Sweet Smell of Success (1957) and The Ladykillers (1955), Alexander Mackendrick (1912–1993) was a pivotal figure in the history of CalArts, and his work and writings remain a major influence on contemporary narrative directors and screenwriters. For this celebration of the artist’s multifaceted contributions, Paul Cronin (editor of Mackendrick’s seminal book On Film-Making) is joined by two CalArts alums, director James Mangold and author and filmmaker F.X. Feeney. Together they honor the man who, as Dean of the School of Film/Video at CalArts and throughout his nearly 25 years of teaching, shaped an institution and inspired generations of filmmakers. This lively discussion reveals Mackendrick through personal reminiscences, film clips and critical observations on his work as a filmmaker, teacher and theorist.

In person: Paul Cronin, F.X. Feeney and James Mangold

“ ’Process, not product’ was [Mackendrick’s] mantra to his students. The creative process—not the creative method, or the creative system. The process. Which never stops.” —Martin Scorsese

One of the most distinguished directors ever to emerge from the British film industry, Alexander “Sandy” Mackendrick was born in the US to Scottish parents. Raised in Scotland, Mackendrick studied at the Glasgow School of Art. Afterward, he worked as a commercial illustrator, soon gravitating to making films, the first being animated advertisements followed by numerous live action short documentaries.

Mackendrick’s feature debut was the Ealing Studios comedy classic Whisky Galore (1949). Other works produced at Ealing include masterpieces like The Man in the White Suit (1951) and The Ladykillers (1955) – comedies marked by dark satire, countering the typical British comedies of the era.
His first Hollywood feature, *Sweet Smell of Success* (1957), a no-holds-barred portrait of the world of ruthless New York gossip columnists, has been acclaimed as one of the great American films, and a career high-point for Mackendrick; shot by award-winning cinematographer James Wong Howe, the film stars Burt Lancaster and Tony Curtis.

In 1969, after growing disillusioned with Hollywood, Mackendrick’s accepted the position of Dean of the School of Film/Video at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). There he founded a revolutionary film instruction program titled “Directing for Theater, Video and Cinema” (DTVC). The curriculum focused on story and acting, elements of filmmaking held dear by Mackendrick. He was fond of saying: “The best way to learn how to work with actors is to have had experience of trying to act yourself - it will teach you humility if nothing else.”

Some of Mackendrick's most notable students include David Kirkpatrick, Doug Campbell, Terence Davies, Don Device, F. X. Feeney, Richard Jefferies, James Mangold, Stephen Mills, Thom Mount, Sean Daniel, Bruce Berman, Gregory Orr, Don Di Pietro, Michael Pressman, Douglas Rushkoff, Lee Sheldon, and David Brisbin, amongst others. The DTVC program, which eventually changed its name to “Film Directing Program,” is one of four programs that compose the CalArts School of Film/Video.

Mackendrick’s writings on film directing and dramatic construction have been compiled in the book, *On Film-Making: An Introduction to the Craft of the Director* (2004, edited by Paul Cronin with a foreword by Martin Scorsese), which remains an influential and widely revered manual on the work of a director. Mackendrick continued to teach at CalArts almost until his death, at 81, in 1993.

**Paul Cronin** edited Alexander Mackendrick’s book *On Film-Making: An Introduction to the Craft of the Director* (2004), and is currently working on collections of Mackendrick's interviews and screenplays. He regularly teaches a workshop based on Mackendrick’s teachings. His films include "Look out Haskell, it’s real!" *The Making of Medium Cool* (2001), *Film as a Subversive Art: Amos Vogel and Cinema 16* (2003) and *In the Beginning was the Image: Conversations with Peter Whitehead* (2006).

**F.X. Feeney** graduated from CalArts in 1976, and started to work as an inker and painter at Hanna-Barbera Studios. In 1980, he became a film and book critic for *The LA Weekly*, and was resident film critic and creative consultant to Z Channel between 1983 and 1989. His articles have been published in *American Film, Movieline, People Magazine,*

James Mangold graduated with a BFA from CalArts in 1985, and, at 21, secured a writer/director deal at Disney. A few years later, he returned to the East Coast, graduated with an MFA in Film from Columbia University, and directed the independent film Heavy that won the Directing Prize at Sundance in 1995. His other films include Cop Land (1997), Girl Interrupted (1999 – Best Supporting Actress Oscar for Angelina Jolie), Kate and Leopold (2001), Identity (2003), Walk the Line (2005 – nominated for five Academy Awards – Best Actress Oscar for Reese Witherspoon), 3:10 to Yuma (2007 – nominated for two Academy Awards) and Knight and Day (2010). His new project, The Wolverine, is slated for a summer release.

Presented in collaboration with CalArts School of Film/Video and CalArts Office of Alumni Relations.

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