

## **Educating Movies**

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### **Part 2**

The recently concluded European Film Festival provided an excellent opportunity for students to appreciate a range of films exploring the challenging issues faced by the increasingly diverse cultures of contemporary Europe. Those who missed the Festival can rent similar films from their local video stores. Some embassies also loan tapes and DVDs to interested persons. The Argentinean embassy has a magnificent collection of feature films that I would recommend to those interested in Latin American culture or who are studying Spanish. They also have a weekly screening of such films on a Wednesday evening, by reservation only.

The Alliance Francaise also has regular film screenings but, unlike the Argentinean films, they do not have English subtitles and are thus better suited to those who have a level of proficiency in the language. The Studio Film Club shows classic, foreign, and independent films every Thursday night at the CCA7 back studio, Fernandes Industrial Complex. Peter Doig and Che Lovelace select an eclectic collection of films geared to a mainly young audience and, whenever possible, they show local or Caribbean films. All these screenings are free of charge.

The local television stations traditionally broadcast commercial films from Hollywood, but, recently, there have been some interesting developments. TV6 recently commissioned the production of a “made for television” movie “Jobell and America,” directed by Asha Lovelace, based on a short story by her father, Earl Lovelace. With proficient cinematography and editing by Asha’s brother, Walt Lovelace, this production is yet another stepping stone in the development of a Trinidad and Tobago and, hence, a Caribbean film industry. The community station, Gayelle the Channel, has already started showing Caribbean and international feature films, including ones by Trinidad and Tobago director Frances-Anne Solomon and Gloria Rolando from Cuba.

MovieTowne, in collaboration with the Trinidad Theatre Workshop, has also made a significant contribution to an emerging local film industry by organizing a short film competition for secondary schools. The best five films were shown as part of a Short Film Festival at MovieTowne. The audience enjoyed the winning production “My Scarlet Letter” from St. Mary’s College, the runner-up “Just a Matter of Time” by Tableland High School, the third place “Identity” by Queen’s Royal College,” as well as “Nah Leaving” from St. Augustine Girls’ High School and “The Cycle” from Barataria Secondary Comprehensive School [my favourite film and, hopefully, the winner of the peoples choice award]. The prizes were appropriate, with the three top schools receiving money towards the development of a film facility in their school.

I believe film is an important media and should be taught not only at university but also throughout the school system. Derek Walcott has also recognised the importance of film to the people of the Caribbean. In responding to questions after a public lecture at The

University of the West Indies (UWI) in 2003, he recognised that, traditionally, Caribbean people have been represented as marginal characters in international films, while the foreign directors and the cameramen have been unable to record the landscape with sensitivity. However, he argued that “film is going to replace theatre in the Caribbean.... there is a generation now that is very interested in film, justifiably so, because the video camera has become like a pen to the people.”

I look forward to the day when it will be normal to view a whole range of Caribbean films (and not just those from Cuba) on a regular basis in film festivals, on television, in the cinema, and in the classroom.

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