

**BREAKING NEWS**

# George Clooney On Sultan Of Brunei Hotel Boycott, Part 2

**FILM**

## Peter Bart: Fifty Years In, Three Directors Continue To Build Their Legacies

by Peter Bart

• May 10, 2018 1:24pm



As several excellent books and articles are reminding us, 1968 was a year of tumult. Regimes were collapsing on this date 50 years ago, protesters jammed the streets, and the worlds of music and film were being re-imagined. Even the tightly regimented Cannes Film Festival exploded in a noisy chaos of demonstrations.

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The convulsions of five decades ago, to be sure, did not have the enduring impact that many had imagined. Game-changing ideas crashed and burned, taking promising careers down with them. Indeed, it became cool in the '60s to carefully study the rituals of survival rather than the keys to success.

Given this realization, I decided to seek out three proud '60s survivors who not only defied the fates but actually managed to build on the frenzy of the times: Francis Coppola, Billy Friedkin and [Peter](#)



**Bogdanovich.** Their careers were just starting to burgeon in 1968. Today, they seem as passionate as ever to build on the past, not reject it.

A checklist:



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**Coppola** is often on the Paramount lot these days, staging a succession of readings of a major film which he will shoot in 2019 – a multi-generational saga of an Italian American family. Coppola has visited this terrain before, of course, but his focus this time will not be on the crimes and thuggery of his *The Godfather* films but rather on the creative destiny of the family.

Coppola has also devoted much of his time and resources (to wit, \$500,000) to create *Cotton Club Encore*, an expansion and re-edit of his 1984 film. The new version incorporates five big musical numbers that brighten and enhance the period gangster movie. Distributors are now bidding on the project. Coppola, of course, continues to expand his other various businesses – hotels, wine and food – entities, which, in his mind, further represent the art of storytelling.

**Friedkin**, meanwhile, has been busily promoting his new film *The Devil and Father Amorth*. The riveting documentary takes the audience through an actual real-life exorcism, with important scholars analyzing the psychological and religious repercussions of these fierce interactions. It's been 45 years since the release of Friedkin's award-winning thriller *The Exorcist*, which featured a staged exorcism. He also will direct several major operas in various capitals of the world, as he has done for several years, and is prepping other features.



The Orchard

**Bogdanovich**, on the other hand, is completing work on a famously



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incomplete project: Orson Welles' *The Other Side of the Wind*. A longtime admirer of that filmmaker, Bogdanovich and his associates have re-edited and restored *Wind* based on Welles' notes and assembled film, and Netflix is committed to releasing it in the fall. The new version was supposed to be shown as a major event at this month's Cannes Film Festival, but that plan was canceled because of the

Netflix-Cannes battles — the French demand theatrical distribution from the streaming service. Bogdanovich also is completing a documentary about Buster Keaton, but not for Netflix.

It seems appropriate that all three filmmakers are consumed both with present and past, since all were involved in an innovative company, conceived 50 years ago, that was intended both to innovate and re-create. At the time the Directors Company was developed, all three had made their breakthrough films. Bogdanovich's was *The Last Picture Show* (1971), Friedkin's was *The French Connection* (1971) and Coppola's first film was *The Rain People* (1969). Their basic precept in forming their company at Paramount was to afford filmmakers the autonomy to develop and green light their own projects, provided budgets were \$3 million or under (a healthy sum at that time). Further, each director was obliged to mentor both younger and senior directors, guiding their work on future projects.

Bogdanovich announced that he would foster the future work of Welles, not exactly a youthful protégé but nonetheless a filmmaker who urgently needed both capital and discipline. It would take Bogdanovich 50 years to fulfill his mission.

During its initial years, the Directors Company produced *Paper Moon*, *The Conversation* and *Daisy Miller* and plans were afoot to expand the slate — part of my job at Paramount at that time was to be the studio supervisor for the company. It soon became clear, however, that some top corporate executives bridled at the autonomy afforded the filmmakers; Frank Yablans, the president, was especially distrustful. Within four years the company was disbanded. Each of the filmmakers went their separate ways, taking their

lumps along the way — some projects dazzled, other imploded. Yet all three remain at work today, with each endeavor paying homage to the past as well as seeking new ground.

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Observer of Media Happenings • on May 10, 2018 1:39 pm

Peter Bart: Mall Cop

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ROBERT HUNT • on May 10, 2018 2:13 pm

“The Rain People” was Coppola’s fourth film (if you ignore “Tonight for Sure”).

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Three Serious Amigos • on May 10, 2018 2:58 pm

We are still big. It’s the pictures that got small.

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• on May 10, 2018 3:05 pm

Sorcerer!

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**Bo • on May 10, 2018 5:10 pm**

Sorry, but these guys are done. I've liked their best movies from long ago, but they are no longer relevant and will not make movies people will go and see. I doubt seriously that Coppola's huge Italian American family picture will even be made. Friedkin made some great movies and his Sorcerer is one of my all time favorites. Bagdanovich stopped making decent movies long ago and only made a few in his heyday. These are old guys, like myself, who need to just relax and enjoy the short time they have left instead of attempting to make great things again...like they did in their youth. Or not. It's nice to stay busy when older and all that. Good luck to them all, but reputations and past glory aside they pretty much finished what they had to say. Who knows? Scorsese is still turning out really good films, but then again he never stopped.

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**• on May 10, 2018 6:26 pm**

Peter Bogdanovich overrated

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**Sage on the Hudson • on May 10, 2018 11:16 pm**

Coppola's the only one of the three who made great films — two, to be precise, along with a couple of good ones and a few bad ones.

Friedkin made one very good films, an unintentionally funny film (guess which one), and a lot of rubbish.

Bogdanovich made a couple of fitfully amusing movies, and some self-indulgent and derivative junk. His real metier has always been documentaries; would that he could have gotten more people like John Ford on camera.

The 1970s were not the golden age, or even gilded age, so many misinformed people like to think they were.

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**• on May 11, 2018 9:49 am**

I think it's great that these guys are still hard at work. Who cares if they're not putting out big money films. That was never their style anyhow. They have passion and that counts for something. We live in such a "throwaway" culture nowadays. People are so quick to dismiss history and achievements in favor of the latest thing. These three guys were vital in the American cinematic movement, and many of their works and techniques are influential today.

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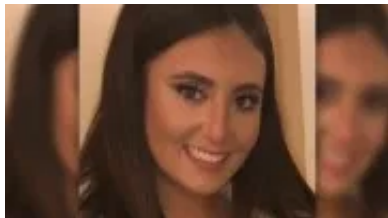
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