Arrow Academy celebrates the best in world cinema with key titles from cinema's history. As the once common repertory cinema dies off Arrow Academy aims to be your at-home equivalent, where you can make rich cinematic discoveries and enjoy films with optimal picture and audio presentation, special features to contextualise and comment upon the film for that essential post-screening discussion as well as a celebration of the art of the film poster with alternate poster designs, printed on the reverse of this sleeve and throughout the booklet.

Arrow Academy takes its name from the dearly beloved repertory cinema, the Academy 1-2-3 in London, where many critics, writers, filmmakers and cinephiles first discovered a new kind of cinema, which celebrated poster artwork with specially commissioned designs by famed artist Peter Strausfeld.

So as the programmer of your at-home cinema we hope you enjoy the cinematic treats on offer and for more information on forthcoming releases please visit:

www.arrowfilms.co.uk

CONTENTS

CAST

ELLIOTT GOULD as Philip Marlowe
NINA van PALLANDT as Eileen Wade
STERLING HAYDEN as Roger Wade
MARK RYDELL as Marty Augustine
HENRY GIBSON as Dr. Verringer
DAVID ARKIN as Harry
JIM BOUTON as Terry Lennox
WARREN BERLINGER as Morgan
JO ANN BRODY as Jo Ann Eggenweiler
STEVE COIT as Detective Farmer
JACK KNIGHT as Mabel
PEPE CALLAHAN as Pepe
VINCE PALMIERI as Vince
PANCHO CORDOBA as Doctor
ENRIQUE LUCERO as Jefe
RUTANYA ALDA as Rutanya Sweet
TAMMY SHAW as Dancer
JACK RILEY as Riley
KEN SANSOM as Colony Guard
JERRY JONES as Detective Green
JOHN DAVIES as Detective Dayton
RODNEY MOSS as Supermarket Clerk
SYBIL SCOTFORD as Real Estate Lady
HERB KERNS as Herbie
DAVID CARRADINE as Dave aka Socrates (uncredited)
CARL GOTTLIEB as Wade Party Guest (uncredited)
ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER as Augustine's Henchman (uncredited)

CREW

Directed by **ROBERT ALTMAN**
Produced by **JERRY BICK**
Executive Producer **ELLIOTT KASTNER**
Screenplay by **LEIGH BRACKETT**
Based on the novel by **RAYMOND CHANDLER**
Photographed by **VILMOS ZSIGMOND**
Edited by **LOU LOMBARDO**
Music by **JOHN WILLIAMS**

THE LONG GOODBYE

by Brad Stevens

This essay and both the interviews that follow contain significant plot spoilers.

With US cinema currently dominated by franchises aimed at undemanding teenagers, the 1970s looks more than ever like a golden age. The commercial success of Dennis Hopper's *Easy Rider* (1969), Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* (1972) and Robert Altman's *MASH* (1970) ensured that, at least until *Star Wars* (1977) came along, filmmakers who wished to challenge rather than conform, provoke rather than reassure, found themselves welcomed with open arms by Hollywood studios. Altman's *The Long Goodbye* (1973) is among this period's masterpieces.

Its protagonist is Philip Marlowe, a private detective who appeared in seven Raymond Chandler novels published between 1939 and 1958. Chandler's *The Long Goodbye* (1953) contains Marlowe's penultimate appearance (not counting the unfinished *Poodle Springs*, which appeared after the author's death), and involves him attempting to clear the name of his friend Terry Lennox. The screenplay for Altman's adaptation was by Leigh Brackett, an acclaimed fantasy author who had previously written Howard Hawks's version of Chandler's *The Big Sleep* (1945-46), in which Marlowe was played by Humphrey Bogart. Altman and Brackett remain reasonably close to Chandler's novel, with one significant change: in the book, Lennox is innocent of his wife's murder (which was actually committed by Eileen Wade), and is last seen heading off to enjoy a new life in Mexico under an assumed name; in the film, Marlowe casually executes Lennox after discovering he actually did kill his wife. This ending was singled out for criticism by those who believed Altman was expressing his contempt for the heroic ideals Marlowe represented, and had to be cut from the film when it was first shown on American television.

Another major change involved updating the action from 1953 to 1972, setting 'Rip van Marlowe' (as the director referred to him) down in the middle of a modern-day Los Angeles where his commitments to codes of honour and the sanctity of friendship could more easily be exposed as delusional (though Chandler's Marlowe is already something of an anachronism). Whereas previous screen Marlowes played by Bogart, Dick Powell (*Murder, My Sweet*, aka *Farewell My Lovely*, 1945) and Robert Montgomery (*Lady in the Lake*, 1947) frequently delivered one-liners which demonstrated their ability to dominate any situation by sheer force of personality, Elliott Gould (in a style typical of Altman's protagonists) seems to be talking to himself most of the time (his catchphrase, "It's okay with me", almost always functions in this way), his attempts at wit merely exposing him to relentless mockery.

Producers Jerry Bick and Elliott Kastner initially offered *The Long Goodbye* to Howard Hawks, then to Peter Bogdanovich, who suggested Altman for the project. According to Leigh Brackett, Brian Hutton also came close to directing, and was responsible for casting Gould, who had previously appeared in Altman's *MASH*: though it took him some time to adjust to the director's working methods, he would become an important collaborator, co-starring in *California Split* (1974) and playing cameo roles as himself in *Nashville* (1975) and *The Player* (1992). At the time, Gould was regarded as unemployable because his erratic behaviour while shooting an adaptation of Herman Raucher's novel *A Glimpse of Tiger* (directed by Anthony Harvey) had led to the production being shut down after four days (1). According to an interview on Gould's website, United Artists insisted that he undergo psychiatric evaluation before agreeing to hire him for *The Long Goodbye*: "I took all the tests, and finally, they put 19 needles in my head to study my brain waves. At last, I was certified sane. How many of us are certified by document as being sane?".

Most of Altman's films, especially in the 1970s, contain at least one scene that takes place during a party (*The Long Goodbye*'s party was shot in the director's own house), and his cast list might just as easily have served as the guest list for a planned celebration. *The Long Goodbye*'s performers seem to have been chosen specifically for their extra-cinematic associations, something brilliantly caught by the film's poster, created by Jack Davis in the style of his *Mad Magazine* parodies, which depicts a caricature of Robert Altman interviewing his lead actors: on the poster, Nina van Pallandt's character Eileen Wade is described by Altman as "a femme fatale involved in a deceptive plot of shadowy intrigue", and when van Pallandt's caricature asks "How do you want me to play it?", Altman's response is "From memory!". The reference is to van Pallandt's affair with Clifford Irving during the period when he was writing a fake autobiography of Howard Hughes (one of the central concerns of Orson Welles' *F For Fake*, also premiered in 1973, in which van Pallandt figures prominently among the interviewees). Other cast members include ex-New York Yankees pitcher Jim Bouton (making his screen debut) as Terry Lennox, director Mark Rydell (who would direct Gould in *Harry and Walter Go to New York* three years later) as Jewish gangster Marty Augustine (a character who bears only a vague resemblance to Mendy Menendez, the mobster in Chandler's novel), *Laugh-In* star Henry Gibson (who would play one of the main roles in *Nashville*) as Dr. Verringer (2), and Sterling Hayden as Hemingwayeseque novelist Roger Wade, a part originally to have been played by Dan Blocker, whom Altman had directed in several episodes of *Bonanza* (the film is dedicated to Blocker, who died in 1972). Hayden was a professional actor, but his remarkable performance as a self-loathing alcoholic draws on his experience naming names to the House Un-American Activities Committee, which left him tormented by guilt.

---

1. According to Peter Bogdanovich, *A Glimpse of Tiger* eventually morphed into *What's Up, Doc?* (1972), with the male protagonist played by Gould changed to a female protagonist (played by Gould's ex-wife, Barbra Streisand). However, there is no obvious connection between Bogdanovich's film and Raucher's novel.

2. Another change from Chandler's novel is the addition of a scene in which Dr. Verringer turns up at the Wades' house and publicly humiliates Roger into signing a cheque.

The film also includes uncredited cameos by David Carradine, *Jaws* (1975) screenwriter Carl Gottlieb, and the then unknown (at least outside of body-building circles) Arnold Schwarzenegger, who plays one of Marty Augustine's henchmen.

These casting games seem frivolous, but actually relate to one of the most fascinating aspects of Altman's work. Whether working on large-scale, multi-character epics such as *Nashville* and *Short Cuts* (1993), or more intimate chamber dramas such as *Images* (1972) and *3 Women* (1977), Altman is always concerned with the slippery nature of identity. In the multi-character films, identity tends to be widely diffused, with individuals connected only by chance viewed from a distance as if they were laboratory animals participating in controlled experiments. In the chamber films, this process is reversed, with small groups (frequently either all male or all female) finding that their identities have started to dissolve, rendering notions of individuality problematic: consider *Images*, wherein the actors have swapped names with their characters (René Auberjonois plays Hugh, Hugh Millais plays Marcel, Marcel Bozzuffi plays René), or *3 Women*, wherein the eponymous protagonists gradually merge. A key title here is *Secret Honor* (1984), in which only one actor, Philip Baker Hall as Richard Nixon, appears onscreen: since there is nobody for him to merge with, Altman's Nixon undergoes the reverse process, one of fragmentation, finally being seen as a series of repeated images on the television screens in his office.

Altman's casting games in *The Long Goodbye* relate intimately to the film's concern with identity, the line between 'fictional' characters and the 'genuine' public personas of the actors playing them having become hopelessly blurred. But then everything here has undergone a blurring process; note how Altman's camera constantly drifts, refusing to settle in any one place; or the way mirror reflections are used to show two events occurring simultaneously (we observe Roger's argument with Eileen through a sheet of glass in which we can also see the reflected image of Marlowe standing by the sea); or the way that (with the exception of 'Hooray for Hollywood', heard at the beginning and over the end credits) all the music (including door chimes at the Wades' house) consists of variations on John Williams' title song, problematising the distinction between diegetic sound (which can be traced to an onscreen source) and non-diegetic sound (which emanates from a space outside the fictional world). Thus the opening credits juxtapose non-diegetic performances of the song (by male and female singers) with a diegetic variation playing as muzak in the supermarket Marlowe visits.

Even the distinction between genres is blurred: at times, *The Long Goodbye* feels like a comedy, at other times like a serious crime film (3), and on occasion we have no idea what mode Altman is working in, are unable to work out whether we should be laughing or crying. Consider the scene (an invention of Altman's - it does not appear in either Chandler's novel or Brackett's screenplay) in which Marty Augustine, after talking about how much he loves his girlfriend, smashes a Coke bottle in her face, then

informs Marlowe "Now that's someone I love, and you I don't even like". Consider also a scene that could easily have been hilarious, but, as Jonathan Rosenbaum has pointed out, is "the most nightmarish in the entire film" (4). After Marlowe is hit by a car and picked up by an ambulance, we see a hospital bed containing a man wrapped entirely in bandages. The context encourages us to assume this is Marlowe, but a cut soon reveals Marlowe lying, groggy but evidently uninjured, in the next bed, the previous shot representing his viewpoint. Marlowe gets up and engages the bandaged figure in conversation (even though the latter can communicate only in a series of meaningless grunts and groans), assuring him that "You're gonna be okay. I've seen all your pictures too". 'All your pictures' is obviously a comic reference to the resemblance this individual bears to such cinematic icons as The Mummy and The Invisible Man. But what on earth does Marlowe mean by 'too'? Is he implying that the bandaged man has seen all of Philip Marlowe's films? Or all of Elliott Gould's? The scene continues as a nurse enters and says "You shouldn't be out of bed, Mr. Marlowe"; Marlowe responds by gesturing at the bandaged man and insisting "I'm not Mr. Marlowe. This is Mr. Marlowe right here", ironically confirming our initial suspicions. As the multiple references to classical Hollywood suggest, *The Long Goodbye*'s world is an artificial one in which identity has become shadowy and tentative, something that can be put on and taken off at will. Marlowe claims to be 'Sidney Jenkins' and 'Donald Duck', Roger Wade refers to him as 'Marlboro', and at one point he is mistaken for a 'Mr. Katz'; Roger's real name is Billy Joe Smith; and Terry Lennox's real name is Lenny Potts.

All this blurring - of actors and roles, diegetic and non-diegetic music, comedy and drama, one identity and another - sharpens Altman's focus on the blurring of morality in Nixon's America, a context which renders Philip Marlowe's commitment to abstract notions of integrity and loyalty absurd (as absurd as his cat's refusal to eat anything except a specific brand of food). After the exchange of identities in the hospital room, Marlowe is essentially a walking corpse, dead both spiritually and morally, and thus ready to confront a living dead culture of amorality on its own terms. His execution of Terry Lennox is both shocking and amusing, indeed shocking because it is amusing, serving as it does to punctuate the last of Marlowe's sardonic one-liners ("Yeah, I even lost my cat"). Having left his 'real' self behind - inarticulate, helpless and probably dying - in a hospital bed, Marlowe, last seen dancing happily along a street in Mexico, becomes indistinguishable from the psychotic Marty Augustine. Like so many of Altman's films, *The Long Goodbye* implies that losing these games of identity may be preferable to winning, and refusing to play at all - as Essex (Paul Newman) does at the end of *Quintet* (1979) - the most honourable solution.

---

3. This uncertainty is reflected in the various poster designs: Jack Davis's poster suggests a Mel Brooks-style parody, others imply that *The Long Goodbye* is a straightforward thriller. None attempts to capture the film's mixture of tones and genres.

4. Jonathan Rosenbaum, "Improvisations and Interactions in Altmanville", *Sight and Sound*, Spring 1975, pp. 90-95.

CONTEMPORARY
REVIEWS

To say that *The Long Goodbye* polarised critical opinion would be an understatement. Early alarm bells sounded with *Variety*'s pre-release review on 31 December 1972 ("An uneven mixture of insider satire on the gumshoe film genre, gratuitous brutality, and sledgehammer whimsy."), and the film was critically savaged when it opened commercially on 7 March 1973 on a limited release in Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia and Miami. As a result, the film's New York premiere was delayed until 28 October, where it had a much warmer reception. Here are excerpts from some of the original reviews:

— — — — — — — — — —

A knockout of a movie. [...] This softhearted honest loser is so logical a modernisation, so "right", that when you think about Marlowe afterward you can't imagine any other way of playing him now that wouldn't be just fatuous. [...] Gifted filmmakers are driven to go beyond pulp and to bring the qualities of imagination that have gone into the other arts. Sometimes, like Robert Altman, they do it even when they're working on pulp material. Altman's isn't a pulp sensibility. Chandler's, for all his talent, was.

(Pauline Kael, *New Yorker*)

This Marlowe is an untidy, unshaven, semi-literate dimwit slob who could not locate a missing skyscraper and who would be refused service at a hot dog stand. He is not Chandler's Marlowe, or mine, and I can't find him interesting, sympathetic or amusing, and I can't be sure who will.

(Charles Champlin, *Los Angeles Times*)

Altman's most entertaining, most richly complex film since *MASH* and *McCabe and Mrs Miller*. It's so good that I don't know where to begin describing it. [...] Don't be misled by the ads, *The Long Goodbye* is not a put-on. It's great fun and it's funny, but it's a serious, unique work.

(Vincent Canby, *New York Times*)

Elliott Gould has none of the characteristics of the tough, canny sleuth: his face and expressions, slack and self-indulgent, do not betray any signs of quick and sharp thinking - or, for that matter, of any other kind.

(John Simon, *National Review*)

Robert Altman's *The Long Goodbye* attempts to do a very interesting thing. It tries to be all genre and no story, and it almost works. It makes no serious effort to reproduce the Raymond Chandler detective novel it's based on; instead, it just takes all the characters out of that novel and lets them stew together in something that feels like a private-eye movie.

(Roger Ebert, *Chicago Sun-Times*)

Altman's lazy, haphazard putdown is without affection or understanding, a nose-thumb not only at the idea of Philip Marlowe but at the genre that his tough-guy-soft-heart character epitomized. It is a curious spectacle to see Altman mocking a level of achievement to which, at his best, he could only aspire.

(Jay Cocks, *Time*)

INTERVIEW WITH LEIGH BRACKETT

by Tony Macklin

Leigh Brackett (1915-78) started almost at the top of her profession when her first mystery novel, *No Good from a Corpse* (1944), led to "this guy Brackett" being hired by Howard Hawks to adapt Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep* for the screen. Although primarily a science fiction prose writer, she continued writing screenplays, for Hawks on *Rio Bravo* (1959), *Hatari!* (1962), *El Dorado* (1967) and *Rio Lobo* (1970), and for George Lucas on the posthumously produced *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980).

In this interview, conducted in July 1975 at her home in Kinsman, Ohio, she discusses the peculiar challenges both of adapting Chandler's difficult late novel and of working with Robert Altman.   The full 70-minute audio interview, in which she also talks about her other films and her lengthy collaboration with Hawks, can be heard at *http://tonymacklin.net/audio/brackett.mp3*

TM: *Tell me about your experience working on* The Long Goodbye *and how you viewed that and how it changed. Do you consider that a pessimistic film or a parody, or...?*

LB: No... well, I'm not exactly sure what it turned out to be! Of course, I was playing it straight. In the beginning, of course, as you know, it is a tremendously long book, just in terms of plot, trying to fit all this into the arbitrary length of a two-hour film. It is a very discursive plot. It's two stories, and one of them takes place really during World War II, and then the part that we're concerned with now takes place now but it hooks back onto the World War II story. In other words, as I recall, you start out with with one modern-day plot, Marlowe and Terry, and then that breaks and you go onto the rest of it and you find where the two link up. *The Big Sleep* started off with a bang and it never quit moving, never sat down to talk. There was an awful lot of good dialogue but it didn't talk, if you know what I mean. Marlowe's introspective thoughts were easily put into a line of dialogue to somebody. In *The Long Goodbye* there were chapters and chapters and chapters of Marlowe thinking how rotten the world was and how rotten everybody in it was. By this time Chandler, of course, had got older and he was going through a very cruel phase in his own life too. His wife was dying and he was an unhappy man, and the whole world I can imagine might have seemed very sour and bad to him. So there was relatively little or no action in the book, and so many of the things, twenty-five years later, that were fresh when *The Big Sleep* was fresh, you can't do them any more. They've just become such clichés that they're funny. So we had that problem. And then we had the problem of what period to do it in: shall we go back and do it in the Fifties, or shall we bring it up to date? Well, if you go back and do it in the Fifties that's just dandy, but it runs your budget *way* up. If you bring it up to date, you're getting your people a little bit into the geriatric

set if you hang onto that World War II business. We tried it with the Korean War and it didn't work, the mood was all wrong and the whole thing was all wrong. So, what to do?

TM: *And when you say "we", who do you mean?*

LB: Well, I was working with Jerry Bick in the beginning. Elliott Kastner of course was the executive producer, and Jerry was the producer, and with Brian Hutton, who was to be the director.

TM: *Oh, he was? I didn't know that.*

LB: And Brian was having problems himself at that time. And Brian got a brilliant idea how to solve the plot problem. I kept telling him, I don't think it'll work because I think... well, I didn't think, but Brian didn't understand the discipline and the structure of the mystery story, which is a thing you have to...

TM: *Of any story!*

LB: Well, the mystery story, the detective story especially. It's like putting a watch together, and if one piece doesn't fit the whole watch doesn't work. And this brilliant idea was very clever, the only trouble was it killed you right at the top of page one. You were dead right there. Well, I thought maybe I'm wrong so I'll go ahead and do it, and so I wrote a script. And it didn't work.

TM: *What was his brilliant idea?*

LB: Well, we threw out quite a few of the characters and we started off with Terry and the death of Sylvia. And his idea was that Terry had pre-planned the whole thing. He'd murdered his wife himself knowing that Roger Wade would be blamed for it. In other words, you had people coming out of boxes and saying words because they had to, otherwise the plot didn't work. And a plot that's built that way never works: you've just got puppets and nothing builds. So I sent it in and I didn't like it very much, and I had done something with the ending I've forgotten, because the ending in the book was inconclusive, everybody felt, and I did something... and Brian said no, hell, I'd rather have Marlowe shoot him himself. So I said well, fine, that at least I do like, so let's have Marlowe shoot him. So that's where that came from. And then there was a hiatus, some problem that had nothing to do with me, I don't know, way up at the production top, and Brian had another commitment and had to leave the film. So we sat for quite a while on the shelf, and so then they got Bob Altman. And Bob Altman was cutting *Images* at that point and he was in London so I scooted over to London again where I'd gone to see Brian, to talk with Brian and Jerry Bick, which was no sweat - I'll go to London any time, with or without expense account. And Altman had - because I had written Jerry and Elliott Kastner a letter saying what I felt was wrong with the structure of the script and how I felt we could fix it, and Altman said "the most helpful thing I see about this is that letter you wrote." And so we started from there on a very good basis.

And we had jam sessions, he and Jerry Bick and I met for a week and got it all thrashed out, and I'd go to a hotel at night and pound on a borrowed typewriter until I got the notes all down and would go back the next day and do the next segment. And we got everything all thrashed out and then I came home and did the script, and that was that. And some of the touches like the cat, the opening with the cat, were Bob's, and the ending, where he dances away to... that was Altman's, and the first time I saw that in the projection room I looked at it and "What in the... is going on here?" And he said "You know, the whole thing is a farce, you can't play it straight, everybody knows, so you play it off as a joke." And I said "Well, maybe you know what you're doing", and he said "Well, we'll just run it that way and see what the audience thinks of it and maybe we can pull it," but I guess they didn't because it was still on the print that I saw in the theatre.

A couple of connective-tissue scenes got lost that were shot, which made things a little confusing, like how Eileen got hold of the money that she gave back to the gambler, which was shown, which was written in the script and photographed but didn't get on the screen. A couple of things like that. There again is what I mean - the connective tissue, the who done it and why? All directors, Howard Hawks, Altman, everyone I've ever worked with, have an absolute loathing - and I can perfectly well understand why - for scenes where actors stand and talk plot at each other. And you remember in the early days of the talkies they'd do these very complicated murder mysteries and the detective would say "And then I knew, because so-and-so was hiding in the closet" and all that stuff, and you'd go to sleep on it. So I could understand why they'd shy away from these scenes. So I'd get it down to where it's like two lines, you know, and I think well, maybe they won't even notice that those lines are in there, because they sound quite natural, they're embedded in the dialogue: they get lost, they're not there. And that's a little frustrating.

TM: *So they get taken out anyway?*

LB: That's right.

TM: *It seems to me that there was a big problem: if you thought of it as a straight work and he thought of it as a joke, did you ever come to his way of thinking?*

LB: Well, I wasn't around when he was shooting it. When we worked together, we were working on the characters and the structure, and everything went right along. And actually, the satiric touches that he put in didn't have anything to do with the structure or the basic characters.

TM: *Isn't Marlowe played as a kind of... well, he is a fool in some ways, isn't he?*

LB: Well, he's an innocent man, he's a decent man, he's an honest man. He's the honest man who always gets screwed because he believes everybody else is honest, and he trusts his friends, and he got taken for a ride, and he got mad.

TM: *Did you get a lot of letters that said that you in some way betrayed Chandler?*

LB: I didn't get so many letters, but I got a couple. Charles Champlin in the *L.A. Times* just practically had a frothing fit about it. We knew we were going to get flak, we knew we were, especially on the... Marlowe killing Terry because this was out of character for Marlowe. But it was out of character for the time when Marlowe was written: you couldn't do that on the screen. No matter how right it might have been, you couldn't do that. If you remember, he always had to sucker somebody else into doing the shooting. He'd get somebody to walk out a door knowing that somebody was out there ready to kill him and he'd get somebody else to walk out. You could do that, but you couldn't do it - bang! And I thought it was... you know, here is a decent man who has trusted a friend and done him a favour and gotten himself... gotten his neck in the grease. He's fallen in love with a woman who didn't even know he was alive. She didn't really betray him, she didn't even know he was there. As he says, "I lost everything - I even lost my cat". And you're just not gonna get away with it! Which I thought would... well, it satisfied me. A lot of people thought we had taken undue liberties with the thing, because it wasn't *The Big Sleep* over again.

TM: *Not only that, it was totally different from Chandler's style, wasn't it, with this opaqueness and this obliqueness?*

LB: Yes, well, you're not going to get Altman to do... it's gonna be an Altman film.

TM: *And you were willing to do that?*

LB: Yeah, sure. Also, Elliott Gould came with the film, with the deal, because United Artists had a commitment with him, so he was Marlowe or we didn't make the film. Which also posed you another problem because I like Elliott Gould, I think Elliott Gould is one hell of an actor. But he is not Humphrey Bogart, and nothing under the sun you are going to do with him is going to make him look like Humphrey Bogart or act like him. And so you had to do a whole new character, which was the mumbling and the... we tried to keep as much as we could of the businesses with the cops and so on, we tried to keep as much as we could of either the original Chandler or what we thought Chandler might have done if he had been writing it now.

TM: *But there's a lot of risk in that.*

LB: Oh yeah, there's a lot of risk. The picture died, as you know, on the West Coast. It came out, and it got one beautiful review in the *Reporter*, which I framed, and the rest was all either screams of fury or [blows raspberry], you know. So when it opened in New York I was just sitting here with my fingers crossed waiting for the roof to fall in. My little niece who lives up there, she's a musician, rang me up on the phone and said "Aunt Leigh, I've just read the reviews, I've just got the *New York Times*! Listen! Listen! Listen!" and she started to read me and I almost fainted. I said "Are you sure?" And the reviews were all marvellous.

TM: *You of course read Pauline Kael's...*

LB: Yes. Us venerable pulp writers... most of that "improvised dialogue", two-thirds of it, came right out of my typewriter! I don't know whether she thought the whole shape and the structure and the progression of the scenes and everything just fell out of the sky onto the set!

TM: *Well, probably Altman let her think that a lot of it was improvised.*

LB: A lot of it... he did improvise a good bit on the set. I must tell you that the scene with the Coke bottle was not in the script. I don't think the gangster even had a girlfriend in the script. Somebody wrote to me, Mike Goodwin at Take One, he said "What about that scene there?" He said "If that Coke bottle, that hard Coke bottle, those mothers are hard, you could build bridges with them, hit that soft face and it shattered, that just didn't seem right to me." And I wrote back and I said "It didn't seem right to me either!" I said it was a shocker of a scene, brought me up in my seat, but I thought the same thing. The face is going to go splat, but that Coke bottle's not going to be hurt in the slightest. And the business of the guy saying "everybody take your clothes off" - that was not in the script. Some of the dialogue between Dan Blocker, who was originally going to play Wade, he died just before they started shooting.

TM: *When Wade walks off into the ocean - a beautiful scene - was that in the script, or Altman?*

LB: The suicide itself was in the script. It was in the... it was the way it was done in the book, behind the closed door, the bang, the guy blows his head off. Of course, I didn't know at the time we were going to have the Malibu set, or I might have thought of it. I don't say I would have thought of it, but I might have thought of it. It was pure Altman and it was purely magnificent. It was absolutely beautiful - just superb. But in those scenes between Marlowe and Roger I tried to build up the fact that [Roger] was suicidal and that he was sadistically punishing his wife, taking everything out on her, and that he was suicidal as well as alcoholic. And some of the... [Sterling Hayden] doesn't speak the same language that Dan Blocker spoke, you know, the rhythm, everything's all different, so a lot of the dialogue got changed just out of necessity. And Altman... I saw the full rough cut, and he put Gould and Hayden down in those chairs on the beach and just let them say whatever came into their heads. And part of it was fascinating, but it went on far too long, I thought. Now of course it was muchly cut in the theatre print, but I could have wished some of the scenes were a little tighter. There was one beautiful scene between Hayden and his wife which was done behind the window.

TM: *A lot of people complained about that scene.*

LB: They did, but I thought it was beautiful, and that was Altman.

TM: *Because they said "we should hear what they're saying. Chandler would never have prevented us from knowing what was going on."*

LB: No, that's probably true, but I thought it was fine, and that was Altman's entirely.

INTERVIEW WITH ALAN RUDOLPH

by Neil McGlone

Alan Rudolph was a frequent and close collaborator with Robert Altman throughout the 1970s and 80s. In his formative years Rudolph worked as assistant director on three classics from Robert Altman's golden period (*The Long Goodbye, Nashville and California Split*), with Altman later returning the favour by producing five Rudolph films (*Welcome to LA, Remember My Name, Mrs Parker and the Vicious Circle, Afterglow* and *Trixie*). Rudolph's junior status often led to him being referred to as Altman's protégé, which is perhaps unfair but Rudolph's films do seemingly spring from the same laconic, character-driven, ensemble school as Altman's.

Rudolph has said that upon meeting Altman, "nothing in my life would ever be the same. All of my filmmaking dreams, aspirations, experiences, and energies would barely budge the needle compared to what I encountered in Altmanland. [One] fateful phone call began my privileged collaboration with one of America's greatest film artists."

The pair remained close friends for more than forty years until Altman's death in 2006 and as such Rudolph can provide some key insights into both the production of *The Long Goodbye* and Altman's singular working methods.

NM: *This film marked your first job working with Altman. How did you come to be involved with the film?*

AR: I was contacted by Altman's office as they were looking for a second assistant director and I'd been recommended. I was a first assistant by then, trying to make my own films, but politely demurred. The contact sincerely suggested I should meet Bob in person before making any decision. My mother's maiden name is Altman - no relation, but maybe that's why I agreed!

NM: *You are credited as second assistant director on the film. Can you explain what your specific duties were?*

AR: The first assistant director is in charge of the set, making sure all production elements come together for the director. In Bob's case that meant Tommy Thompson, his longtime producer/first AD and wonderful guy. The second assistant anticipates, communicates, gathers and records the various needed requirements.

It was made clear to me that things were different here. Some job titles were just that. My production skills served me well but no amount of experience readies you for a Robert Altman shoot.

NM: *By this time you had already made your first feature film and I wonder whether you can explain what you learned from working with Altman on this film that helped you in making your next movie?*

AR: I directed a no-budget horror movie to see if I could learn exponentially, and wanted more. Then, after meeting Bob once, everything changed. I had a glimpse into what was possible on both sides of the screen. I put my personal dreams on hold and joined the circus.

Bob's productions were smart, relaxed and efficient. Their sole purpose was to carry out Altman's vision. An assistant director works with the director but not on creative matters, which is why I stopped being one. Bob kept including me and the artistic level was higher than I could ever imagine.

Altman didn't teach, he just was. His gifts and persona were strong, bold and unafraid. He not only did it completely his way, but that was the only way he knew. I became surprised how often Bob's methods overlapped my own instincts and impulses.

NM: *Leigh Brackett's screenplay was originally offered to both Howard Hawks and Peter Bogdanovich who both turned it down. Bogdanovich recommended Altman for the picture, but he too initially turned it down, as the producers wanted either Lee Marvin or Robert Mitchum for the role of Marlowe. When the producers agreed on Elliott Gould, Altman took on the directorial role. What was your recollection of the above and how things panned out?*

AR: All that happened before I was hired. From what I know, it seems accurate. Elliott was the main reason Altman wanted to do the film plus the ending in the Brackett script where Marlowe kills his friend, but everything was "Altmanised".

Near the end of the schedule before going to Mexico, I asked Bob if he always changed the script so much. He turned those penetrating eyes on me and said without smiling, "I haven't changed this script." Only later did I understand he really meant it. Screenplays are very important to Bob, his interpretation on film is Altman's true read of any script.

NM: *Sterling Hayden took over the role of Roger Wade after the originally cast actor, Dan Blocker, sadly passed away. It's been reported that Hayden was often drunk on set or high on marijuana and that Altman let him ad-lib his lines with Gould because he couldn't remember them. What is your memory of this?*

AR: My first encounter with Sterling Hayden was outside the Wade house, which was Bob's in real life. I was protecting the sidelines of a shot and crouched behind bushes. Suddenly my colour is altered to a beautiful red hue as someone behind me had slipped sunglasses over my eyes and said with a growl, "These are the original rose-colored glasses." Sterling was arriving on the set for the very first time and he was lovable and legendary.

Bob never smoked dope or drank on a shooting set. If someone else was stoned while working and did their job the way it had to be done then it was okay with him. Sterling might have been high but who could tell? He was Roger Wade and he was larger than life and that was him.

Questioning whether any actor in any Altman film ad-libbed lines would be to ask if the surf has sand in it. Bob discarded most written dialogue as he received all the necessary information from his characters' behaviour.

The most memorable example covering your questions is the scene where Wade and Marlowe drink aquavit. There was a story point to accomplish, but dialogue was completely improvised and the liquor was real. Who knows where that line is? It was a conversation between Marlowe and Wade and Elliott and Sterling through Bob. Each take ran a full magazine (ten minutes) and was never repeated.

NM: *Cinematographer Vilmos Zsigmond developed an unusual post production technique of partially exposing the undeveloped camera negative to achieve a hazy, pastel look. Was this something that he and Altman had discussed in terms of how the film would look or what is your understanding of any discussions that took place about the film's look?*

AR: It's called post flashing and has a risky side to it. The film negative, the Holy Grail, was permanently altered during developing. What you get from it is what you're stuck with. Very few filmmakers would apply it to even one shot, let alone every frame of footage. Bob and Vilmos had done it first on *McCabe and Mrs Miller* (1971). They upped the ante on this one and it was breathtaking. Unadorned, gritty, yet alluring and seductive. It will never be duplicated. At least not *live!*

Bob decided from the outset that he wanted the camera to move arbitrarily, back and forth on a dolly. We picked locations with that in mind. He wanted the audience to feel like they were peeking in on something, like snooping. This movement has since become standard technique for film and television.

NM: *The updating of the setting, adjusting the plot a little and a completely new interpretation of the character of Philip Marlowe did not sit well with many Chandler purists at the time. It was a bold step by Altman to film it this way and I wonder if you could talk about any conversations you may have had with him either at the time or later about this?*

AR: Bob used to say that his Marlowe was closer to Chandler's than the so-called purist version. The complaints were because Elliott wasn't enough like Humphrey Bogart, instead of not being Philip Marlowe.

I think the main reason the film looked like a radical interpretation then was that Altman, as always, saw his subject through truth and satire instead of lies. Bob took the icing off the cake and his viewpoint wasn't so much radical as meaningful and really funny. It reflected human behaviour while Hollywood was still busy fogging the mirror. Altman was capturing something contemporary from out of the past, so to speak.

NM: *The title song is essentially the only song we hear in the entire film, but played in various different styles. Did Altman ever expand on why he chose to do this?*

AR: He and the composer John Williams came up with that idea. Bob always wanted music as organic as possible and he got close: doorbells, muzak and mariachi band.

NM: *Altman would jokingly refer to his main protagonist as: "Rip Van Marlowe, as if he'd been asleep for twenty years, had woken up and was wandering through this landscape of the early 1970s, but trying to invoke the morals of a previous era". Did you see the character this way at the time too?*

AR: The real world, the one outside Marlowe's cocoon, was a running comment on everything contemporary at the time. Marlowe's world was locked in the Forties: code, style and references. He drives a '48 Lincoln and lives in the ultimate old Hollywood Hills apartment.

For that crucial location, we kept offering Bob good choices but he refused them all. He wanted the audience to get everything about Marlowe's life in that one place. Someone on the crew told Tommy and me about a friend who lived in this old Hollywood apartment building. From a production standpoint, it was the last place you would choose as there was no parking, a vintage elevator, footbridge, no staging space and you could see for blocks in every shot. After he saw the place, Bob knew it would be worth the effort.

One day we were shooting outside Marlowe's apartment, looking in. I was next to Bob at the camera overlooking the expansive view from the heart of Hollywood to the Pacific Ocean. "From here," he said, "you can see everyone in Hollywood fucking everyone else."

NM: *The film features a very brutal scene where a girl has a Coke bottle smashed in her face. It's a real jolt in the film, because you don't expect it or see it coming. It almost wakes you up to what is happening on the screen. Can you talk a little about the filming of this scene and any concerns Altman may have had in including it in the final cut?*

AR: Not much to add except that what follows that vicious moment is the most darkly funny line from Marty Augustine, (something like) "And that's someone I love. You I don't even like."

NM: *When the film was initially screened it received bad reviews. The film was withdrawn for six months, with rumours it would be re-edited. The reasons for its failure were linked to the advertising campaign, which pitched it almost as if it was a James Bond film. The film was re-marketed, released in New York and received good reviews. What do you remember of this process and what happened after those initial screenings?*

AR: The studio sold it as Marlowe with his gun, which guaranteed that people would be pissed when they saw it. After the New York opening, Bob pushed the Jack Davis *Mad Magazine*-like ad to promote it. These things happen when visionary artists have to wait for conservative businessmen to catch up.

The irony to me is that this only confirms the film's perspective. The reason your ray is now blu over Altman's *The Long Goodbye*, a film about being out of time, is because it's not dated.

NM: *Elliott Gould has said in an interview that he has spent many years working on a sequel, based on Chandler's 'The Curtain' which he bought the rights for from the Marlowe Estate for $1. He supposedly showed it to Altman who told Alan Ladd that the only person he'd ever make the film with would be Gould. He then goes on to mention a screenplay that you've based on it with a working title 'It's Always Now'. Are you able to shed any light on this?*

AR: I didn't know about it until Elliott contacted me after Bob passed. He wanted to know if I would be interested. I felt a nudge of approval from Altman and wrote a first draft to get it started. The project is in Elliott's hands so I can't say much about the chances of ever making it, but if I'm needed, then I'm ready! I think it could be terrific and refreshing, in the spirit but not style of *The Long Goodbye.*

CREATIVE POST-FLASHING TECHNIQUE FOR
THE LONG GOODBYE

by Edward Lipnick

One of *The Long Goodbye*'s greatest assets was the brilliant Hungarian-born cinematographer Vilmos Zsigmond, who would go on to win an Oscar for *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (amongst multiple nominations) and be voted by his peers in a 2003 poll held by the International Cinematographer's Guild as one of the ten most influential cinematographers in film history. This article, originally published in the March 1973 issue of *American Cinematographer* magazine, describes the risks and benefits of his controversial 'flashing' method in considerable technical detail. An illustrated video interview with Zsigmond is included on the disc.

Exposing your negative to varying amounts of light after you have shot it and before you have developed it, without being precisely certain what the results are going to look like, wouldn't seem like a technique designed to reduce the anxiety level of a cameraman shooting a major feature, or to ensure a good night's sleep for the director or the manager of the laboratory responsible for these shenanigans. But it worked exceptionally well for director of photography Vilmos Zsigmond, director Robert Altman and Technicolor, who used variable flashing as a technique of modifying the characteristics of the colour negative during the shooting of *The Long Goodbye*. It produced results that are aesthetically exciting, while solving technical problems that could have been handled other ways only at much greater cost and developed methods to adapt colour emulsions to a much greater range of lighting situations.

The Long Goodbye is of course based on Raymond Chandler's best-selling work of the same name, and continues the adventures of his detective hero Philip Marlowe, private eye in the well-known tradition, and one of the fictional and movie greats.

Considered one of Chandler's best, and his last important work, *The Long Goodbye* was published in 1953, and has been a best-seller in the genre ever since. Interestingly enough, it had never been made into a motion picture, and might have slid slowly into obscurity if executive producer Elliott Kastner had not optioned it for the screen. Kastner, who has a long string of fine films to his credit (including *Harper*, *Kaleidoscope*, *The Walking Stick* and *A Severed Head*), felt that *The Long Goodbye* was a sure winner, especially in light of the recent successes of such other hard-edged detective pictures as *The French Connection*, *Bullitt* and *Dirty Harry*, and he commissioned producer Jerry Bick to put the project together. Robert Altman, a director who has received critical acclaim for his venturesome and visionary undertakings of such diverse material as *Brewster McCloud* and *McCabe and Mrs Miller*, became involved when Bick, in London to discuss his and Altman's upcoming project, *Thieves Like Us*, casually mentioned *The Long Goodbye* and the fact that Elliott Gould might play Marlowe. Altman, who had directed Gould in *MASH*, was so intrigued with the combination of story, character and actor that he convinced Bick to delay *Thieves Like Us* so that he could direct this one.

Upon wrapping *Images*, which he was then shooting in Ireland, Altman then came back to Hollywood for his first picture here since *MASH*, and started prepping the Leigh Brackett script. Leigh Brackett, having previously co-adapted (with William Faulkner) Chandler's *The Big Sleep*, and authored numerous westerns and thrillers, was a lady well qualified to translate the intense sense of character and place unique to Chandler into the language of the screen.

With the main elements, story and star, now set, Altman began to look deeper. To Altman, the surface of the story, that is, the plot and dialogue, is generally not the most important element. In fact, his actors are given great freedom to improvise on the set dialogue and action that they feel is appropriate to the character and situation. (This presents some interesting photographic problems, as we shall see later on.) He is much more concerned with the non-explicit story - the way that characters reveal themselves in mannerism and in unguarded moments; the way an event is shaped by the uniqueness of its time and place; and how the story takes on a wider range of (ironic) meanings when viewed from a different (modern) perspective. In *McCabe and Mrs Miller,* for example, the evocation of time and place, in this case the growth of a mining camp in the Pacific Northwest from a tent city to a permanent town, to a large extent *was* the story. And when Raymond Chandler created Philip Marlowe, he invented more than just another fictional detective. He set him into a time and place uniquely his own: Los Angeles in the late 1940s and early 50s.

Those of us who lived in L.A. then remember that it was a very different place from what it is now. We lived on the "coast", in stucco bungalows surrounded by palm trees, orange groves,

and mountains, not tract houses and smog. We met our arriving visitors at Union Station, not LAX, and took them to Grauman's Chinese to see the stars place their footprints in concrete, not to Disneyland to see an Animatronic President Lincoln recite the Gettysburg Address.

So the background, too, is a character in the tale, and with this in mind Altman selected all practical locations in both Los Angeles and Mexico. The locations have that gritty L.A. reality that Chandler knew so well, and range from the luxurious Malibu Colony (filmed at Altman's own beachfront house) to the old Lincoln Heights Jail, a piano bar in the Valley, a Pasadena rest home, and Marlowe's own old stucco hillside apartment behind the Hollywood Bowl. No soundstages were to be used at all.

Altman also had a very definite point of view about Philip Marlowe. "Marlowe is a Fifties character who has survived unchanged into the Seventies. He's a man out of time, and out of place. He wears white shirts, narrow ties, and rumpled blue suits with brown shoes. He is the only one in the whole picture who smokes, constantly puffing on Camels or Luckies. For him, the last fifteen or twenty years never happened," explained Altman. Marlowe is a man whose values, morality and style belong to another era, long since gone. This is the unspoken story, to be conveyed visually and non-explicitly, and is as important as the pulse-pounding, action-packed, suspense-filled murder mystery that forms the "real" story.

Having posed this interesting set of photographic problems, the question became how to get this idea, this mood, onto film. Altman again turned to one of the most brilliant young cameramen working in Hollywood today, Vilmos Zsigmond. Vilmos and he had worked together on two of Altman's previous films, *McCabe* and *Images*, with impressive results.

But neither the faded, flarey, oldtime sepia look of *McCabe*, nor the clarity, introspection, and examination of detail of *Images* was right for this picture. This was fine with Vilmos, who approaches each picture as a new experience, and tries to create a look that is uniquely right for it.

Zsigmond, along with another gifted Hungarian cameraman, his close friend László Kovács, had fled the 1956 Hungarian revolution and landed in Los Angeles. After a number of struggling years, their film on modern dance, *Lullaby*, gained them the recognition that they needed to move into feature work. Most recently Zsigmond has done *Red Sky at Morning*, *The Hired Hand*, and *Deliverance*, plus the previously mentioned two for Altman.

Vilmos's European background and classical training have served him well, and many times for a picture he will search through the works of the old masters for a painting that comes close to the stylisation that he has in mind; not to copy the look, but to have something to show the director, art director, and the lab, so that they can visualise what he has in mind for the film and help him achieve it.

"For this picture we had a difficult job. We were making a today picture, but we wanted the look of twenty years ago. It is very difficult to talk about it in words, but we did not want to re-create the Fifties, but to remember them," said Vilmos. "So what we decided to do was to put the picture into pastels, with a shading toward the blue side. Pastels are for memory."

Vilmos, who probably does not feel that he expresses himself well in his fluent but accented English (even though he does), warmed to his subject. "It is also a sad and a funny movie - Chaplinesque. You feel sorry for Gould, and that also works well in pastels. The blue shading in the night effects also will give a feeling of the Fifties. We also did not want to imitate the style of the way pictures were photographed then, except for a few scenes with the gangsters where there is a satiric and ironic quality, a put-on. We used higher contrast with people moving in and out of shafts of light, the way you would remember a Fifties gangster."

But how to achieve this? "The problem is that 5254 colour negative is too good. It is too saturated, too perfect. It corrects for mistakes in nature. A blue sky is never that blue, a yellow flower never that yellow," lamented Vilmos.

The problem was to create pastels the way the eye sees them, or even more so. Vilmos is the first to admit that the cameraman can't do it all. The production designer, art director and costumer had to eliminate bright colours in the clothing and sets. But that wasn't enough. The raw stock, Eastman Color Negative Type 5254, still had too much inherent contrast for his purposes. "You can't just light it flat, because then it looks flat, and not pastel. Also I did not want to use heavy fog filters and backlight as in *McCabe*, because that takes away the sharpness, and we wanted the sharpness, but not the contrast," explained Vilmos.

Vilmos took the problem to Technicolor, in the person of the affable Skip Nicholson, Technicolor's Manager of Photographic Services. Vilmos had achieved something like the results he desired for *The Long Goodbye* in *Deliverance*, which had a muted, de-saturated look. Technicolor had done the lab work on that film, and without giving away any of Technicolor's trade secrets, the varying degrees of de-saturation of *Deliverance*

were achieved in the printing, and did involve a masking step when the Color Reversal Intermediate (CRI) was prepared. This, while it did create what was wanted for *Deliverance*, was costly, and involved additional handling steps with the original negative, which is always something to be avoided, if at all possible. Most important of all, it was not quite what Vilmos had in mind.

There is a very easy way to solve the problem of contrast if you are working in black and white. The contrast of the material is controlled in the development. A longer development time produces greater contrast (higher gamma), and shortening the development time yields a lesser degree of contrast (lower gamma). Appropriate adjustments are made when exposing the material, decreasing exposure when development and contrast are to be increased so that the more dense areas of the negative will not all develop to maximum density (to ensure that the highlights won't "block up"), and increasing exposure when contrast and development are to be reduced so that the shadow areas, the "thin" parts of the negative, will have adequate density. But with colour emulsions the development time parameter can vary only within very narrow limits; otherwise, unacceptable colour shifts take place which cannot be satisfactorily corrected in the printing.

Zsigmond decided to experiment with one other way to control contrast in-the-negative, and that was by flashing. (Flashing is providing an additional amount of overall exposure to the negative, either by pre-exposing it to a controlled amount of light before exposure or post-exposing it after exposure.)

But how does flashing control contrast? First, let's define contrast (for the purposes of this discussion) as the ratio between the highest and lowest density. Let's say the ratio of the highest to the lowest density for a normal scene photographed and developed normally is 100:1. If we add one unit of density overall to the negative by flashing, the new ratio is now 101:2, or approximately 50:1, a reduction of 50% in the overall contrast.

This process is analogous to adjusting lighting ratio by the addition of fill light, where the addition of the fill does not change the basic exposure of the scene, but changes the brightness ratio between the lighter and darker areas to a more manageable or desirable one. In addition, flashing tends to make all the colours more pastel, as it adds an overall white light to all areas, thus lightening the values of all of the colours.

Flashing is not a new technique, and has been in use for many years. Freddie Young, for example, used pre-exposure seven years ago, in photographing *The Deadly Affair*, and it goes back even further than that, with its roots in B&W still photography. But Vilmos has added a few new wrinkles. He is post-exposing the film to variable amounts of light, the amount of flashing being determined after shooting and dependent on the original conditions of the scene and the lighting used. He had previously used a form of the technique in photographing Altman's *McCabe and Mrs Miller*, probably the first American film in which post-flashing was applied as a means of contrast control.

It is truly incredible - the marvellous softening effect that flashing has upon the film. Skip Nicholson, who had some understandable reservations in the early stages of the project, says now, "I fell in love with it". And after viewing the dailies, it's hard not to. The image is bright, sharp and well-defined, and yet it is soft, pasteled and muted at the same time. The final scenes in the picture, shot in a forest in Mexico, are done with 50% flash, and have an almost surrealistic quality about them.

This brought up the point about what was meant by "percentage of flash". How was it being measured and controlled? "Percentage of flash is somewhat relative, but is generally a certain percentage of the original camera photography," explained Nicholson. Extensive testing was done before shooting commenced under widely different lighting situations of night and day, high- and low-key lighting.

"In our testing we started with the working definition that the percentage of flash is the percentage of increase in the density of the most dense portions of the negative over what it would have been without flashing," Nicholson said.

But as this is relative, depending on the unflashed densities of the original scene, they soon settled on using precise amounts of flash that they could call "10% flash", "20% flash", etc.

One result that was immediately apparent as a result of their tests was that different percentages of flash produce differing effects which depend on the type of scene and the lighting used. In night exteriors and other very low-key scenes 10-15% flash has a pronounced effect, while the same percentage of flash will produce almost no change in a day exterior or high-key scene. This is understandable when you consider that in a low-key scene, the shadow areas have very low density to begin with, and a small amount of flash produces a great change in density, while with a high-key scene, even the lower densities

are relatively high, and consequently it takes a much greater amount of flashing to produce results, density being proportional to the log of exposure.

Following this initial testing no tests were done on individual sequences after principal photography began, but by that time Vilmos had a pretty good idea of what to expect and, depending on what the lighting conditions were on any particular day, would specify what percentage of flash was to be applied to a particular roll.

Flashing has the added benefit of bringing out shadow detail where none was visible before. Areas in shadow, that had received some exposure, but not enough to lift them off the bottom of the sensitometric curve to the point to which they would print as something other than an undifferentiated black, with the addition of a little extra exposure, were now lifted high enough onto the curve to the point where they would separate out and print nicely.

This application of flashing to increase shadow detail was used to great advantage by Zsigmond in shooting many of the night exteriors. "Present day budgets don't allow for the use of much fill light in shooting night exteriors," explained Zsigmond. The use of extra generators, arcs, and lamp operators makes shooting large street scenes at night a costly proposition. The trend of late has been to push the film one, two, or even more stops in the development. But Technicolor doesn't believe that you can push 5254 more than two stops without a definite loss in quality. And to Vilmos a two-stop push had the disadvantage of an unacceptable increase in contrast as well as causing any practical lights in the scene (such as auto headlights), to photograph with a noticeable flare.

What Vilmos did was to add a 10% flash and push the film one stop in the development. This had the overall effect of a two-stop increase in speed. The increase in shadow detail was remarkable, and there was no loss in the quality of the image or any unacceptable flare.

Vilmos is very enthusiastic about this technique, and predicts that it could become the norm for low-light-level shooting that requires forced development. Nicholson has an additional comment on this. "While forced development does increase contrast, it also increases the fog density of the film over what it would be with normal development. This increase in fog density is in effect a chemical flash and so we use a very small percentage of additional flash."

They both caution anyone using this technique to be very careful not to flash too heavily when trying for shadow detail. If the negative ends up even slightly overexposed, necessitating "printing down" the positive, all the benefits of flashing will be lost.

On the other end of the scale, flashing helped Vilmos solve an even more tricky problem. There is a party sequence in the film that takes place on the beachside patio of the elegant home of Eileen and Roger Wade, played by Nina van Pallandt and Sterling Hayden. It was necessary to photograph the party on the sunlit patio, seeing into the shadow detail inside the house, and all in the same shot swing around and photograph the beach and ocean. All on a sunny day! The latitude required was tremendous, and flashing alone wouldn't do it. Vilmos elected to overexpose the film by three stops, flash it 35%, and cut the development time in half. This greatly lowered the gamma of the film, and he was able to hold detail from the bright highlights to the depths of the shadows. Of course the highlights looked a little strange, and there was a colour shift which was compensated for somewhat in the printing. The 50% cut in development only compensates for two stops of overexposure, the third stop being handled in the printing, as any less development would have caused an uncorrectable colour shift.

Vilmos philosophically explains that for most purposes the sequence would appear to be unacceptable but it does have the look of a pastel fantasy newsreel, which is what Bob Altman and he had in mind all the time. Be that as it may, the results, in terms of stretching the colour negative to almost its ultimate limits of latitude, are impressive.

There was one other aspect of Vilmos's work on *The Long Goodbye* that fascinated us as we watched him. And that was the constant movement of the camera. Every shot was a moving shot. The camera was constantly in motion, slowly dollying back and forth along the track without apparent rhyme or reason during both the masters and the close-ups. Vilmos admitted that the moves were only occasionally legitimate, i.e. justified by the action. He maintained that these slight moves, coupled with very slow zooms in and out, gave a feeling of improvisation and a 3-dimensional quality as objects and people changed their relationships to one another. He likened it to a controlled hand-held or *cinéma vérité* technique. Altman improvises a lot on the set, and the coverage shots may find the camera in a different position, or moving in a different direction from that of the master, causing the editor to cut from a right to a left move, for example, or to a non-matching action.

Although he admitted that most cameramen will find it obtrusive and pretentious, he urged them to see for themselves. Vilmos feels that it is not obtrusive if the speed of the move is slow, and that the movement will help the picture. "The audience will like it better because it's not perfect. The 'mistakes' are making it better," he maintained.

At the end of our discussion, Vilmos casually mentioned that he always tries to shoot so that even with flashing all the negative would print at about the same printer light. "If you just try to control the gamma, and not worry about matching the density from shot to shot, the change in printer light will mess you up," he said.

Skip Nicholson goes into greater detail on that point: "Because flashing adds another variable, it is vital for the cinematographer to maintain very accurate scene-to-scene exposures. Since an entire roll is flashed without consideration for scene-to-scene changes, any great degree of exposure variation will cause an increase or decrease in the desired flashing effect. Whereas an unflashed negative can be timed scene-to-scene and thus produce a uniform final print, the flashed negative can appear to 'bounce' if scene-to-scene correction of density is too great. A one-half-stop variation should be considered the maximum to produce the most pleasing result. Vilmos's ability to maintain this scene-to-scene consistency enabled us to do as good a job as we did."

In this respect he compared Vilmos's work to Gordon Willis's on *The Godfather*. "Our answer print on *The Godfather* for Gordon was a one-light print. Now that's consistency. And Vilmos is very consistent also."

He went on to emphasise that because of this and other personal factors, what Vilmos did on *The Long Goodbye* is applicable only to him, and to his work, and is not directly transferable to the work of other cameramen. Although in working with Vilmos Technicolor developed some techniques and approaches that may be useful to other cameramen in other situations, he cautions against anyone trying just to imitate the technique without finding out through testing what works well for them.

Zsigmond in turn has nothing but praise for Technicolor and the help they gave him. Together they've created a highly original and unusual look for *The Long Goodbye* that should make it one of the more interesting visual experiences this year.
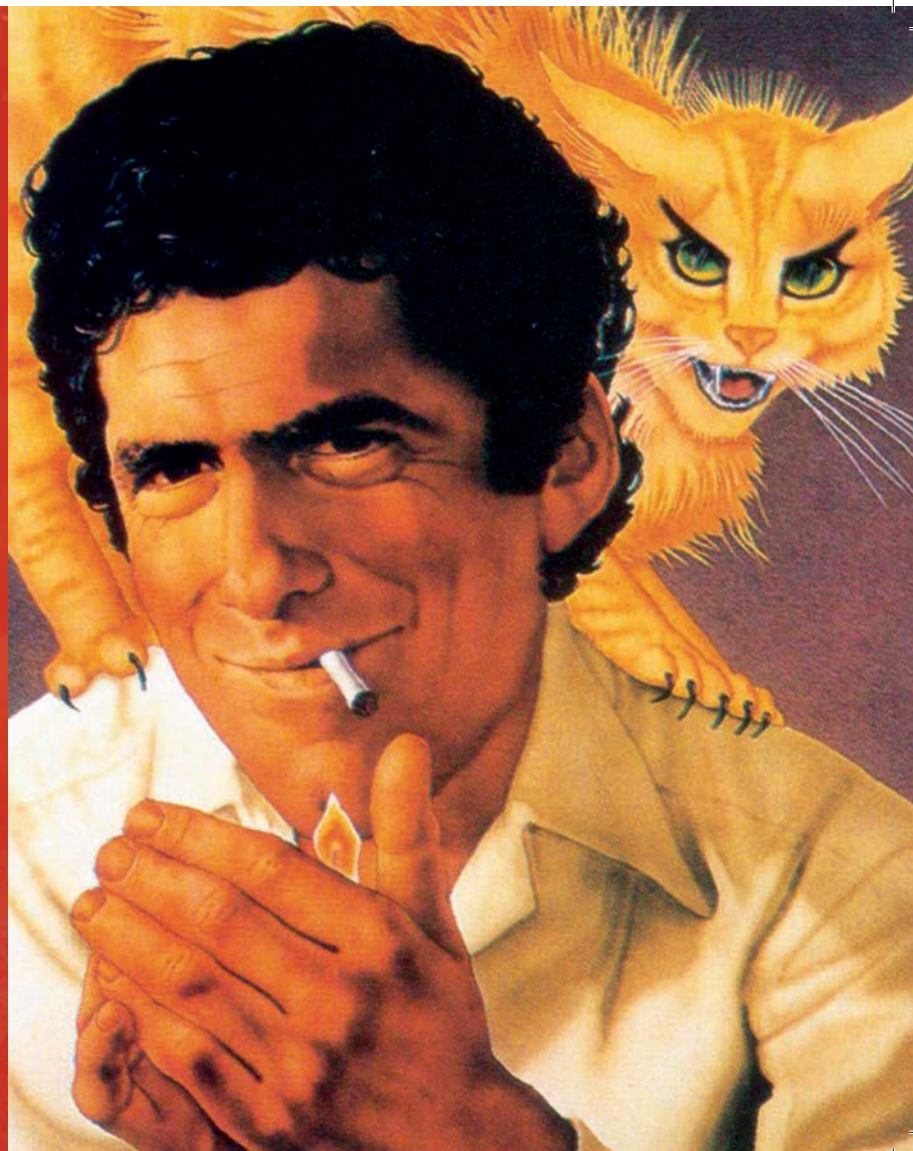
PROJECTIONIST'S NOTE

The Long Goodbye was shot in 35mm Panavision, an anamorphic widescreen system with an aspect ratio of 2.35:1. This has been respected by this Arrow Academy edition, and the black bars at the top and bottom of the image are perfectly normal.

36

ABOUT THE TRANSFER

The Long Goodbye is presented in its original aspect ratio of 2.35:1 with mono 1.0 sound. The HD master for *The Long Goodbye* was made available from MGM via Hollywood Classics. The film was transferred from the original 35mm Interpositive held by MGM. Colour grading was performed by Paul Schramm at Todd-AO Video in Hollywood, CA. Director of Photography Vilmos Zsigmond provided detailed colour notes so the master could better match the original intended look from 1973, resulting in an overall emphasis on muted, desaturated colours with very low contrast. This look, which is maintained on Arrow's Blu-ray edition, is correct and true to the film's original theatrical release. Yvonne Medrano managed the process for MGM Technical Services.

Additional picture restoration was supervised by James White and completed at Deluxe Digital Cinema - EMEA, London.

Digital Restoration Artists:
Tom Barrett, Clayton Baker, Dana O'Reilly
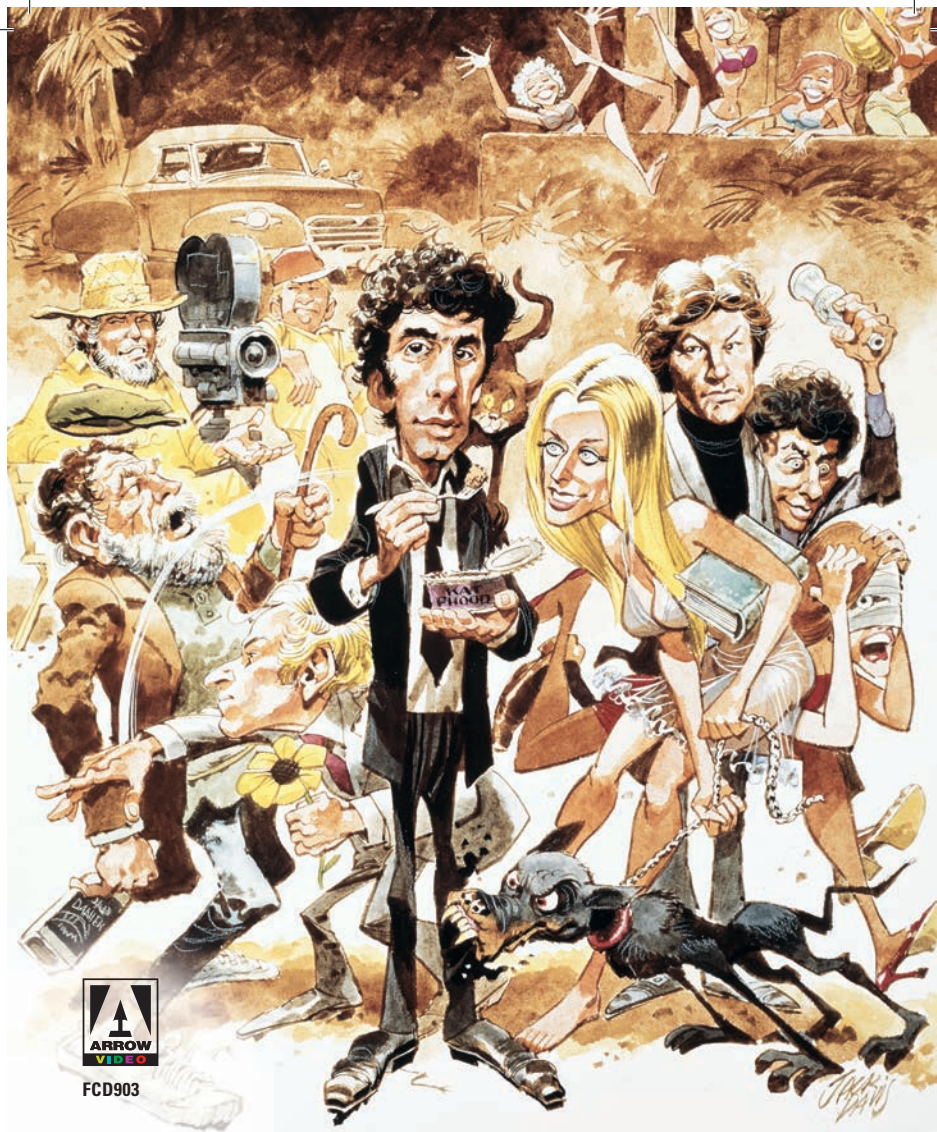
Deluxe Management:
Mark Bonnici, Graham Jones

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and booklet produced by: MICHAEL BROOKE
Executive Producer: FRANCESCO SIMEONI
Production Assistant: LOUISE BUCKLER
QC and Proofing: MICHAEL BROOKE, ANTHONY NIELD
Authoring: DAVID MACKENZIE
Subtitling: IBF DIGITAL
Artist: JAY SHAW
Design: JACK PEMBERTON

SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, Daniel Bird, Michael Connelly, Scott Grossman, Elliott Gould, Maxim Jakubowski, Paul Joyce, Terrill Lankford, Sigrid Larsen, Alistair Leach, David Mackenzie, Tony Macklin, Neil McGlone, Robert Medl, Jon Robertson, Jennifer Rome, Brad Stevens, Melanie Tebb, David Thompson, Tom Williams