



Photo courtesy of Adam Rose

# The past and future of the classic film

By: Ray Luo

**T**urner Classic Movies' second annual Classic Film Festival is a movie-lover's dream come true, and Asian American viewers and talent are taking notice.

Classic Film Festival is a celebration of newly restored Hollywood and foreign classics, complete with discussions with filmmakers and performers who can illuminate the times and situations surrounding the creation of various featured films. On Friday, April 29, Kirk Douglas was in person to talk with host Robert Osborne about the production of "Spartacus."

Clips from Douglas's One-Man Show were shown on the big screen. In that clip, the older Kirk Douglas tells the younger Kirk Douglas to go away when it is revealed that he is just too haughty. Douglas and Osborne were a delight for all, including a sizeable crowd of Asian and Asian American viewers.

"The presence of movie directors and moviemakers gave us a great insight into the [the ways movies are made], from the original idea to the final product," said Ting Liu, an exchange student from Hong Kong at UCLA who attended the film fest for the first time. "It was a delight to see some of the great works in the movie [genre] for the first time."

Liu and the audience were sent into riotous laughter following a description of a the scene in "Goldfinger." In particular, Meskin's retelling of the moment where, feeling the need for "man talk" with Felix Leiter, his British colleague, Sean Connery slaps the buttock of a lady with whom he was intimate.

Liu referred to one of the moviemakers Warren Beatty, whose conversation with Alec Baldwin was one of the highlights of the festival. During that discussion following a showing of the very long film, "Reds," Beatty joked that he only

agreed to participate because Baldwin had agreed to star in Beatty's next film; a four hour and twenty-five minute vehicle with two characters, both played by Baldwin, who was to work without pay.

One of the most insightful topics to come up during the conversation is the nature of directing oneself when one is also the lead performer in a film.

"It can't be done," said Beatty, the 1981 Academy Award-winning director of Reds; a film about Communist activist and journalist John Silas "Jack" Reed. "Because the job is to be out of control, as an actor, but the job of the director is to be in control. A little bit out of control of [being] in control because you want to go with the actor, and the actor has to be a little bit in control of being out of control."

Aspiring filmmakers beware next time a small budget calls for putting oneself in film.

“Character is plot,” said Beatty, who applauded Diane Keaton’s performance as the personality who formed the plot. “I would not have made the movie without her, or would have made an entirely different film.”

Baldwin, the host, was impeccable. One of his most provocative questions was how Beatty’s relationship with the woman in the film affects the filming process.

“It’s very hard to meet someone [for the first time on film] you already know [personally],” said Beatty, who elicited a gasp of profundity from the crowd.

For Asian filmmakers and audiences, the festival was a gem of insight into the workings of the Hollywood industry, as well as into some of the most influential filmmakers and performers who ever graced Hollywood.

“As Asian Americans, we will be able to make use of the media to voice out our stories and thoughts,” said Ting. “It is an introduction to the classics of the past adapted to [our digital age].”

Even in showing his most acclaimed work, Beatty forecasts the future of movie-making and movie-watching. What do Beatty and Baldwin think are on the horizon? Variable ticket pricing and watching “Lawrence of Arabia” on one’s iPod.

“The car chases used to require a buildup,” said Beatty, who describes a different way of filmmaking for our more demanding current times. “Now if there’s a buildup to a car chase, you go to the refrigerator—there is no captive audience.”

For Asian Americans at the forefront of the digital revolution, the classics cannot be ignored. They teach us what we need to know about filmmaking and reveal how the ways of the past will be applied to the films of the future.



Photo courtesy of Mathieu Young



Photo courtesy of Adam Rose