

TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

AN ONGOING SERIES OF CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY FILMS PRESENTED IN 35MM BY THE YALE FILM STUDY CENTER

SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 21, 2014
7:00PM • WHITNEY
HUMANITIES CENTER

NOTHING BUT A MAN

PRESENTED WITH SUPPORT FROM
PAUL L. JOSKOW '70 M.PHIL., '72 PH.D.



On June 11, 1963, in a televised speech, President John F. Kennedy informed the nation that he was sending a major Civil Rights Act to Congress. The next day, Medgar Evers, an African American activist, was shot to death in Jackson, Mississippi. On August 28, an estimated 300,000 people marched on Washington, D.C., where Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his "I Have a Dream" address. On September 15, four young girls were killed by a bomb in a Birmingham, Alabama church. During that tumultuous summer, Michael Roemer directed a landmark film about a black couple's search for respect in the face of oppression and bigotry in the South. "Nothing But a Man" encompasses issues of race, class, gender, work, marriage, and parenthood in dramatic, often heart-wrenching ways that are specific to the story's time and place — and yet are universally meaningful. The U.S. premiere was at the 2nd New York Film Festival on September 19, 1964. Tonight we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of this groundbreaking work, and we honor its director, Michael Roemer.



THE FILMMAKERS: Michael Roemer was born in Berlin in 1928. At the age of eleven he escaped the Nazis, via Kindertransport, to England, and in 1945 he came to the United States, where he attended Harvard University. His college classmate Robert M. Young (born in 1924, in New York City) would become his film-making partner. By the time they teamed up for "Nothing But a Man," both had made documentaries (Roemer for producer Louis de Rochemont; Young for NBC, including a 1960 program on the sit-in movement). Young went on to direct documentaries as well as award-winning narrative films such as "Short Eyes" (1977), "Alambrista!" (1977), and "The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez" (1982). Roemer made, among other films, an acclaimed comedy, "The Plot Against Harry" (1969; released in 1989), and the compelling documentary "Dying" (1976). As a faculty member in Yale's School of Art and American Studies Program since 1966, he has inspired generations of students with his courses in filmmaking and film history.

Nº. 3

DIRECTED BY **MICHAEL ROEMER** (1964) 92 MIN.
PRODUCED AND WRITTEN BY **ROBERT M. YOUNG**
AND **MICHAEL ROEMER**
CINEMATOGRAPHY BY **ROBERT M. YOUNG**
RELEASED BY **CINEMA V**

STARRING **IVAN DIXON, ABBEY LINCOLN,**
JULIUS HARRIS, GLORIA FOSTER, MARTIN PRIEST,
LEONARD PARKER, AND YAPHET KOTTO

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THE FILMING: Professor Roemer says that their approach to "Nothing But a Man" was to draw political implications from a personal drama: "We thought that the most powerful, useful statement would be a human one." He drew from his experience in Germany, particularly the loss of pride caused by economic deprivation: "If you're unemployed you don't feel like you're a man." He said that Duff and Josie conveyed aspects of himself, and that liberal white filmmakers from the North could be the channels for a story about the oppression and the need to regain dignity on the part of blacks in the South. With the help of the N.A.A.C.P. and others, Roemer and Young traveled through Alabama, South Carolina, and Mississippi for three months, researching their script by living with black families. Because they thought that the presentation of racism might be too volatile to film in the South, they simulated Alabama locations in and around Cape May and Atlantic City, N.J. The settings were so believable that Time Magazine praised "the ghastly reality of the Birmingham slums." The soundtrack of the film is also noteworthy for its inclusion of a number of Motown recordings, well before "found music" became common in American films. The two principal stars often expressed great enthusiasm about "Nothing But a Man." Ivan Dixon commented, "That's the picture that justifies my entire relation to the film industry." Abbey Lincoln said, "If it hadn't been for Michael Roemer, who would have told it? These stories could be told by many people, but it's only those who really are lovers of the arts who do it. They don't care what color your skin is."

DID YOU KNOW: NOTHING BUT A MAN IS OFTEN CITED AS MALCOLM X'S FAVORITE FILM. ON FEBRUARY 18, 1965, JUST THREE DAYS BEFORE HIS ASSASSINATION, MALCOLM X WAS WALKING IN NEW YORK AND HAPPENED TO ENCOUNTER THE ACTOR WHO PLAYED DUFF'S FATHER IN THE FILM. HE SAID TO HIM, "YOU'RE JULIUS HARRIS. I SAW NOTHING BUT A MAN. I REALLY LIKED IT!"

NEXT UP: HAPPY HALLOWEEN! COME CELEBRATE WITH THE FILM STUDY CENTER AS WE PRESENT GUILLERMO DEL TORO'S MASTERFUL AND MOVING PORTRAIT OF LIFE IN FRANCO'S SPAIN, **PAN'S LABYRINTH**, ON FRIDAY, OCTOBER 31 AT 7:00 P.M.