

YFA TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

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

SUNDAY
OCTOBER 8, 2017
2:00PM • WHITNEY
HUMANITIES CENTER

FAST, CHEAP & OUT OF CONTROL

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



"This is all done from memory. You know what an animal looks like, and so you just start making the animal."

— *George Mendonça, topiary gardener*

"People just come and look. They're looking to see if there's a common ground. They're constantly trying to find themselves in another social animal."

— *Ray Mendez, mole-rat specialist*

"If you're not scared of them, you're in big trouble."

— *Dave Hoover, wild animal trainer*

"If you analyze it too much, life becomes meaningless."

— *Rodney Brooks, robot scientist*

"I like the idea of making films about ostensibly absolutely nothing. I like the irrelevant, the tangential, the sidebar excursion to nowhere that suddenly becomes revelatory. That's what all my movies are about."

— *Errol Morris, filmmaker*

When Morris made that statement in 1989, he was referring to *GATES OF HEAVEN*; *VERNON, FLORIDA*; and *THE THIN BLUE LINE*. Contrary to his pronouncement, he would go on to make films about decidedly major subjects (Stephen Hawking, *A BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME*; Robert McNamara, *THE FOG OF WAR*; Donald Rumsfeld, *THE UNKNOWN KNOWN*; Abu Ghraib prison, *STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE*). However, *FAST, CHEAP & OUT OF CONTROL* *could* be viewed as an example of "the tangential, a sidebar excursion to nowhere that suddenly becomes revelatory."

The excursion takes us into the unusual occupations/obsessions of four men, who are interviewed separately and do not meet, but who magically interact through Morris's clever editing of images, words, and music. There is no omniscient narration: each man tells his own story. They look directly into the camera lens, and yet are able to have virtual eye contact with Morris, thanks to the director's patented invention, the "interrotron" (a portmanteau combining "interview" and "terror"), consisting of a teleprompter-like apparatus of cameras and mirrors. The interrotron, which debuted here and is now widely utilized in the film industry, makes the relationships between Morris and his subjects seem very intimate, even though the director never appears on screen and is heard only once (speaking five words).

As one would expect, each man's comments are juxtaposed with shots of that man at work. More frequently, though, Morris combines one person's narration with another's occupation, or with scenes inspired by thematic or visual free association, including cartoons, circus acts, and clips from B-movies such as *KING OF JUNGLELAND*, *THE DEADLY MANTIS*, and *ZOMBIES OF THE STRATOSPHERE*. He orchestrates a dazzling variety of techniques (including canted camera angles, slow motion, and fast motion) and formats (from elegant 35mm to home-movie 8mm, from rich color to grainy black-and-white). The result is a surrealist collage (or four-ring circus), which reveals surprising commonalities among the disparate pursuits, and which is by turns—and often simultaneously—quirky, funny, disturbing, enlightening, thrilling, and poignant.

FAST, CHEAP & OUT OF CONTROL premiered in the U.S. at the New York Film Festival, almost exactly 20 years ago, on September 30, 1997. In that day's *New York Times*, Janet Maslin wrote, "Morris remains a one-of-a-kind filmmaker capable of melding science, philosophy, poetry and sheer whimsy into an elaborate meditation on mankind's mysteries... he imaginatively weaves together his speakers' ideas to achieve a much larger overview than any of them achieves individually, and to make haunting connections among man, beast and machine. He starts simply and builds to unexpected metaphysical heights."

DID YOU KNOW: THE FILM'S TITLE COMES FROM A 1989 PAPER BY RODNEY BROOKS, HYPOTHESIZING THAT IT WOULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE TO SEND 100 TINY ROBOTS TO MARS INSTEAD OF ONE LARGE ROBOT, ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT IF SOME ROBOTS MALFUNCTIONED, MANY WOULD REMAIN TO CONTINUE THE EXPLORATION. THE PAPER WAS TITLED "FAST, CHEAP AND OUT OF CONTROL: A ROBOT INVASION OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM."

NEXT UP: THE SEARING 2009 FRENCH DRAMA *UN PROPHÈTE*, DIRECTED BY JACQUES AUDIARD (*THE BEAT THAT MY HEART SKIPPED*), ABOUT A YOUNG FRANCO-ARAB MAN WHO FINDS HIMSELF ENTANGLED WITH THE CORSICAN MOB BEHIND BARS, SCREENS IN 35MM ON **SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12 AT 2:00 PM.**



WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY **ERROL MORRIS**

CINEMATOGRAPHY BY **ROBERT RICHARDSON**

(1997) 82 MINS.

WITH **GEORGE MENDONÇA, RAY MENDEZ, DAVE HOOVER, AND RODNEY BROOKS**

MUSIC BY **CALEB SAMPSON**