

Now this *is* a great idea for a book: 35 directors, ranging from old-school (Peter Bogdanovich, John Waters, Henry Jaglom, Arthur Hiller) to cutting-edge (Rian Johnson, Phil Lord, Antonio Campos) are queried to recommend what the Chicago Review Press publicists dub “guilty pleasures, almost-masterpieces and undeniable classics in need of a revival.” Indeed, the title of this book suggests a treasure trove of under-the-radar gems that movie lovers need to seek out.

However, either Robert K. Elder forgot the concept of his project, or his A-list line-up ignored the initial request. As a result, anyone with even a desultory knowledge of film history will be more than a little familiar with many of the productions cited here.

For instance, Kevin Smith speaks at great depth over the *A Man for All Seasons*, absurdly insisting that “nobody remembers” this Fred Zinnemann classic won the Best Picture Oscar for 1966. Two Orson Welles films are cited (Henry Jaglom speaks about *F for Fake* while Frank Oz talks up *The Trial*), and well-known works such as *Trouble in Paradise*, *Ugetsu*, *Some Came Running*, *The Swimmer*, *The Honeymoon Killers*, *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*, *Breaking Away* and *Killer Klowns from Outer Space* are also in the spotlight.

Fortunately, roughly half of the directors surveyed for the book managed to talk up elusive and obscure works that truly fit Elder’s parameters. Guillermo del Toro’s advocacy of Pupi Avati’s *Arcane Sorcerer*, Phil Lord’s praise for Trent Harris’ *The Beaver Trilogy*, Steve James’ discussion of the Chris Marker documentary *Le joli mai* and Sean Durkin’s championing of Richard Fleischer’s *10 Rillington Place* offers an invigorating conversation of seriously overlooked masterworks. There is also a pair of American Film Theatre features – Peter Hall’s adaptation of *The Homecoming* and John Frankenheimer’s take on *The Iceman Cometh* – that pays proper tribute to that innovative independent film series.

And, ultimately, the book’s faults are happily overlooked thanks to the jolly interview with John Waters, who speaks glowingly of the 1968 Joseph Losey atrocity *Boom!* Waters recalls meeting Elizabeth Taylor and telling her with complete sincerity how much he loved that film – which left the star greatly confused. “She was just stupefied that somebody liked that movie,” he said, adding that he had to convince the star how much he loved the production. Really, how can anyone top *that* anecdote?

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