

view. It came basically through Sean.

Q. Do young actors come to you for advice?

A. Sometimes—and I find this amusing—I hear things like, “They’re so impressed that you’re here.” I find it so bizarre, I can’t connect with it.

I see a lot of good actors around. Daniel Roebuck from *River’s Edge* is a good actor, and he’s only 22. We had a great time. I liked *River’s Edge* a lot. I don’t want to give a rating to the films we’ve discussed, but I find it’s among the best. It’s not my best work—I don’t like the way my performance was edited in it. But the film is unique, and real frightening. I find it scarier than *Blue Velvet*. *Blue Velvet* lets you off. You get some humor once in a while where you can breathe and say, “Well, it’s a movie.” There’s something about *River’s Edge* that gets me. The apathy of the characters I find really scary. [The film depicts what happens to a close-knit group of kids when one of them reveals he has murdered his girlfriend.]

Q. So how do you like all the attention you’ve been getting?

A. Since *Hoosiers* opened, people have been coming up to me and saying, “I loved you in that movie.” And I can see from their faces that it’s not *Blue Velvet* they’re talking about. People come up and say “That movie” about *Blue Velvet*, too, but they have fear in their eyes. If they reach out at all, it’s with somebody in front of them. They peer around and say, “God, you were great in that movie.”

Q. You must feel a little better.

A. Hey, I feel a lot better. It’s better just to be talked about.

A YEAR AGO, Dennis Hopper was planning to sit down and prepare his autobiography. Mention it to him now and he blanches and withdraws. “I just felt that I couldn’t do it,” he says at last. “I mean, I’d have to deal with drug dealing, relationships, guns, etc. It’s just not the time for me to look at that. I’d much rather work.” A hopeful smile comes over him. “I don’t feel at this time that it would be conducive to my career!” He laughs a boyish laugh. “Or healthy.”

There is no doubt that someday biographies will get written about the long, strange trip of Dennis Hopper. Like John Barrymore, his life is the stuff of legends. But unlike Barrymore, who was resolute in his embrace of oblivion, Hopper is showing that a living legend can keep on living. Even with all that past, he can still look for a future. ★

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BOB RAFELSON

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6th, and Fox needs prints three weeks ahead of that. And still there’s more music to be recorded and several more reels of the picture for which the last subliminal subtleties of sound must be mixed, the ones where death sounds like sex if you close your eyes.

The director and the composer, Bob Rafelson and Michael Small, are too weary to go home, gazing out on where, so recently, a 50-piece orchestra was recording chunks of Small’s very complex, emotional music beneath a screen where the work-print images of Debra Winger and Theresa Russell went back and forth, pursuing one another on a Puget Sound ferry, then prowling around some unspoken tension on a cliff in Hawaii.

Only Small, conducting his own music, could really see the screen, fitting his own beat to the narrative pulse. By February, it will all be beautiful, married, perfect—and ours. Now it is the makers’ precious project still, and though they are tired they can dream of ways of making it better tomorrow, or the next day, until time runs out.

“Don’t you just love it,” groans Small, looking out at the littered studio, nearly abandoned by musicians who came in at six and did wonders with a score they’d never seen before, taking their proper breaks every hour, gathering over coffee with stories of Ravel and Joan Rivers, and then diligently contributing their bits and pieces to the passion on the screen.

“There’s a moment making any film,” says Rafelson, “when you don’t want to go home. You don’t want it to end.”

HOW MANY TIMES CAN that moment come in a life like Bob Rafelson’s, a life in which he will have alarmed himself and frightened loved ones with the realization that nothing else mattered, or matters, to him as much as a movie? He estimated once that he could see how in a full career he might make just ten pictures. He is 52 now, and *Black Widow* is only his sixth. Maybe the total begins to look like nine, for there has been a seven-year gap between this film and Rafelson’s last, the Jack Nicholson-Jessica Lange version of *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. Seven years waiting for the all-out effort and passion. Seven years watching the business make its pictures.

What does such a gap connote? Certainly not idleness or mere relaxation; definitely not the performance of *Postman*. It didn’t do as well as was expected in 1980, yet it is regarded much

more favorably today. The VCR has had this great benefit for good films: it provides time to be felt and absorbed.

No, Rafelson has made no films because nothing worked out exactly right, or at least the 85 percent level that a battered perfectionist holds to. You don’t have to explain to him that that’s a shame: his belligerent, amused face knows it, and the passion every seven years or so wouldn’t be what it is without the towering force of impatience, rage and desire to work that is always building. But Rafelson doesn’t do just anything—certainly anything trite just to keep working—nor will he do other people’s projects. Eight years ago, he was fired from *Brubaker* because the studio wanted him to make the movie their way. Ironically, that studio was Fox. The front office is all changed now—indeed, it’s people like Rafelson, with their yearning, intransigent natures, who persist and abide, odd pillars of a strange business. And this time Fox has been supportive. In the end, the difficult people develop a stamina no one else can match.

Not that the outsider doesn’t appreciate being inside—in a state-of-the-art dubbing theater. Rafelson looks forward to only ten big American movies because he has both the will of the outsider and a mix of old-fashioned show biz in him: charm, guile, stubbornness and (if necessary) self-destructiveness that can say to a studio, OK, guys, what I would like is your \$11 million, or your \$15 million, or maybe even your \$21 million, so I can make this thing, this little bit of terrific, and I would appreciate making it my way, so that it will require a miracle of grace on your part (and I know you can do it). OK?

More or less—85 percent—the deal works. But it leaves the artist very tired from having to be a con man. While all the bits and pieces of the movie are coming together, Rafelson has to reconcile the solitariness of creation with the collaborative chaos of movie-making, not to mention the infinite needs of the corporate structure. He cannot simply refuse the calls from the Fox publicity people asking if he will pose for a possible magazine cover just when he’s judging whether to retard this sound effect by four frames or six and working with a genius sound mixer, Don Bassman, who happens to do his work while he smokes 55 cigarettes a day, so that the artistic integrity of Bob Rafelson is having also to decide whether to give up giving up smoking.

THE HOLLYWOOD outsider cannot be defined simply, or sentimentally. Like the natural American, he wants liberty and the power and glory. Bob Rafelson