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American Film Institute on Love, Banishes James Dean from List of Nominees

University of Dayton

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AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE FOCUSES ON LOVE, BANISHES JAMES DEAN FROM LIST OF NOMINEES

DAYTON, Ohio — It’s happened. James Dean, formerly shorthand for the eternal rebellious hellion who frightened parents, inspired teen boys and beckoned teen girls to fall in love with him, has disappeared from the popular culture arena.

“It shocked me that on a list of 400 films, not one of the James Dean films was listed,” said Tony Macklin, film historian and juror in the American Film Institute’s latest effort to define the “best of” movies. “Rebel Without a Cause, Giant, East of Eden — all were love stories. With Rebel, I challenge anyone to come up with a better film about teen-age love.”

For the AFI’s list of greatest love stories, Rebel Without a Cause was one of the write-in votes by Macklin, who taught film and English classes at the University of Dayton for 38 years and founded and edited the academic journal Film Heritage from 1965 to 1978.

The television special 100 Years ... 100 Passions, the fifth in the AFI series celebrating the centennial of American cinema, will air June 11 on CBS.

Macklin also wrote in director Sam Peckinpah’s Ballad of Cable Hogue, and picked Casablanca, Doctor Zhivago, Notorious and Vertigo from the list of 400 films supplied with his American Film Institute ballot.

“Great love stories are often about lost love,” Macklin says. “Alfred Hitchcock was a master of suspense, but he was also a master of lost love and sacrifice for love. Notorious is about a commitment to love because Cary Grant goes to rescue Ingrid Bergman from the clutches of the Nazis and Claude Raines gives up his life because of his commitment to love, so the film is very clever on the dualities of love. Vertigo is where commitment becomes obsession. Casablanca, directed by Michael Curtiz, is about commitment to love but sacrificing that love.

“With Doctor Zhivago, David Lean is a great director making a great film about lost love.”

The lesser-known Ballad of Cable Hogue made Macklin’s cut because “it’s a lyrical poem, the softest, brightest side of Sam. Sam was master of the Western, and he was also known for

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the violence in his films. But this makes a beautiful Western. *Cable* is about an old prospector, played by Jason Robards, who falls in love with a prostitute, played by Stella Stevens. She moves out to his claim, but then she leaves him and goes to San Francisco. She comes back at the end and it looks like they will be together, but then he dies. It's a ballad of love."

Peckinpah, along with Hitchcock, John Wayne and Edith Head, was one of the 1970s-era film icons Macklin interviewed for *Film Heritage*. He collected 23 interviews, which included material never before published, and released *Voices from the Set* (Scarecrow Press) in 2000.

He appreciates current cinema, too, but knows contemporary directors are not as interested in exploring love stories.

"*Spider-man* is a blockbuster, but in some significant way it's also a love story," Macklin said. "It's a love story that has a broad audience and broad appeal and lasting value — because (director) Sam Raimi humanized the characters, and as soon as you humanize the characters, you open the door to love. Love still makes the movie world go 'round."

There are love stories that Macklin avoids: "The ones I like least are when Barbra Streisand falls in love with herself."

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