



# doc films



A STUDENT-RUN ORGANIZATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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## **Doc Films: At a Glance**

**SEASON:** Doc Films screens movies every night of the week during the fall, winter and spring quarters. During the summer it screens four movies per week.

**TYPE OF ORGANIZATION:** Doc is an organization staffed completely by student volunteers. Students sell tickets, run shows, program series, project and serve on the board.

**NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS:** around 150

**LOCATION:** Max Palevsky Cinema, Ida Noyes Hall, 1212 East 59th Street, Chicago, IL 60637.

**PROJECTION EQUIPMENT:** two Simplex 35mm projectors with Christie xenon lamphouses, one Eastman 25 16mm projector, and a (brand new) HIGHlite 8000Dsx+ made by Digital Projection Inc, throwing 8000 ANSI Lumens and contrast ratio of 2000:1

## Doc Films: Past and Present

Doc Films is on record with the Museum of Modern Art as the longest continuously running student film society in the nation. The organization was founded in December 1940 as the International House Documentary Film Group, though its antecedents stretch back to 1932. Initially the group focused on “the realist study of our time via nonfiction film,” but the documentary alone could not sustain the organization; within a few years, the group’s programs expanded to include fiction and experimental films, a mixture that it maintains to this day.

Providing an unquestioned resource to the University of Chicago and wider city community, Doc Films screens movies every night of the academic year, often showing movies that would not be shown elsewhere. Dedicated to providing a low-cost, high-quality venue for artistic, relevant and socially important domestic and international movies, Doc currently shows films at the Max Palevsky Cinema, 1212 East 59th Street. The theater is named after Max Palevsky, whose generous gift allowed Doc to build and operate a state-of-the-art cinema.

The cinema boasts two Simplex 35mm projectors with Christie xenon lamphouses, one Eastman 25 16mm projector, and a brand new HIGHlite 8000Dsx+ made by Digital Projection Inc, throwing 8000 ANSI Lumens and contrast ratio of 2000:1. The projectors' variable speed and full aperture lens allow Doc Films to present silent films in the closest approximation to their original exhibition. The theater's Dolby Digital and Digital Theater Systems (dts) audio systems meet the highest standards in digital sound.

Doc Films's outstanding equipment is matched by its rich and colorful programming. Students develop programming themes for each quarter of the academic calendar, dedicating one night a week to a particular theme. One recent series presented a tantalizing selection of German Expressionist films from the Munich Filmmuseum. Other series have showcased the diverse national cinemas of Iran, Canada, China, Mexico, and France or tackled subjects like feminism and human rights. Doc has unearthed and presented genre treasures—silent westerns, anarchist comedies, zombie cinema, naughty one-reelers. Recent retrospectives have examined the works of Spike Lee, James Wong Howe, Jean-Luc Godard, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Erich von Stroheim, Graham Greene, John Ford, Preston Sturges, Powell and Pressburger, Satyajit Ray, and Hou Hsiao-Hsien. Doc also routinely shows prints from some of the country’s leading film archives—including the Library of Congress, UCLA, and Harvard.

Many film directors, familiar and obscure, have visited Doc to present films and lead discussions. Alfred Hitchcock, John Ford, Nicholas Ray, Joseph Losey, Samuel Fuller, Josef von Sternberg, Jerry Lewis, George Cukor, Maya Deren, Stan Brakhage, Otto Preminger, Fritz Lang, Howard Hawks, G.W. Pabst, Frederick Wiseman, Guy Maddin, Terrence Malick, Harold Ramis, Michael Powell, John Milius and Woody Allen have led discussions and answered questions about their films. A number of notable critics have also graced Doc’s stage—including Andrew Sarris, Jonathan Rosenbaum, David Thomson, Fred Camper, Peter Wollen, Gerald Mast, Pauline Kael, Robin Wood, and Arthur Knight. And over the decades Doc has hosted an astonishing number of Chicago premieres, giving the city its

first glimpse of such masterpieces as *The Rules of the Game*, *An Autumn Afternoon*, *Au hasard Balthazar*, *The Loyal 47 Ronin*, *Masculin-Feminin*, and countless underground landmarks by Andy Warhol and others.

Volunteering for Doc has led several former students to careers in filmmaking and film criticism. Former members include Ernest Callenbach, founding editor of *Film Quarterly*; Gordon Quinn and Gerald Temaner, co-founders of Kartemquin Films (*Hoop Dreams*, *Golub*, *Home for Life*); Terry Curtis Fox, a playwright and former movie critic for the *Village Voice*; Dave Kehr, former film critic for the *Chicago Reader* and current columnist at the *New York Times*; Henry Sheehan, Los Angeles Film Critics Association President; and filmmakers Aaron Lipstadt (*City Limits*, *Android*) and Myron Meisel (*It's All True: Based on an Unfinished Film by Orson Welles*).

Perhaps Doc is best encapsulated by our entry in "The Film Snob's Dictionary":

The film society of the University of Chicago, founded in 1932 as the Documentary Film Group. Hard-core beyond words and lay comprehension, the society is populated by 19-year olds who have already seen every film ever made, and boasts its own Dolby Digital-equipped cinema and an impressive roster of alumni that includes Snob-revered critic Dave Kehr.

- *Vanity Fair*, "The Film Snob's Dictionary," March 2004, p. 332

The students who run Doc Films hope to reach a wide-ranging audience, from film aficionados to casual moviegoers, by cultivating and facilitating an excitement for the study of film. Their mission is to nurture and inspire future writers, filmmakers, and creative artists to tackle the professional world of cinema.

## Premieres at Doc

Doc has long been a leading forum for new and groundbreaking films. In addition to hosting the Chicago premier of *Brokeback Mountain* (with director Ang Lee and writer James Schamus in attendance) Doc has hosted the Chicago premiers of films that are now mainstays in the canon—including major works by Godard, Ozu, Renoir and Mizoguchi. The following is a list of notable Chicago premieres Doc has hosted:

### Michelangelo Antonioni & Federico Fellini

*L' Amore in città* (4/18/1962)

### Robert Bresson

*Au hasard Balthazar* (2/26/1971)

### Luis Buñuel

*Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (4/27/1975)

### Claude Chabrol

*La Rupture* (5/24/1975)

*Line of Demarcation* (5/15/1970)

### Jean Cocteau

*Blood of a Poet* (2/17/1951)

### Aleksandr Dovzhenko

*Schors* (2/10/1944)

### Rainer Werner Fassbinder

*Satan's Brew* (4/20/1978)

*Lili Marleen* (10/9/1982)

### Robert Flaherty

*The Land* (6/29/1942)

### Samuel Fuller

*Dead Pigeon on Beethoven Street* (5/12/1976)

### Jean-Luc Godard

*Band of Outsiders* (2/11/1967)

*Sympathy for the Devil* (2/6-2/7/1970) —

American premier

*Wind from the East* (10/18/1970)

*Le Gai Savoir* (4/25/1971)

*Vladimir and Rosa* (4/9/1972)

*Masculin-Feminin* (10/5/1976)

### Richard Lester

*The Bed-Sitting Room* (11/08/1970)

### Chris Marker

*Le Joli Mai* (5/5/1967)

### Kenji Mizoguchi

*The 47 Ronin Part I* (5/23/1976)

*The 47 Ronin Part II* (5/30/1976)

### Yasujiro Ozu

*An Autumn Afternoon* (10/31/1975)

*I was Born But...* (5/9/1976)

*There Was a Father* (5/11/1975)

*The Only Son* (11/2/1975)

### Pier Paolo Pasolini

*Medea* (4/7/1972)

### Satyajit Ray

*Middleman* (3/4/1979)

### Jean Renoir

*The Rules of the Game* (3/3/1951)

*La Marseillaise* (4/22/1969)

### Alain Resnais

*Muriel* (4/7/1967)

*Night and Fog* (11/10/1962)

### Lionel Rogosin

*Come Back, Africa* (3/2/1962)

### Alain Tanner

*Le milieu du Monde* (11/29/1975)

### Bertrand Tavernier

*Let Joy Reign Supreme* (1/28/1978)

### Paul Verhoven

*Soldier of Orange* (1/24/1982)

### Andy Warhol

*Nude Restaurant* (5/8/1968)

*Bike Boy* (10/4/1968)

\*\*\*\* (4/16/1969)

*Fuck* (4/8/1970)

## Notable Alumni

*Doc has produced a number of prominent alumni who have extended their love of the cinema to their professional lives. Here are a few, in alphabetical order:*

**Jerry Blumenthal** • co-founder of Kartemquin films

**Ernest Callenbach** • founder and editor of *Film Quarterly*; novelist; former film editor, the University of California Press

**Don Druker** • former film critic, *Chicago Reader*

**Marc Evans** • former president of the Chicago International Film Festival; Vice President of Production, Paramount Studios

**Charles Flynn** • author (with Todd McCarthy) *King of the Bs*

**Terry Curtis Fox** • writer, *Stargate SG-1*, *JAG*

**David Kehr** • film critic, *New York Times*; formerly of the *Chicago Reader*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *New York Daily News*; contributor to *Film Comment*

**Aaron Lipstadt** • director, *Law & Order*

**Mike Mahern** • screenwriter, *Mobsters* (1991); served on the Writers Guild of America

**Myron Meisel** • filmmaker, *It's All True* (1993) & *I'm a Stranger Here Myself* (1974)

**Gordon Quinn** • co-founder of Kartemquin films

**Henry Sheehan** • president Los Angeles Film Critics Society; panelist on NPR's "Film Week"; contributor to NPR's "Fresh Air with Terry Gross"; film critic *The Orange County Register* 1993-2002; writing has appeared in *Sight and Sound*, *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Daily Variety*.

**Gerald Temaner** • co-founder of Kartemquin films

## **Famous Visitors to Doc**

*Over the years, Doc has hosted various luminaries, filmmakers, scholars and actors. Included among them are some of the 20th Century's most important directors and critics:*

### **FILMMAKERS**

Woody Allen  
Stan Brakhage  
George Cukor  
Maya Deren  
John Ford  
Samuel Fuller  
Howard Hawks  
Thom Andersen

Alfred Hitchcock  
Fritz Lang  
Ang Lee  
Jerry Lewis  
Guy Maddin  
Terrence Malick  
John Milius  
Billy Woodberry

G.W. Pabst  
Michael Powell  
Otto Preminger  
Nicholas Ray  
James Schamus  
Josef von Sternberg  
King Vidor  
Darren Aronofsky

### **CRITICS**

Fred Camper  
Gerald Mast  
Pauline Kael

Arthur Knight  
Jonathan Rosenbaum  
Andrew Sarris

David Thomson  
Peter Wollen  
Robin Wood

## Frequently Asked Questions

### *When was Doc Films founded?*

Doc Films traces its roots back to the 1930s. It was formally founded as the International House Documentary Film Group in December 1940, with its first screenings held the following month. ('International House' was dropped from the name by Spring 1941 and eventually the abbreviated Doc Films became the dominant usage.) Doc Films has been a fixture of the University of Chicago campus ever since.

### *Where is Doc Films located?*

Max Palevsky Cinema, 1212 East 59th Street, on the campus of the University of Chicago in Hyde Park. For directions, please visit our website, [docfilms.uchicago.edu](http://docfilms.uchicago.edu).

### *How much does it cost to see a movie at Doc?*

\$5 for an individual screening or \$26 for a quarterly pass, which grants admissions to all regular screenings each quarter—at least 80 films.

### *Who runs Doc Films?*

Doc is run entirely by student volunteers. Volunteers serve on the board, project films, sell tickets, run shows and program calendars.

### *What kind of movies does Doc show?*

Doc shows a wide variety of films—old and new, foreign and American, avant-garde and Hollywood. Our calendar changes every quarter and we generally don't repeat a given film for at least four years.

### *How often does Doc show movies?*

During the Fall, Winter and Spring quarters Doc shows a movie every night, with a double feature on Thursdays, two showings on Wednesdays, three showings on Friday and Saturday nights, and two matinées on Sundays—in total, 15 screenings a week. During the Summer quarter, Doc screens four films a week.

### *When does Doc show movies?*

All weekday screenings begin at 7:00 P.M. The second Wednesday and Thursday shows begin approximately a half hour after the first film ends. Weekend films often start between 6:00 and 7:00 P.M. depending on the length of the feature; they repeat twice, with roughly a half-hour break following each show.

### *How does Doc decide what movies to show?*

Students programmers propose series that focus on a particular director, writer, star, studio, genre, national cinema, historical period, or theme. After several weeks of discussion, the programmers vote on which series would be best for the next quarter's calendar. Weekend movies are selected by ballots given to all Doc volunteers.

### *How many films has Doc Films screened?*

Thousands and thousands. Doc Films has screened a different film every night since the early 1980s, with repeats allowed only every 4 years except in very special cases.



***What is the relationship between Doc and the University?***

Doc Films is a Registered Student Organization (RSO) that operates with a small subsidy from the University; occasionally individual University departments or other outside groups will sponsor a given series, but the vast majority of Doc's operating budget comes from ticket and quarterly pass revenue. The University of Chicago has no oversight over Doc's programming decisions.

***Can most Doc movies be seen elsewhere?***

Often, weekday series at Doc contain films of which only a few prints survive. Recent examples include Fred Halsted's gay porn masterpiece *L.A. Plays Itself* and Maurice Tourneur's *A Girl's Folly*. Doc routinely screens rare prints from the Library of Congress, UCLA Film & Television Archive, Harvard Film Archive, the British Film Institute, and the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research.

***What kind of events does Doc sponsor?***

In the past year Doc has hosted Thom Andersen, who presented his recent film *Los Angeles Plays Itself* and conducted a conversation about its themes after the screening, as well as Darren Aronofsky for a Q&A after a special screening of *The Fountain*. Sony Pictures Classic chief Michael Barker and screenwriter Peter Wollen also came to Doc to present a new print of Michelangelo Antonioni's *The Passenger*—suppressed by its star, Jack Nicholson, for decades.