Introduction

"Not for the past five years has there been any doubt . . . that television has siphoned off the lowbrows and left theatre films on the high ground of art." So began an article by Gideon Bachman in the June 1, 1960 edition of *Variety*.[1] At almost the same time, in his doctoral dissertation written for the Faculty of Political Science at Columbia University, Frederic Stuart described three major impacts of television on Hollywood as the new decade began: 1) the breakup of the major studios had been accelerated; 2) the type of feature film being produced had changed; and 3) new technologies, such as widescreen, had been introduced.[2] From the newsprint of the premier trade tabloid of the entertainment industry to a scholarly treatise being defended at one of the nation's leading universities, the message was clear. As of 1960, the feature film industry in the United States was in the midst of a transition that was proving to be long and difficult. And Hollywood "restored" eventually would be a Hollywood substantially redefined and redirected. From a negative perspective, Hollywood would survive only as a shadow of its former self, absorbed into a corporate structure intent on packaging movies as part of a newly conceived commodity called "leisure," targeted extensively toward the growing adolescent and young adult populations of the industrial world. Viewed more favorably, the Hollywood feature film would reemerge at the end of the 1960s to fill a particular and distinguished niche among the growing range of aesthetic attractions available to increasingly affluent populations around the globe. The false hopes and genuine triumphs, as well as the fitful starts and firm directions of the feature film in the United States from 1960 through 1969, are the subject of the first section of this volume (chapters one through eleven).

There is a broad consensus among film historians that Hollywood experienced a transformation beginning in the late 1940s and the early 1950s that lasted well into the 1970s. There is less agreement, however, on which precise dates delineate the subcategories within this era. To cite several instances of the differences between historians, Gerald Mast offers one timeline (from 1953 to 1977) when Hollywood made a full transition to its redefined place in American culture and society during the "age of television."[3] In another of his books, however, Mast breaks down a similar period into "Hollywood in Transition: 1946–1965," and "Hollywood Renaissance: 1965–1976."[4] Another historian, Jack C. Ellis, dates the beginning of Hollywood's resurgence in 1963, two years earlier than Mast, arguing that this rebirth began with the critic Andrew Sarris's first articulation of the auteur notion of filmmaking that he had imported from France. Ellis maintained that auteurism, by emphasizing that moviemaking was dominated by the artistic vision of individual directors, provided the central mystique of the "New Hollywood."[5] The film historian Thomas Schatz, in contrast, identifies three distinct phases in the American cinema following World War II, each roughly a decade long—from 1946 to 1955, from 1956 to 1965, and from 1966 to 1975. Schatz typically divides American cinema history by the appearance of huge box office hits that strongly

influenced new directions for Hollywood production, such as THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (1956), THE SOUND OF MUSIC (1965), and JAWS (1975).[6] Douglas Gomery, in his survey of American cinema history, dates "the television era" as beginning in 1951 and concludes that "a new economics and sociology of Hollywood was in play by 1975,"[7] while David A. Cook identifies a period lasting from 1952 to 1965 characterized primarily by Hollywood's attempts at technological innovations—especially the exploitation of widescreen formats—to distinguish theatrical film releases from what audiences could watch at home on television.[8] The more popular critic, Ethan Mordden, however, locates the turning point for the American feature film precisely in the year 1960 with the release of Alfred Hitchcock's PSYCHO, which Mordden calls "a revolt against the fascism of the studio heads and the Hollywood Production Code."[9] However, in a 1959 essay, "The New Hollywood," Robert Brustein claimed that the feature film industry in the United States had already destroyed its time-honored forms. According to Brustein, then dean of the Yale Drama School, the demise of the major studios was complete before 1960, and along with them went the production processes, artistic conventions, and themes that had defined Hollywood since its beginnings.[10]

The specifics of chronology are largely determined by where observers position themselves and which indexes of change are noted to justify one interpretation or another. Nonetheless, the history of the American cinema during the thirty-five years after the end of World War II (1945–1980) has been divided into periods that are relatively well agreed upon. In this volume, the period from 1960 through 1969 is considered a coherent epoch, albeit a transitional one. Its coherence is defined by the emergence of a cinema of sensation that begins with the famous shower scene in Alfred Hitchcock's PSYCHO (1960), where Janet Leigh's character is stabbed to death. The new cinema of sensation pioneered in this film grew up separate from the cinema of sentiment that had constituted the aesthetic core of classic Hollywood from the late 1920s through the 1950s. The new aesthetic of sensation was defined by a speeded-up pacing, the sweep of color production that all but eliminated black-and-white features from Hollywood production, and an increased reliance on graphic visual and sound effects. By 1969, when Sam Peckinpah's THE WILD BUNCH was released, that new aesthetic of sensation was firmly established.

The aesthetics of this cinema of sensation moved away from the dialogue-based cinema that had dominated Hollywood production from the end of the 1920s into the 1960s. Perceptibly, visual and audio sensation began to coexist with—and even displace—the narrative and dramatic demands of dialogue and scripting as the primary elements upon which the viewer's attention was focused in a feature film. The widescreen aesthetic of the 1950s, and Hollywood experiments such as 3-D, either receded in significance or disappeared altogether during the 1960s. It was neither the spatial width nor the depth perspective of the picture on the screen that gained aesthetic prominence during the 1960s so much as a new editing style, which altered the temporal nature of the American feature film. The distinct aesthetic that emerged was more strongly based on how shots and scenes were constructed in terms of time, rather than on spatial relationships within visual shots, expanded aspect ratios for the screen size, or the appearance of increased depth perspective in the image.

In nonfiction film, the philosophic assertions and production techniques of direct cinema became prominent during the decade. The notion of the documentarian as an observer of life and its processes largely displaced the traditional form of nonfiction film, which emphasized a persuasive, voiced-over narrative that provided explanatory logic.

In the avant-garde cinema, experimental filmmaking entwined itself with contemporary movements in abstract art and performance, and developed conceptual and structural forms. Most importantly, however, the avant-garde cinema, centered almost entirely in New York City and San Francisco, provided a nexus for extending counterculture ideas well beyond the Beat movement of the 1950s and radically advanced alternative lifestyles and sexual identities. However, all these new directions of the 1960s, in each of the branches of the American cinema, were subsequently developed in ways that would be perceived as unfulfilled or distorted, or even as constituting outright betrayals of their original intention, by many of their innovators.

For Hollywood and the American feature film, the 1960s was a decade that ended in the midst of transitions that established no definitive direction for the future. Even the fiscal peril confronting the motion-picture production industry was not entirely overcome. Throughout the 1960s, the feature film industry in the United States continued to struggle with the competition of television and the decline of the domestic audience for theatrical movies. Early in the 1960s, moreover, Hollywood had been forced to take into account the growing and significant challenge of its European competition. The vitality of several film industries in Western Europe encouraged the perception that many foreign productions were setting new standards for sophistication and artistic achievement as well as increasing box-office competition for Hollywood. Faced with a malaise that had been growing in the feature film industry since television began siphoning off its mass audience, and further troubled by the European challenge, Hollywood made a number of major miscalculations in the early 1960s. The production of CLEOPATRA (1963)—a highly publicized, enormously expensive flop—only contributed to the growing perception among both Hollywood insiders and the nation's movie critics that European filmmakers were in some way ahead of their American counterparts. That CLEOPATRA cost more and lost more than any previous movie was only emblematic of Hollywood's troubles. That same year of 1963 showed an all-time low of 143 for the number of feature films produced in the United States.[11] Even though the number of productions started to increase the following year, it was far from certain whether Hollywood could regain its artistic reputation, or if it could continue to globally dominate cinema. For 1966, for example, Bosley Crowther, the highly influential movie critic for the *New York Times*, selected only three American-produced features on his list of the year's "Ten Best."[12]

In hindsight, the Hollywood feature film appears to have been struggling throughout the 1960s with the question of how to hold its audience by creating movies that might be positioned somewhere between being "arty" and "conventional." European directors dominated motion pictures aimed at the more mature and sophisticated "art" audiences. Such productions could hardly be imitated effectively by Hollywood. The European art film began in 1944 with neo-realism in Italy and remained linked to artistic concepts and intentions by dealing with the aftermath of World War II for nearly thirty years. Art films were produced by and for younger generations of Europeans who were still working through the moral legacy of that conflict on the continent. The aesthetics of the art film (e.g., neo-realism, auteurism, New Wave, engaged cinema) were rooted in Western European philosophy and collective experience in Western European nations after World War II in ways that Hollywood could neither duplicate nor imitate.

Television, on the other hand, provided conventional mass entertainment in infinitely greater abundance, as well as far more cheaply, than the movies. Hollywood's transition to new production formulas during the 1960s was not easy, and some of the spectacular

CLEOPATRA, the greatest failure of the 1960s, was released in 1963—Hollywood's leanest year for film production.

box-office successes of the decade did not necessarily provide formulas that assured the long-term recovery of feature film production in the United States. Looking back on the 1960s, the producer Ned Tanen argued that two of the decade's most profitable productions nearly destroyed the entire motion-picture industry in the United States: "THE SOUND OF MUSIC (1965) was a huge hit and all the studios tried to copy it . . . and all were commercial disasters. The second film was EASY RIDER (1969) which spawned the low-budget 'youth' movies . . . except most of the youth movies were so bad they were never even released."[13]

What films to make and the audience toward which to target them, of course, is the quintessential challenge faced by Hollywood in any era. The competition of television on the one hand, and the European art films on the other, along with America's shifting demographics throughout the 1960s and widespread cultural changes among young people, rendered the 1960s unusually trying and vexing for Hollywood. No decade in the twentieth century is so closely identified with social unrest in the United States, and few, if any periods in human history compare to the late 1960s for the speed and breadth of transformations in lifestyle and culture. One might be tempted to speculate on how Hollywood would have fared with its recovery and redirection in a less highly charged period of change, but such speculation is counter-historical. The 1960s provided abundant social and cultural grist for nonfiction films and experimental work, and both genres took up these challenges advantageously. For the American feature film, however, these years were difficult, indeed.

Historically, the decade was marked by an unprecedented string of assassinations, including the murders of President John F. Kennedy and his brother, U.S. Senator Robert F. Kennedy, civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., and Nation of Islam leader Malcolm X. A landmark civil rights bill was passed by Congress in 1964 and signed into law, only to be followed by urban rioting that set cities ablaze from the nation's capital to the Watts section of Los Angeles. American military intervention in Southeast Asia beginning in 1965 became a divisive issue that polarized much of America, even if the images of an entire nation divided into two distinct and warring camps are largely exaggerated and inaccurate.[14] Nonetheless, the Vietnam War, and the protests that arose against it, inspired many to question the nation's sense of direction and basic institutions, and led to widespread challenges to fundamental values that were widely believed to constitute the "American way of life." A bipartisan foreign policy based on "containment of communism" that had prevailed since shortly after the end of World War II became widely opposed. The belief that the nation's affluence could be widely shared, hence providing a basis for social peace and domestic tranquillity, was seriously called into doubt. For most observers, the optimism that had dominated the public's perception of America and its role in the world during the 1950s was lost by the second half of the 1960s.

Along with the trials and tribulations of the American republic during the late 1960s, however, other factors fill in a more complete picture of the period's history and economics. As seen from many perspectives, the 1960s was a decade of positive social change, rapidly increasing affluence, and general well-being. The ten years from 1958 to 1968, for example, was a period of unprecedented economic prosperity. The spread of affluence and social mobility in the United States had never been greater. The brief presidency of John F. Kennedy (1961–1963) became linked in the collective memory with civil rights and ideas of social justice, although the most salient legislative accomplishment of his administration actually may have been a substantial federal tax reduction in 1963 that stimulated the nation's economy. Civil rights legislation and the "war on poverty" (and even final passage of the tax cut) were left to Kennedy's successor, Lyndon B. Johnson (1963–1968), who rallied Congress to act in memory of Kennedy. Johnson's pursuit of military intervention in Southeast Asia, however, so thoroughly compromised his presidency that he went from landslide electoral victory in 1964 to an early decision not to campaign for reelection in 1968.[15] The 1960s ended with conservative Republican Richard M. Nixon in the White House.

The 1960s, however, cannot be understood as a decade defined either by the broad sweep of American political and economic life, nor by the accomplishments and failures of the nation's presidents during the decade. The cultural historian Norman Cantor poignantly observed that in the late 1960s history reached a turning point, not only in the United States but in a substantial portion of the industrialized world, but did not turn.[16] Despite the cultural changes and political unrest of the 1960s neither the political nor the economic structure of the United States was transformed. The assaults upon capitalism and representative democracy failed. Indeed, social and cultural changes that spread farthest, fastest, and most tellingly across the United States were the shifts in mores, attitudes, and behaviors that constituted the "sexual revolution." The late 1960s in the United States proved far more revolutionary culturally than politically. Abbie Hoffman and his Chicago Seven cohorts (who upstaged the Democratic National Convention in 1968 with street demonstrations) were more effective at "street theater" than they were in assaulting the real bastions of establishment power. To say that the

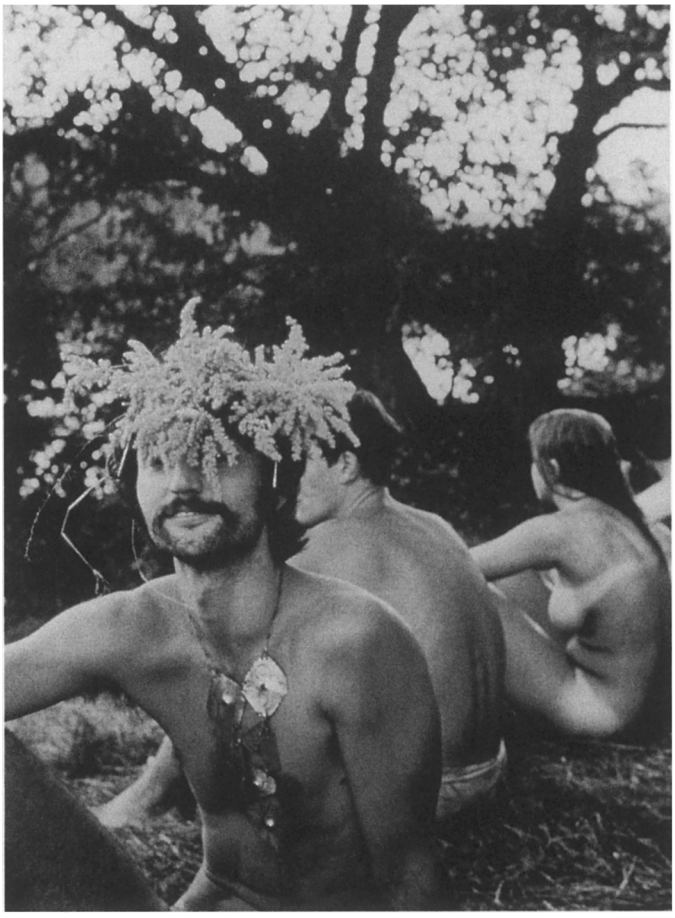
Signs of social unrest. Cultural historian Norman Cantor observed that in the late 1960s, "history reached a turning point . . . but did not turn."

pursuit of pleasure transcended political ideology for most young Americans in the late 1960s is a truism, and not necessarily a negative one. It would be negative from a Marxist perspective, of course. But from a perspective anchored within the nexus of post-World War II American political, economic, social, and intellectual development, it was a logical consequence of the "American way of life." Far more young Americans found diversion during the late 1960s in "turning on and dropping out" than in becoming politically engaged and mounting the barricades.

While many of the public mythologies that had prevailed in the United States since the end of World War II were shaken to their roots during the 1960s, this fact did not derail the dominant culture in its continuing evolution toward non-ideological and apolitical responses to social and political causes. In many ways, American society and its core institutions were preserved intact in the late 1960s, while the nation's social and political conflicts were displaced to the combat field of America's "culture wars." Civil rights protests, political assassinations, antiwar protests, and the riot outside the 1968 Democratic Party convention in Chicago deservedly drew the headlines. Nonetheless, change in American society and culture was likely influenced as much or more by a decision made one day in 1960 by the Federal Drug Administration when it accepted the Searle Pharmaceutical Company's "synthetic anovulent" as an oral contraceptive pill, permitting its sale in the United States. The "birth control pill" offered highly reliable and relatively inexpensive birth control and appeared to involve none of the unromantic interference with sexual pleasure of previous contraceptive methods. The wellsprings

of the sexual revolution were found in the small, round dispensers that made it easy for women to keep track of their intake; those pill dispensers likely were the truest symbols of deep cultural change and a shift in mores all across the United States.[17]

Low-budget feature films celebrating pleasure-seeking among young adults, such as MUSCLE BEACH PARTY, BIKINI BEACH, and BEACH BLANKET BINGO (all released between 1963 and 1965), pointed toward the abiding hedonistic social dynamic in American youth culture, in much the same way as the mayhem surrounding the American tour of the British rock group, the Beatles, in 1964.[18] At the same time, the world of experimental film portrayed the sexual revolution as radical, gay, and aggressively anti-conventional in films such as FLAMING CREATURES (1963), THE QUEEN OF SHEBA MEETS THE ATOM MAN (1963), BLOW JOB (1963), and SCORPIO RISING (1964). During the second half of the 1960s, cultural and political revolutionaries ostensibly coexisted, although sometimes uneasily, but in reality one form of rebellion far exceeded



The 1960s began with the government approving the birth control pill in 1960 and ended with a sexual revolution among young Americans: they "let it all hang out" at the Woodstock Music Festival in August 1969 and in Michael Wadleigh's documentary of the event.

the other. As Landon Y. Jones wrote in a seminal study of the post-World War II baby boomers and their impact on American society: "While the political revolution [of the 1960s] attracted the most fevered attention in the press and in the minds of the public, the cultural revolution was the most representative of the boom generation and the one that ultimately would come closest to prevailing."[19]

The American documentary film appeared ideally positioned to cut directly to the core of political and social issues. With television having largely taken over the dissemination of news and public information, however, and with documentary film's aesthetic impulses shifted toward observational filming techniques, nonfiction film in the United States during even the late 1960s remained relatively devoid of direct political engagement and the articulation of a clear ideology. Even the most radical agendas of the experimental filmmakers had more to do with building a sense of community based upon alternative sexuality and gender identity with small audiences on the edges of American culture than with advancing the dialectic of history and furthering the cause of the downtrodden. Hollywood feature films, moreover, avoided dealing directly with the great social and political issues of the 1960s almost entirely, although increasing numbers of them by the end of the decade began implicitly exploring the images and illusions of rapidly changing cultural attitudes and mores.