FOREWORD

Choosing the best year in movies has always been fun sport, for film critics and fans alike. The year 1939 was a popular favorite for decades, with 1999 recently emerging as a credible rival. But I've found that a cineaste's "greatest year" more often than not lines up with the early years of his or her adolescence. (Martin Scorsese, a prodigy in this as in all things, is the exception that proves the rule—he seems to have discovered the joys of cinema at age seven, and his golden age takes him into his late teens.) So I'll admit I was intrigued but skeptical when Mike McClellan told me that he and Stephen Farber were writing a book about the films of 1962, with the immodest title *Cinema '62: The Greatest Year at the Movies*. Was this just another case of immortalizing the thrill of first discovery? (I'll admit that it took me some time to acknowledge that, despite its glories, my personal year of discovery—1971—wasn't a central moment in the history of cinema.) Well, I'm happy to report that this fascinating and hugely enjoyable book dispelled my doubts, making a very convincing case for both its premise and that very cheeky title.

In this lovingly detailed work of scholarship and criticism—don't worry, there are also healthy dollops of gossip and scandal—a powerful argument emerges. It's Farber and McClellan's bold perception that, in an art form well into its second century, 1962 represents the inflection point—both a summation of everything that had come before and a harbinger of all that would follow.

The studio system, though teetering, had not yet collapsed, and the year's roster of directors includes such Golden Age giants as John Ford, Howard Hawks, Orson Welles, Vicente Minnelli, George Cukor, Leo McCarey, Lewis Milestone, John Huston, and Busby Berkeley (admittedly not all in top form). The international cinema is represented by an equally impressive list of masters: Satyajit Ray, Akira Kurosawa, Luchino Visconti, Jean Renoir, Roberto Rossellini, Luis Buñuel, Ingmar Bergman, Michelangelo Antonioni, and Federico Fellini. The *nouvelle vague* is possibly in its fullest flowering, with major works by Alain Resnais, Claude Chabrol, François Truffaut, Eric Rohmer, Jean-Luc Godard, and Agnes Varda. Tony Richardson represents the British kitchen sink movement, while a crop of young American directors—Robert Mulligan, John Frankenheimer, Blake Edwards, Arthur Penn, Frank Perry, Sidney Lumet, and Sam Peckinpah—graduates from television with honors.

Old and young; past, present, and future—all live side by side. Veteran critic Bosley Crowther may still reign at the *New York Times*, but Andrew Sarris and Pauline Kael are making noise. To say nothing of Stanley Kubrick, John Cassavetes, and Roger Corman, three unclassifiable iconoclasts who will change the landscape of cinema before the decade ends.

This is the story brought to vivid life in this book. The authors' thesis reaches its climax in a brilliant examination of David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia*, a film that in this telling holds up a mirror to the tensions and complexity of this most remarkable year.

I hope that—as with most hit movies—this wonderful book inspires the authors to write a sequel, a second “Greatest Year at the Movies.” 2020, anyone?

Bill Condon