

Lecture 3 & 4: Splitscreen in 1950s/60s Hollywood

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Recap from yesterday:

Classical space (perspectival): ordered, privileged, distant, safe, observable, individual

Space of attractions: frontal, ostentative gestures, direct address, collective

-> what is the space of the splitscreen?

Standard film history

“[S]plit screen experiments, although intrinsically interesting as adventures in image making, remained a footnote to the history of feature film editing.”

Paul Monaco: *The Sixties. 1960–1969*. Berkeley, CA et al.: University of California Press 2001. (History of the American Cinema; Volume 8): 88

Sex Comedies

Cycle of three films with Doris Day and Rock Hudson (and Tony Randall):

- PILLOW TALK (US 1959, Michael Gordon)
- LOVER COME BACK (US 1961, Delbert Mann)
- SEND ME NO FLOWERS (US 1964, Norman Jewison)

Double Motivation

- Technology (party line)
- Formation of the couple (separation that has to be healed)

Pillow Talk (US 1959, Michael Gordon)



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Formal and narrative relations

“We see the split of the party line, represented as a split screen, healed visibly towards the end of the film, as Brad and Jan are splayed not across the split screen but an undivided single screen. In fact, as the film progresses, the split of the screen changes axis; it is no longer split between Brad’s and Jan’s side, but between Brad onscreen and Jan offscreen.”

E.L. McCallum: »Mother Talk: Maternal Masquerade and the Problem of the Single Girl«. In: *Camera Obscura*, no. 42, Sept. 1999: 70-95, hier 94.

Off-screen

- Hors-champ / hors-cadre
- Absence/presence
- Suture

Lover Come Back (US 1961, Delbert Mann)



Down with Love (US 2003, Peyton Reed)



The Grass Is Greener (US 1960, Stanley Donen)



Opening and Closing Passages

„Typically, the opening and closing of the film are the most self-conscious, omniscient, and communicative passages“

David Bordwell: *Narration in the Fiction Film*. London: Routledge 1985: 160.

Charade (US 1963, Stanley Donen)



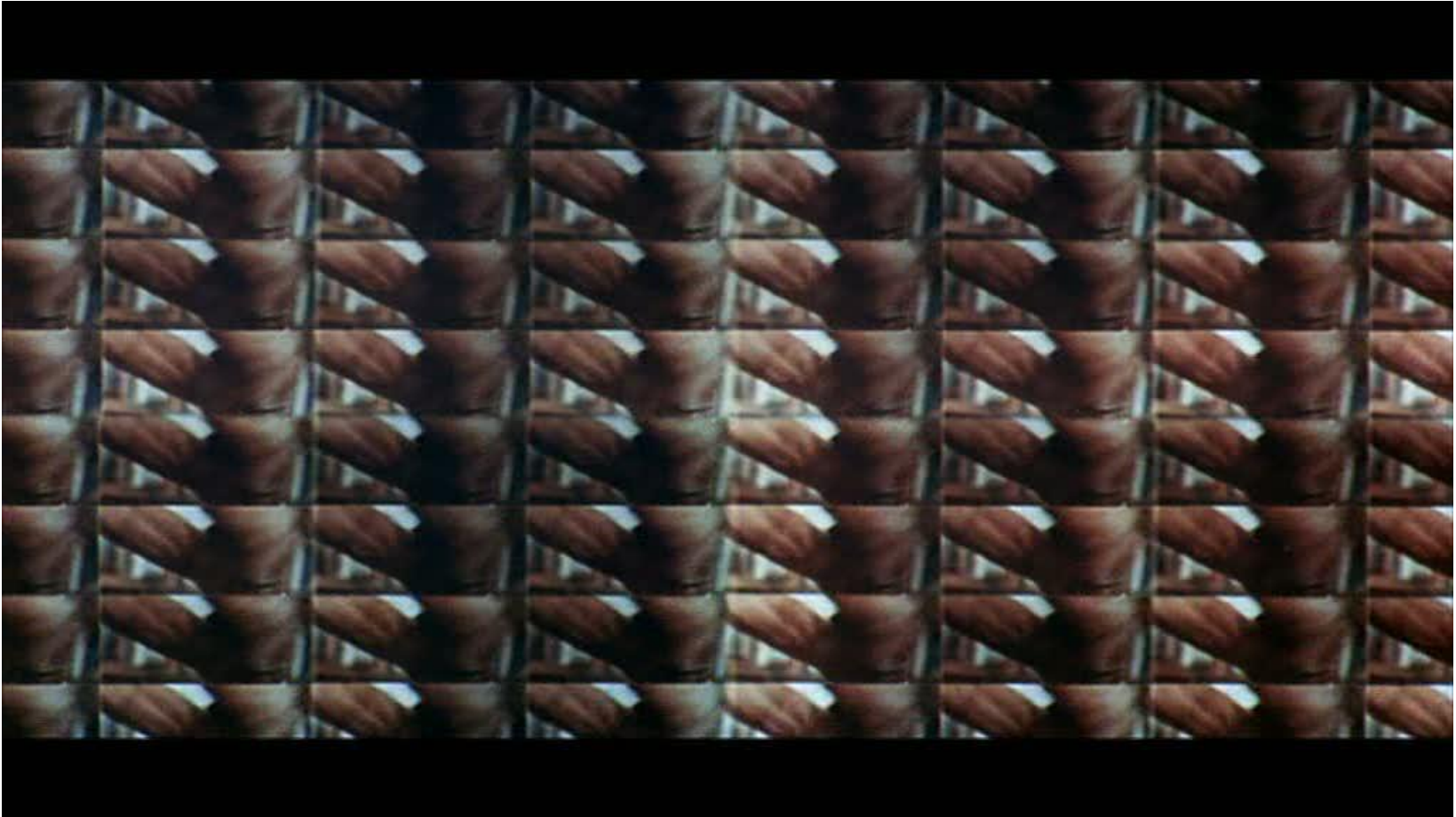
Bye Bye Birdie (US 1963, George Sidney)



Conditions for the use of splitscreen (in Hollywood, around 1960)

- Genre (comedy, musical)
- Milieu (forced modernisation)
- European-US relations
- Creative industries (interior design, heritage industry, art, advertising)
- Modern media (telephone, television, computer)
- Acoustics (composers, singers etc)

Managing Complexities (part II)



Preconditions for further splitscreen experiments

- Society in transition and upheaval – open for new ideas
- Hollywood in crisis (television, youth, suburbanisation)
- Cultural atmosphere of experimentation (thematic exhibitions)

I got the idea for the split screen and the multiple images from Francis Thompson and his film *TO BE ALIVE* at the New York World's Fair [in 1964/65]. It impressed me a great deal as did Charles Eames's film for IBM. I spent some time with Eames afterwards discussing split screen because *GRAND PRIX* was really ideally suited to it.

Gerald Pratley: *The Cinema of John Frankenheimer*. London: Zwemmer / New York: Barnes 1969: 156.

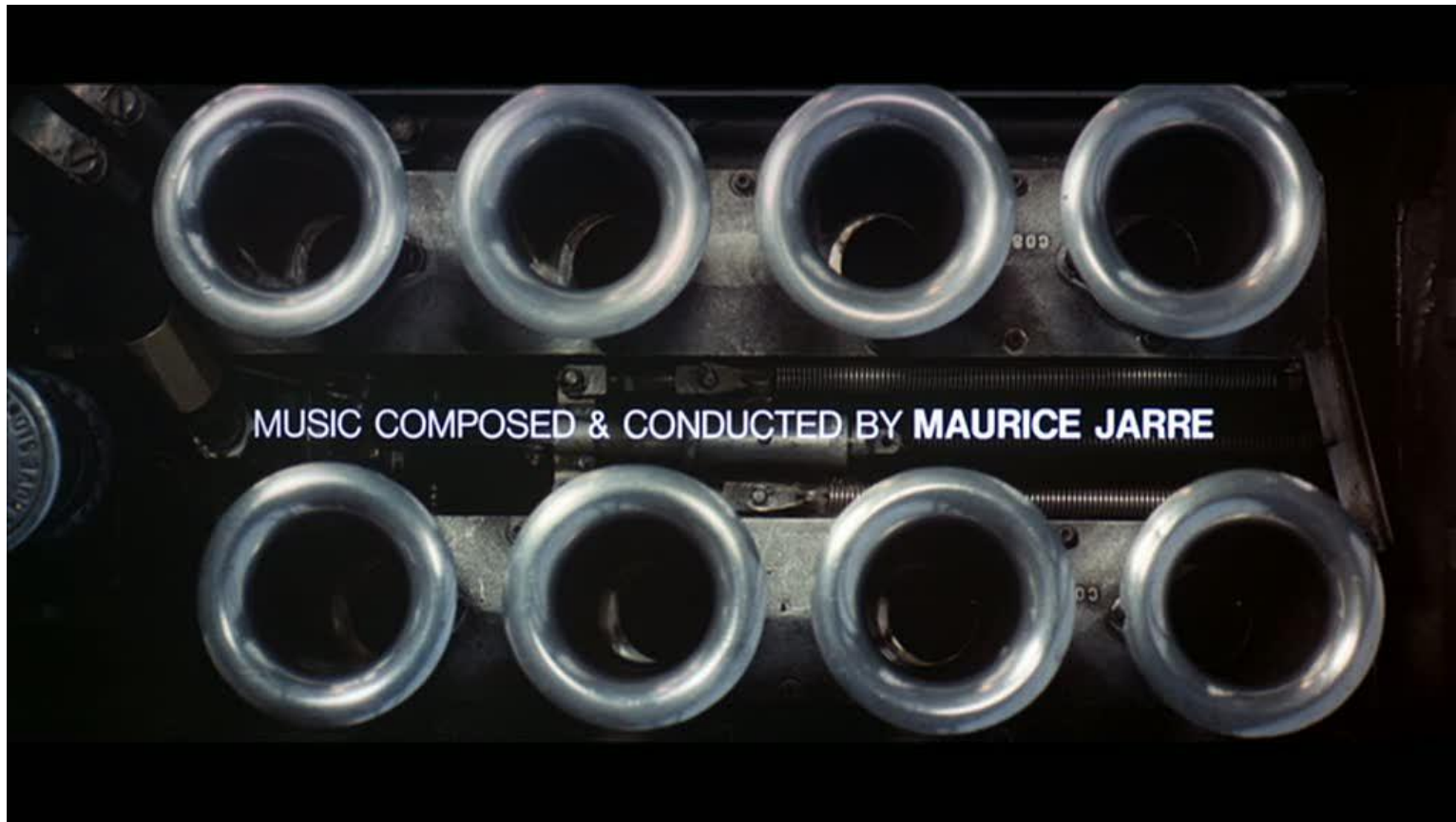
Grand Prix (US 1966, John Frankenheimer)



I don't think split screens will ever be used dramatically to tell, for example, a suspense story, which, more than any type of film, requires one scene after the other. I do think it can be done for something like *Grand Prix* when you're dealing with past and present, doing a kind of miniscule examination of an entire season of racing, trying to portray five characters on the screen without enough time to really get into each one of them as deeply as you would like to [...]. It's difficult for the audience to concentrate on more than one picture at a time, and if you are looking at one you really aren't observing the other.

Pratley, *Frankenheimer*, op.cit.: 156f.

Grand Prix (US 1966, John Frankenheimer)



Saul Bass (1920-1996)

- Graphic design, title design
- Studied with György Kepes
- Work for IBM, AT&T, Warner



„Bass’s animated visualizations are both narrative and nonnarrative, referencing art and art illustrations, flattening space to emphasize the conscious construction of images.”

Jan-Christopher Horak: *Saul Bass : Anatomy of Film Design*.
Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky 2014: p. 124.

„...Saul Bass was a great filmmaker. He would look at the film in question, and understand the rhythm, the structure, the mood — he would penetrate the heart of the movie and find its secret.” (Martin Scorsese)

Grand Prix (US 1966, John Frankenheimer)



The Boston Strangler (US 1967, Richard Fleischer)



“[T]he mind and eye have been proved to be capable of tremendous speed and versatility in accepting multiple images [...]. Viewers in the audience may feel that they are just on the verge of missing something, which is fine, but the total effect on the audience is wonderful, because it makes their eyes and ears explore the entire screen and keeps them very conscious of what is happening.”

Richard Fleischer quoted in »Multiple-Image Technique for ›The Boston Strangler««. In: *American Cinematographer*, vol. 50, no. 2, Feb. 1969: 204.

visual designer Fred Harpman: “We went up together to EXPO 67 to see the unusual film presentations and we got all excited over them”.

anon.: “Multiple-Image Technique for THE BOSTON STRANGLER”. In: *American Cinematographer*, vol. 50, no. 2, Feb. 1969: 205.

„à la suite de ma visite de l’Expo Universelle de Montréal en 1967. C’est en voyant les exhibitions d’écrans multiples que je réalisais le potentiel de cette technique pour le cinéma. Je réussis à convaincre le studio et Richard Zanuck en particulier de me laisser tourner le film avec ce système.”

Stéphane Bourgoïn: *Richard Fleischer*. Paris: Edilig 1986. (Filmo – 16): 99. [„...following my visit to the Expo in Montreal in 1967. When I saw the exhibitions with multiple screens I realized the potential of this technique for the cinema. I managed to convince the studio and Richard Zanuck in particular to let me shoot the film with this system.“, my translation]

The Boston Strangler (US 1967, Richard Fleischer)

