



GENRE AND
THE NEW
HOLLYWOOD

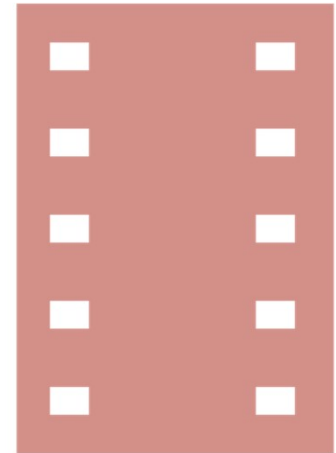
CHINATOWN

(ROMAN POLANSKI, 1974)



THE OLD HOLLYWOOD (1930 - 1960)

- The **studio system** and vertical integration
- The **star system**
- The **system of genres**
- *U.S. v. Paramount* (1948)
- Television
- European New Waves



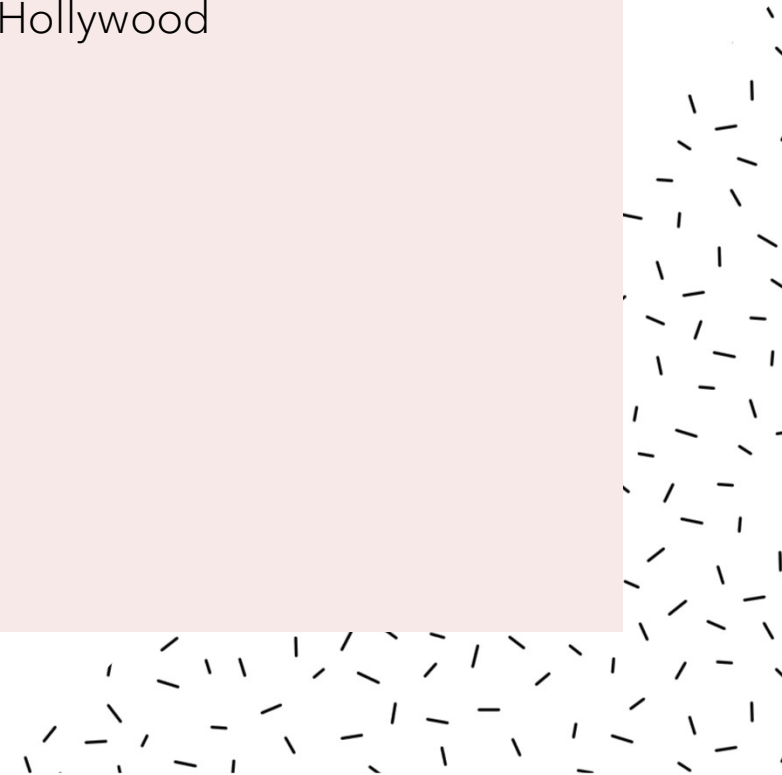
CLASSIC GENRES AND IDEOLOGY

- Genre films and the creation of social myths
- Genre films as responses to/mirrors of current social conditions and concerns
- Genres as stories men tell each other
- Classic genres and American mythology
- Consistent themes and issues
- Consistent attitudes towards those issues
- Reinforcement of social values and approved behaviors



THE NEW HOLLYWOOD

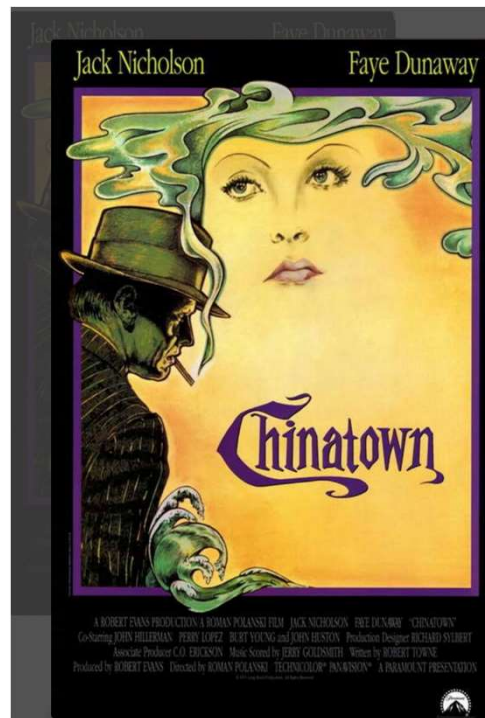
- Also called the New American Cinema, the Hollywood Renaissance
- New golden age
- Creativity
- Experimentation
- Honesty
- Appeal to sophisticated adult filmgoer



NEW HOLLYWOOD FILM TYPES

- Three primary types of films:
 - The new American art film like
Midnight Cowboy
 - The "High Concept" action blockbuster like
Star Wars
 - The revisionist genre film like *Chinatown*

ORIGINAL POSTER: NO TAGLINE



CHINATOWN (ROMAN POLASKI, 1974)

Key Characters (and the actors who play them)

- J. J. “Jake” Gittes (*Jack Nicholson*)
- Evelyn Cross Mulwray (*Faye Dunaway*)
- Noah Cross (*John Huston*)
- Lt. Lou Escobar (*Perry Lopez*)
- Russ Yelburton (*John Hillerman*)
- Hollis Mulwray (*Darrell Zwerling*)
- Ida Sessions (*Diane Ladd*)
- Claude Mulvihill (*Roy Jenson*)
- Man with knife (*Roman Polanski*)
- Walsh, Jake’s colleagues (*Joe Mantell*)
- Duffy, Jake’s colleagues (*Bruce Glover*)





LET'S
WATCH
THE MOVIE

(1 3 0 M I N S)

CHINATOWN'S CINEMATIC STYLE

Long ASLs

Color

- Bright sunlight, clouds avoided
- A lot of white
- Green only near water

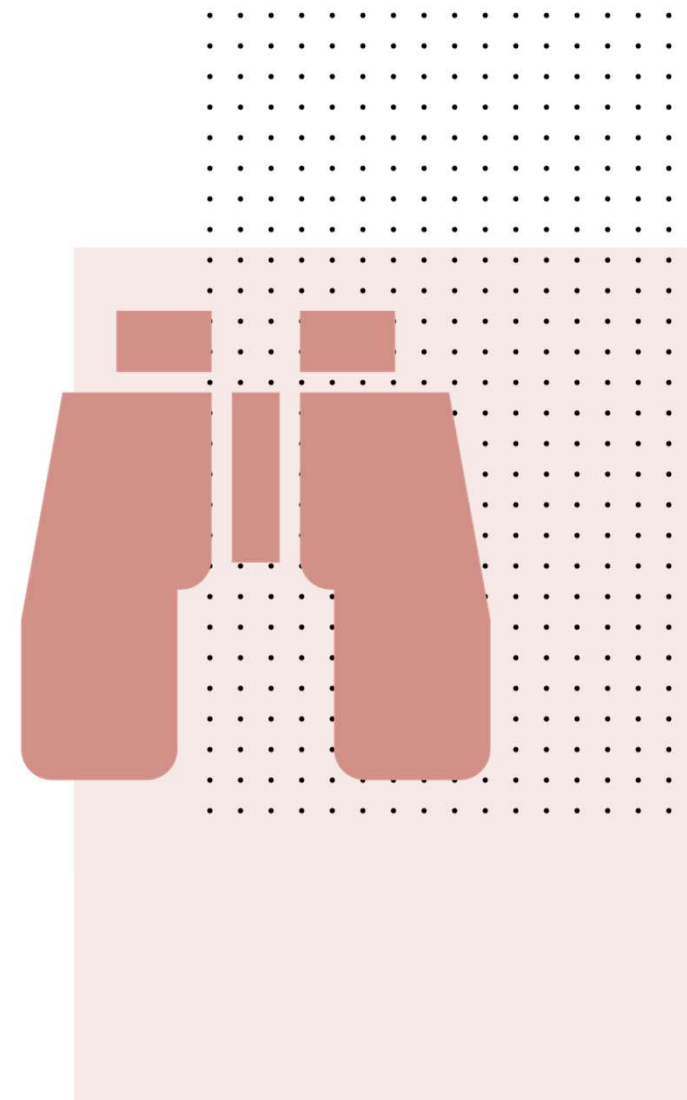
Motifs related to vision:

eyeglasses

binoculars

cameras and photos

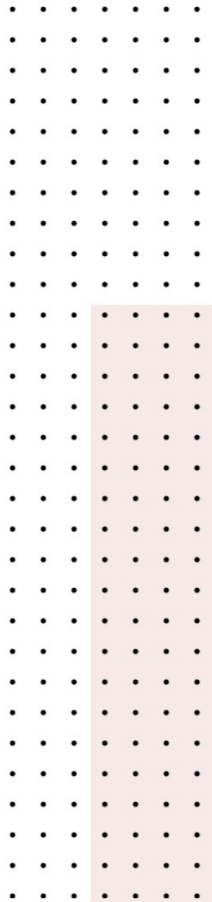
Moving camera always behind Jake





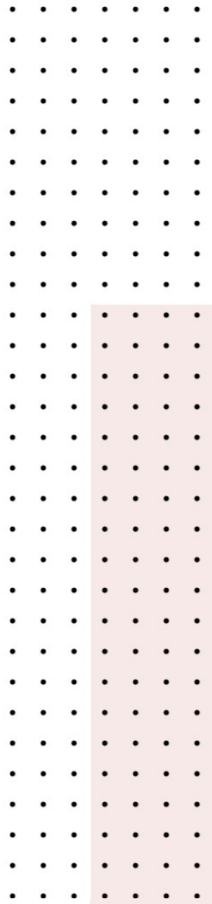
INFLUENCES ON *CHINATOWN*

- 1960s counterculture
 - Anti-Establishment
 - Anti-Vietnam War
 - Post-Watergate paranoia
- The Paranoia Films of the 1970s
- Water scandal in 1904 LA → 1930s → 1970s displacement



CHINATOWN AND "THE PROGRESSIVE GENRE FILM"

- 1. a pessimistic worldview
- 2. thematics: challenging dominant social values, mistrusting key social institutions such as the law and the family
- 3. narratives that stress ideological contradictions rather than effacing them, e.g., through moral ambiguity of the protagonist
- 4. narratives that activate and undermine classical conventions: e.g., illogical cause/effect
- 5. narratives that refuse closure or that undermine it cinematically through excess and irony
- 6. excessive and self-conscious visual style





CHINATOWN AS A SUBVERSIVE FILM

- Noah Cross as model for men who built America; the self-made man
- Jake Gittes and Hollis Mulwray = men who stick up for the underdog
- The equation of knowledge and power undermined
- Chinatown as metaphor
- Chinatown's generic revisionism



JAKE VERSUS THE CLASSIC HB DETECTIVE

- Not economically marginal
- Jake's "honest living"
- "Do as little as possible" credo
- Doesn't work alone

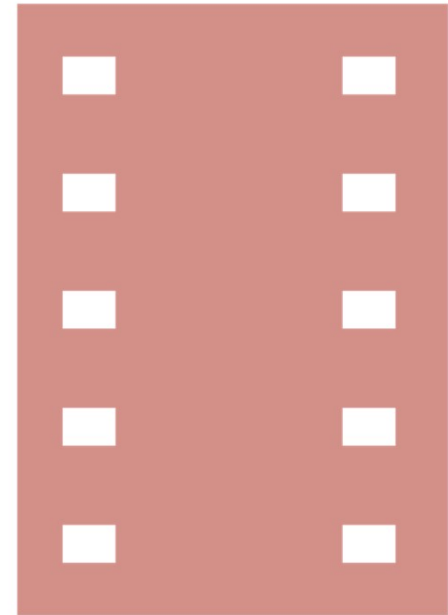


JAKE'S MALE AGENCY UNDERMINED

- Tells embarrassing jokes
- Fooled by Ida Sessions (Spade sees through Miss Wonderly)
- Jake's nose
- Jake needs Evelyn to rescue him
- Jake slaps Evelyn
- Jake underestimates Cross
- Jake overestimates his own abilities

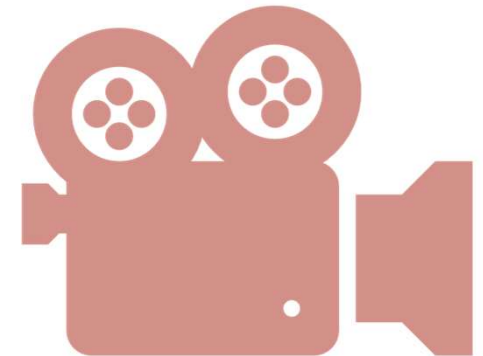


F I L M N O I R
A N D
N E O - N O I R



FILM NOIR

- First American film product taken seriously as an artform by European critics
- The subject of endless debate about what noir is
- Elements that signify success in other genres are sources of distress and danger in noir
- The only American film form that does not portray America in a good light
- The only American film form that does not confirm traditional American social values



Hard-boiled

Few civilians

Effective protagonist

Plain style

Intellectual exercise

Challenge belief in justice

Challenge faith in romance

Paranoid Film Noir

- Plenty of innocent people
- Weak protagonist
- Stylized lighting and framing
- Emotional tension
- Challenge belief in justice
- Challenge faith in romance

