Academic Films for the Classroom: A History. Geoff Alexander. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2010. P/bk 233 pp. ISBN 978-0-7864-5870-7. Price £19.99.

Film Studies books come in all shapes and sizes. This one happens to be A5 in size with a strong bent toward advocacy. Its main purpose is to promote a body of "lost" films made between the "early cinema" era and the era marked by the onset of video in the classroom. These films were US "academic" films made for schools and colleges, their purpose to educate the student body. The genres of the 16 mm films may have varied - fiction, nonfiction - but all were consistent in their will to instruct.

The writer of *Academic Films for the Classroom: A History*, Geoff Alexander, is clearly on a mission. He rates these films as worthy of scholarly research and has done a useful job in laying the groundwork for future study by academics in the humanities and social sciences. For decades now we have seen film studies dominated by post-structuralist paradigms, with the focus on the reader/viewer. Not so prior to the 1980s, when structuralist analyses of ideology dominated. This book harks back to that earlier approach, using an (albeit underlying) Marxist model, and it is none the worse for it. In many ways the book reminds me of the late 1970s' essays on Warner Brothers in *Velvet Light Trap* which usefully summarized the company's context of production during the Studio Era, and which in turn triggered a decade or so of in-depth writings on the subject (e.g. Nick Roddick's A *New Deal in Entertainment* - a study of the 1930s'corporate taste of Warner Brothers - a taste informed by Roosevelt's New Deal). Here too, in *Academic Films*, Alexander maps out the production context of the films, the companies that made them, the Federal programs that financed them, and provides brief biographical notes of the filmmakers he considers of note.

Produced by private US companies such as the post-World War II *Encyclopedia Britannica* Films, the heyday of these academic films was the 1950s and 1960s - a period marked by official U.S. concerns over scientific and cultural hegemony. The films filled a need fostered domestically in schools and colleges, and Abroad through American cultural programs - particularly in countries "at risk" from Communism, such as Turkey. These programs proliferated after the onset of the Cold War in an attempt to keep the lid on radical thinkers.

Bills such as the 1958 National Defense Education Act and the 1965 National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities were the Federal feeding troughs that the production companies specializing in academic film tapped into. So when Alexander makes the point that this niche film market was "generally conservative," there are no real surprises there (41).

Despite the production teams being made up of personnel of a liberal/left persuasion for the most part (university lecturers and future documentary film makers such as Richard Leacock), the profit imperative and government agendas both at home and Abroad seem to have largely shaped the scripts. Budgets were on average about $5OK for a half hour film. A popular film selling at $450 could sell upwards of 500 copies and make a very handsome profit for its makers.

In this regard, and echoing the genre critics of the 1970s, Alexander brings up the old chestnut of genre versus auteur, evidencing inevitable tensions between a director's creative vision and the producer's focus on profit and customer satisfaction. A good example of this is in the correspondence between director John Barnes and his bosses at EB Films again over the making of the "Macbeth" trilogy in 1964. The trilogy of films was designed to explain the play to students, and John Barnes appears to have sought filmic solutions that did not tally entirely with the pedagogic demands of his employers. Management makes crystal clear its priorities in a letter to Barnes which states that "the Humanities tend to seem overwhelming to many students, and anything which disorientates them or makes them feel that they should understand something they don't, is detrimental to the effectiveness of the film" (148).

So were the films ultimately propaganda? At the very least, they appear to have sent mixed messages. It is here I believe that Alexander could have raised his critical game somewhat and addressed the central issue head on, but alas the tone is a little too celebratory. A louder, more discernible critical stance would have been useful. Nonetheless, the writer has done academics a great service by bringing these films to the fore in a way that allows us to get on with the critical job at hand. I'm sure the book will also help promote these films to a more general audience, further stimulating research. Many of the films are available online and await our scrutiny. Appendix A at the back of the book lists many titles. Two I enjoyed were *Frames of Reference* (made by Richard Leacock for the Physical Science Study Committee in 1960) and *The Pilgrims* (made by John Barnes for EB Films in 1955).

As a UK-based academic, I am reminded of the Open University "academic" films that went out on the BBC in past decades. Has work been done on these? What values are espoused in these films? Do they have any artistic merit? Do they at times evidence a tension between creativity and state funded values, between a director's vision and the controlling gaze of public broadcasters and educators? Alexander has made me think.

Searle Kochberg
University of Portsmouth

Ridley Scott: A Critical Filmography. William B. Parrill. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2011. P/bk 181 pp. ISBN 978-0-7864-5866-0. Price $45.00.

As with many modem filmmakers, Ridley Scott spent the early part of his career working in advertising. He formed a company with his brother Tony Scott and enjoyed great success creating commercials with a core group of other film professionals. While he graduated from London's Royal College of Art in 1963, he would not direct his first feature film until the release of *The Duellists* in 1977. Through 2012, he has directed twenty films that are noted for their visual flair and regular critical and financial success. He is also noted for revisiting his films with new versions, as well as his willingness to talk about his films in great detail.

William B. Parrill is an emeritus professor of English at Southeastern Louisiana University. He also helped found the journal Louisiana Literature and has written other critical film guides. In this book, he reviews all nineteen feature films from *The Duellists* (1977) through 2010's *Robin Hood.* He also discusses Scott's student film from 1962 (*Boy and Bicycle*), as well as some of Scott's work in television. He also includes a long introduction that reviews Scott's filmmaking process and his preparation methods for his projects. For each film, he lists the various versions available for each film and the available home video versions for them. He also briefly details each film's plot and presents the critical view of the film when released. For each film, Parrill assesses how it fits into Scott's style and method.

In the introduction, Parrill reviews Ridley Scott's career, focusing in particular with the effect of Scott's commercial work on his filmmaking. He