

What makes Sammy run? author Budd Schulberg does

STAR SPEAK



FRANK SANELLO

Some fictional characters have become such an indelible part of American culture, they almost seem real: Jay Gatsby, Scarlett O'Hara, George Babbitt.

Add to that list Sammy Glick, the anti-hero of "What Makes Sammy Run?," the classic novel about a Hollywood heel who makes it to the top of the movie business.

Written by Budd Schulberg, "What Makes Sammy Run?" is being republished 50 years after it first became a huge best seller.

Schulberg was the son of former Paramount Studios chief B.P. Schulberg, and as a child of Hollywood, Schulberg knew firsthand the kind of amoral studio executive he described so memorably in his novel.

"What Makes Sammy Run?" so enraged the powerful studio executives of the time that Schulberg was effectively blacklisted from working as a screenwriter for years. During that time, he continued his career as a novelist. One of his books was turned into the classic Marlon Brando film "On the Waterfront," and the screenplay earned Schulberg an Academy Award.

Schulberg makes his home on Long Island, N.Y., with his wife of 10 years, Betsy Langman, and their two children. He had previously been married to the late actress Geraldine Brooks.

Warner Bros. plans to begin production on a film of "What Makes Sammy Run?" this spring, with Sidney Lumet directing.

Q. When "What Makes Sammy Run?" was published, you became Public Enemy No. 1 in Hollywood. Why did it cause so much anger in the executive suites of the movie industry?

A. Louis B. Mayer's generation was furious. They were the dinosaurs in town. They felt the book was an act of betrayal. But what really infuriated them was that such a book was written by the son of a studio head.

Q. Since it is the quintessential Hollywood novel, why has it taken so long for "What Makes Sammy Run?" to be made into a film?

A. There was a TV movie made of the book in the early 1960s, and a mu-

called that. Now they consider it a badge of honor, a sign of success.

Q. Name a "Sammy Glick" in public life today.

A. When Donald Trump was called an extreme egotist, he said, "I take that as a compliment because you can't succeed without an ego in 1990." Sammy would have said something like that.

Q. This is a delicate question. In 1951, you identified fellow communists when called to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Other people went to jail rather than name names. Did you name names to avoid blacklisting in Hollywood?

A. By that time, I was a successful novelist and wasn't working in Hollywood. It was not a happy thing, but I couldn't see how I could refuse to answer on the grounds of incriminating myself. If the Ku Klux Klan had been investigated, the communists would have been all for it. I was only a member of the party for a short time.

Q. Your one-time writing partner F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote about the anti-Semitism he witnessed while studying at Princeton. When you were at Dartmouth, did you feel any anti-Semitism directed at you?

A. It was very "polite" anti-Semitism. My freshman year, I roomed with a Jack Patrick. During fraternity rush, they'd come into our room to recruit him and not me. Jack said he was embarrassed because he knew they didn't want me because I was Jewish. But there was a Jewish fraternity. On the other hand, I did become editor of the Daily Dartmouth, and I was inducted into a secret (campus) society, The Sphinx.

Q. As someone who's worked in the film industry on and off for more than half a century, what do you think of the current state of filmmaking?

A. The average film today is not as well-written or structured as in the past. But there are some outstanding films today, like "Field of Dreams," "Driving Miss Daisy," "Born on the Fourth of July." Oliver Stone's work, in particular, shows that it's possible to make a personal statement in films today. The fact that such a personal film as "Driving Miss Daisy" was No. 1 at the box office is also a hopeful sign.



Budd Schulberg

sical based on it ran for two years on Broadway. I think the powers-that-be felt the subject had been covered. But since the early 1970s, I've been getting feelers about making it into a feature film. Now I think Hollywood is eager to do it because the greed and power grabs of the 1980s are finally being discredited. Look at the fall of Wall Street.

Q. Who would you like to play Sam-

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— Budd Schulberg

my in the forthcoming film version of your novel?

A. We're quite fortunate we have a group of really talented young actors. Four or five of them could play Sammy: Tom Cruise, Matthew Broderick, Robert Downey Jr., Sean Penn, maybe.

Q. Were you shocked when a college student came up to you after a lecture and said Sammy Glick was a role model for him?

A. The first time it happened. But he was just the first one. That was in 1980 or '81. There's been a sea change in our social values. Sammy's behavior is more accepted now. There were real-life Sammy Glicks when I wrote the book, but they didn't like to be

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Try 'Breaking In'

By DIAHANN NADEAU
Herald Special

Breaking In: This is the latest work from Scottish director Bill Forsyth. As with Housekeeping, Forsyth has set the story in America; unfortunately the soil is not quite as fertile as Scotland for Forsyth's quirky charms and eccentric characters.

Breaking In stars a grey haired Burt Reynolds as Ernie Mullins, a 61-year-old thief, a safe specialist who encounters young Mike LeFevre (Casey Siemaszko) while robbing a house. Ernie is opening the safe; Mike has broken in to eat, short sheet the beds, and read the mail. Ernie decides to take him on as a partner; better a partner than a witness. All proceeds well until Mike disregards Ernie's advice and starts spending money wildly, doing jobs on his own, hanging around with the wrong woman. The police close in on him and his brief career is put on hold. Ernie walks off to start a new life, but there's money waiting in the bank.

There is a lot of charm, quiet humor, and steady pleasure to be found in **Breaking In**. Reynolds is wonderful as Ernie (although he just doesn't look 61), revealing a capacity for understated acting not apparent in the string of macho drive he's starred in for the past 20 years. Casey Siemaszko is charmingly flaky as Mike "The Firestone Kid," and Canadian Maury Chaykin does a good turn as his lawyer. The script was written by John Sayles (The Brother from Another Planet). This is a good film, but it just isn't as delightful as Gregory's Girl or Local Hero. Forsyth has to watch that his laid back whimsy doesn't lay down so low you lose interest.

Twister: "Look out Cleveland, storm is coming through..." The song is about the town; this movie is about the family, the moneyed Cleavelands of Kansas, where a twister is coming. They have a mansion, they have a live-in maid, they have millions - they're also completely batty.

Dad is Harry Dean Stanton, a single father who has made his

money in soda pop and mini-golf; his loopy family consists of Howdy (Crispin Glover), a wacko given to feminine hairstyles, satin outfits, and whips. Daughter Maureen (Suzy Amis) is a tired 24-year-old, given to drink and asking her eight-year-old to fetch it. Violet (Lindsay Christman) is the precocious child, resigned to the ways of her bizarre household. The only sane voice belongs to the housekeeper, (Charlaine Woodard), a student with a wry but loving relationship to the family.

Two outsiders intrude on the blitzed-out Cleavelands: Violet's father Chris (Dylan McDermott), returned from Canada and determined to rescue Maureen and Violet from the debilitating insanity of the household, and Miss Virginia (Lois Chiles) a religious kiddie-show host engaged to Dad. The twister leaves the house intact, but the family has disintegrated by the end; Dad gives up and runs off in the hope of restoring some bit of sanity.

Twister is an odd film, featuring an excellent cast, but it is not for everyone. A little slow and very strange. **Twister** will interest Harry Dean Stanton fans especially; he is wonderfully tired and resigned here.

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