The Many Hats of Robert Altman: A Life in Cinema

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Dear Bob,

Thank you for inviting me and Carol to Wednesday night’s screening. I hope your book’s selling better completely very soon. I think you’ve made an unforgettable great movie with “Nashville”—I say that despite the fact I feel the entire guts and beauty of my performance and of my relationship with Barnett and Barbara Jean has been deleted virtually from the film—still


Robert Altman and Elliott Gould playfully reenacting the classic Grant Wood painting, “American Gothic,” on the set of California Split, a film that follows two gamblers to a high-stakes poker game in Reno.

Lily Tomlin, telegram to Robert Altman, February 18, 1982.

Telegram from actress Lily Tomlin—one of several Altman “regulars”—sent to Altman while he was on Broadway directing Come Back to the Five and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean, a play that would film later that same year.


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This letter from Allen Garfield, one of the actors comprising the 24-person ensemble cast of Nashville, shares his feeling that his part was improperly edited and he didn’t enjoy his on-screen performance. Despite this dissatisfaction, he could not bring himself to deny the film’s brilliance.

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