The Many Hats of Robert Altman: A Life in Cinema

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Nashville’s Legacy

Nashville (1975) is the Altman film that best symbolizes his deft use of a large ensemble cast. The relationships between characters are complex, yet resoundingly real; and their large number make it a grand mural of country music, rather than a small snapshot. The film’s role as a landmark in American Film was marked 25 years later by an article accompanied by a photograph of the reunited cast in Premiere magazine.

Group photograph of the entire 24-actor ensemble cast of Nashville (1975) and accompanying outtake featuring Robert Altman (white t-shirt). The photograph emphasizes that all of the 24 actors in the film had real roles with well-developed characters in this sprawling drama set against the backdrop of an impending political rally. The film was shot over eight weeks on location in Nashville.

Outtakes from Premiere magazine’s 25th anniversary Nashville photo shoot featuring Altman and ten members of the original cast. That such recognition continued so long after its initial release is a testament to the film’s enduring impact on the industry and medium.

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Alex Lewin, typed letter to Robert Altman, June 2, 2000. The author of the article in Premiere celebrating Nashville’s 25th anniversary, Alex Lewin, wrote a letter to Altman thanking him for the time and effort he devoted to both the photo shoot and interviews.

Richard Nixon, typed note to Robert Altman, March 15, 1983. Appreciation of Nashville was far reaching, at times leading to some unique correspondence. In 1983 — before the advent of the home theater — former president Richard Nixon sent a note to Altman requesting a copy of his daughter’s favorite film.

Sidney Lumet, handwritten note to Robert Altman, June 17, 1975. Dear Bob, I saw NASHVILLE at your theatre the other night. Now I can take things when they are good — but brilliant?? Then I get sick. If I were you now, they’d have to lock me up somewhere. Jesus Christ are you terrific! As Always, Sidney

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