

# The Museum of Modern Art Department of Film

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No. 28  
For immediate release

August, 1982

## HOT-TYPE'S LAST EDITION AT THE TIMES: DOCUMENTARY JOINS MoMA FILM CATALOGUE

FAREWELL, ETAOIN SHRDLU, a 29-minute documentary by David Loeb Weiss, records the night of July 2, 1978 in The New York Times' press-room, as the last edition composed in hot-metal type is prepared and printed. A printer sits at a century-old Linotype machine at the start of the film and strikes the first 12 letters of the keyboard, "etaoin shrdlu" -- the printer's phrase used to fill out a line or signal an error. The title FAREWELL, ETAOIN SHRDLU is a symbolic way of saying goodbye to both the machine and to a printing tradition.

The prize-winning documentary has been selected for distribution by the Circulating Film Library of The Museum of Modern Art. William Sloan, Director of Circulating Film, notes that "the film combines the creative techniques of filmmaking and editing with a clear explanation of how a newspaper is really produced." That explanation goes beyond the last night of hot-type and into the computerized composing room of today; as the film's subtitle, "An Age-Old Printing Process Gives Way to Modern Technology" outlines, we see the same printers who demonstrate the old method making the adjustment to the new.

Filmmaker David Loeb Weiss, himself a member of the New York Typographical Union and a former proofreader at the Times, worked with the paper's cooperation for a "live" and detailed portrait of the process. The narrator and technical advisor for the film, Carl Schlesinger, is a leading authority on the printing trades, co-author of the book Union Printers and Controlled Automation, and worked to retrain the Times' printers on the new electronic equipment.

The film won five national and international awards in 1981, including the Blue Ribbon in the Technology division of the American Film Festival, the Creative Excellence Award from the Industrial Film Festival, and the CINE Golden Eagle. It has been cited for excellence by, among others, the American Newspaper Publishers Association, the Smithsonian National Archive of Printing History, The National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers.

William Sloan remarks that "the movie's portrayal of workers adapting to the change from Linotype to computer is moving and effective. The buzz of activity as editors and printers huddle over type forms, the background noises as the paper is 'put to bed,' catch the drama of closing under deadline and make the movie real and exciting. It belongs as much to the world of cinema art as it does to nuts-and-bolts technology."

FAREWELL ETAOIN SHRDLU is a poignant valentine to the brass and wood, the heavy lead and the skilled, precision craftsmanship of a 500-year-old technology. It is equally a document of social change and a testament to a work-force's adaptability. As the Columbia Journalism Review stated in its favorable review, the film is "more than an appreciation of the mechanical past; it is also a celebration of the electronic future. To witness the end of one revolution and the beginning of the next is to be struck anew by the awesome reach of human inventiveness in our urge to communicate."

FAREWELL ETAOIN SHRDLU is available in 16mm film or cassette from the Circulating Film Library of The Museum of Modern Art. Rental inquiries can be directed to (212) 956-4204, or by writing the Circulating Film Library, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, NY 10019.

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For further information, please contact Alicia Springer, Film Press Representative, (212) 708-9752. See above for rental inquiries.

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