

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
July 1986

DIRECTORS GUILD OF AMERICA: FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY TRIBUTE

ROBERT WISE, July 21

JONATHAN DEMME, August 18

Two major film directors, Robert Wise and Jonathan Demme, will be honored by The Museum of Modern Art as part of the ongoing DIRECTORS GUILD OF AMERICA: FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY TRIBUTE. Mr. Wise, who directed such films as West Side Story (1961) and The Sound of Music (1965) and is president of the Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences, will introduce his 1951 science-fiction film The Day the Earth Stood Still on Monday, July 21, at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Demme, one of the most original filmmakers of his generation, will introduce his 1977 Handle with Care (Citizen's Band) on Monday, August 18, at 6:00 p.m. Both events will take place in the Museum's Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1.

In The Day the Earth Stood Still, which stars Patricia Neal, Michael Rennie, Hugh Marlowe, and Sam Jaffe, Mr. Wise brought seriousness and an unusual role reversal to science-fiction. The alien is benevolent, while the real threat to earth is man himself. Ahead of his time, Mr. Wise sent his alien on a mission to stop man from playing around with war and nuclear weapons.

Mr. Demme's Handle with Care, which stars Paul Le Mat, Candy Clark, and Ann Wedgeworth, received much critical acclaim at the 1977 New York Film Festival. Originally entitled Citizen's Band, the film was produced in the middle of the CB craze. It follows the double lives of several characters in a small town: both their normal personalities and their alter egos created for the radio, such as "Spider", "Hot Coffee", and "Chrome Angels."

Robert Wise began his film career performing odd jobs in the R-K-O cutting room. While still in his twenties, he edited Orson Welles' Citizen Kane (1941) and The Magnificent Ambersons (1942). His directorial debut was the critically-acclaimed supernatural film The Curse of the Cat People (1944) for producer Val Lewton. One of Hollywood's most versatile directors, Mr. Wise has worked within, and often redefined, virtually every genre, including the western, such as Blood on the Moon (1948), the social melodrama, such as I Want to Live! (1958), and the musical, such as West Side Story. He is currently about to begin production on a film version of the stage musical Zorba, which will star Anthony Quinn and John Travolta.

Jonathan Demme is one of the contemporary screen's most skilled satirists, with a rare gift for revealing the eccentricities of seemingly ordinary Americans. After an apprenticeship under Roger Corman, for whom he directed such films as Caged Heat (1975) and Crazy Mama (1976), Demme directed Melvin and Howard (1980) and Swing Shift (1984), among other films. Most recently, his much-praised collaboration with the Talking Heads, Stop Making Sense (1984), revealed new aspects of his talent. Mr. Demme is presently in post-production on Something Wild, starring Melanie Griffiths and Jeff Daniels.

- more -

These events are the sixth and seventh monthly tributes to distinguished members of the Directors Guild of America on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary. Among the directors still to be honored are Martin Scorsese (September 15) and Arthur Penn (October 20).

The DGA Fiftieth Anniversary Tribute has been organized by Stephen Harvey, assistant curator, and Adrienne Mancina, curator, Department of Film, with the collaboration of George Wallach, director of special programs, Directors Guild of America.

No. 59

For further press information and photographic materials, contact Howard Feinstein, film press representative, The Museum of Modern Art, 212/708-9752.