

## LP<sup>2</sup> STUDY GROUP PROPOSAL FOR FALL 2022

### REEL ROCK & ROLL

**Coordinators:** Lisa Cristal, Sheila O'Connell, Tom Sear and Susan Smahl

Rock and Roll changed everything! The beat of Rock and Roll grabbed and moved teenagers and divided old and young America: how we listened to music, what we thought about issues, how we dressed and how we danced. This study group examines documentary and narrative film treatments of Rock and Roll by groundbreaking, award winning, innovative movie directors. Topics can include the historical perspective of the music, political and social context, cultural blending (i.e., R&B, Soul, Folk, Bluegrass, Gospel, Country, Jazz), coming of age, business models, the band's "brand", evolution of the mega-festival, group dynamics, private vs. public persona and the superstar, stereotyping, fandom and the second tier of backup singers and studio musicians. All are welcome on this musical ride—R&R aficionados and novices alike.

**Lisa Cristal** co-coordinated the study group *What Makes New Orleans Different?* She lives in a household where music is always blaring and still loves attending concerts and festivals. **Sheila O'Connell** spent her working life in the field of corporate finance. She spent the rest of her time at the movies or at rock concerts. She has coordinated a number of study groups about popular culture. **Tom Sear** has coordinated or co-coordinated several study groups, including *Winston Churchill*, *TR*, *FDR* and *Reel Justice*. He can't sing and failed to learn how to play music, but is exceptionally talented at listening to Rock and Roll, played very loud. **Susan Smahl** studied film at NYU in the 1970s while listening to lots of Rock and Roll. She still loves both. Currently a staff volunteer at the DOC NYC Film Festival and a film screener for the Montclair Film Festival, this is her fifth time coordinating/co-coordinating study groups.

**Type of Study Group:** Discussion

**Readings and other Materials/Online Services :**

Movies available through Netflix, Amazon and YouTube and other streaming services. Other material will be delivered via email to participants.

## LP<sup>2</sup> STUDY GROUP PROPOSAL FOR FALL 2022

### \*\*\*\*\* SYLLABUS - A WORK IN PROGRESS \*\*\*\*\*

#### WEEK 1 (Cristal)

**TOPIC:** *Almost Famous* (2000, Crowe)

A semi-autobiographical film about a 15-year-old boy who lands a music assignment from *Rolling Stone* to write about an up-and-coming band.

**QUESTIONS:**

What are the primary themes of this movie? Which characters change from the beginning to the end of the movie? How does Rock and Roll music impact the main characters? What is the concept of “fan love” as envisioned by various characters? How are women portrayed in this movie?

#### WEEK 2 (Smahl)

**TOPIC:** *Gimme Shelter* (1970, Maysles, Zwerin)

This documentary chronicles the final weeks of The Rolling Stones 1969 Tour which culminated in the disastrous Altamont Free Concert.

**QUESTIONS:**

How did planning mismanagement lead to violence at the concert? Were the Rolling Stones responsible in any way for the death(s) that occurred? How did the Stones’ particular brand affect the crowd? Peaceful mega concert (Woodstock, August 1969) to mayhem in just a few short months? How and why did this happen? What film innovations were employed by the team (Maysles, Zwerin). How do these contribute to the final product?

#### WEEK 3 (Sear)

**TOPIC:** *Elvis Presley: The Searcher* (2018, Zimny)

We focus on the 1st part of this 2-part documentary and the early part of Elvis’s career up through his legendary 1968 Comeback Concert.

**QUESTIONS:**

Did you experience the birth of Rock and Roll? If no, why not? If yes, what was your experience? Why did Rock and Roll emerge as the force in American pop music that it became? What is Rock and Roll? What is your view of Elvis Presley prior to when he went into the Army? What was Elvis’s impact on American music during that early phase in his career? Did Elvis’ career change after the Army? If so, how and why?

## LP<sup>2</sup> STUDY GROUP PROPOSAL FOR FALL 2022

### **WEEK 4** (O'Connell)

**TOPIC:** *Yesterday* (2019, Boyle)

What would the world of rock 'n roll have been without the Beatles?

**QUESTIONS:**

What was Jack's life before his accident? How does Jack react when he discovers that there are things from his world that are missing from the world he is in now? What is Jack's dilemma? After all, the Beatles don't exist here, do they?

### **WEEK 5** (Cristal): *20 Feet from Stardom* (2013, Neville)

**WEEK 6** (Smahl): *Rolling Thunder Review: A Bob Dylan Story* (2019, Scorsese)

**WEEK 7** (Sear): *Festival Express* (2003, Smeaton)

**WEEK 8** (O'Connell): *Brian Wilson: Long Promised Road* (2021, Wilson)

**WEEK 9** (Cristal): *This is Spinal Tap* (1984, Reiner)

**WEEK 10** (Smahl): *Summer of Soul* (2021, Thompson)

**WEEK 11** (Sear): *The Last Waltz* (1978, Scorsese).

**WEEK 12** (O'Connell): *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018, Singer, Fletcher)