

You're Not Supposed to Be Full of Yourself: A Conversation with Andrew Sarris

👤 Keith Uhlich 🕒 June 2001 📄 Andrew Sarris 📖 Issue 14



Andrew Sarris's apartment is much like the man himself – modest. It's a bright summer day on Manhattan's Upper East Side and I enter the home of one of the most influential movie critics ever. First thing I notice is the neatness of the place. So many movie buffs have cluttered homes – books scattered everywhere in floor-to-ceiling-piles, memorabilia piled in no discernible order – a reflection of the often schizophrenic mind that movies encourage.

In contrast, Sarris and his home is a model of order and sanity. While he finishes his morning coffee, I peruse his living room. Books on a variety of subjects line one wall, alphabetical by author. A print of Ingrid Bergman and Humphrey Bogart filming *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942) hangs on the opposite wall. A slightly tarnished wooden desk with an old typewriter and two couches with end tables are the major furnishings. A rather futuristic television set calls attention to itself, though its flat shape suggests it is trying to be as unobtrusive as possible. Glass seems to be the motif for the rest of the room. On one side, a bay of mirrors, on the other, a panel of windows that reveal the panoramic Manhattan skyline. It is at this point that Sarris joins me at the window and points out the blemish on his breathtaking view – the Guggenheim Museum. He then tells the story of the Guggenheim's construction and how he was originally opposed to it. You might expect this story to be related with the gruffness of the stereotypical elder, but Sarris is exceedingly polite. He does get in a few well-placed witticisms, but quickly accepts the multi-faceted truth of the situation. The museum, in the long run, does more good than harm.

This is an example of the Sarris I've come to know through his writing. He'll get in his barbs and then shake your hand. I sense that if anyone could befriend an enemy on art's battlefield, Sarris would be it. The basis for our interview is the festschrift – *Citizen Sarris: American Film Critic (1)* – written in his honor. Our exchange quickly evolved from those initial questions into a consideration of the life and work of a distinguished man who would do everything in his power to tip the scales away from idolatry and ego. I get the sense I've only scratched the surface of the Sarris mystique herein, but what I found was inspiring, intriguing, humorous, and heartbreaking. Modestly so, of course.

-KU

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Keith Uhlich: One of the things Emanuel Levy pointed out in the festschrift preface was that he tried to keep it a secret. Yet through the grapevine it got back to you. How did you hear about it?

Andrew Sarris: Well he *tried* to keep it a secret from me, but a lot of people he was contacting contacted myself and my wife Molly Haskell. Thus we found out about it. Actually the book was supposed to come out three years earlier. It was supposed to come out when I was seventy. In fact, I went to California back then largely to talk about the book and the book wasn't out yet. So there I was standing on the stage without a book. It's a difficult thing but I can't shake him by the neck and say "Emanuel, why didn't you have the book in on time?!" I mean I was brought up in the public school system and the worst thing was to be conceited. A lot of that has still stayed with me from grammar school especially that you're not supposed to be full of yourself. So this festschrift and the fact that so many people would write all of these nice things certainly leaves me, literally, speechless.

KU: And many of the contributors have met you only two or three times.

AS: A lot of them didn't know me very much except through my writing. And to look at my past writing encourages a kind of nostalgia. It's something that I did many years ago and, it doesn't make me nervous exactly, but I just think that's the past. I stand by everything I've ever written but I want to write other things.

KU: I'd like to get some of your background information. Where were you born?

AS: Born in Brooklyn, somewhere around Fort Hamilton Parkway. It's a rather nice neighborhood. I was born on October 31st, 1928.

KU: Halloween.

AS: Halloween, yeah. In fact kids in school used to say that I was the Halloween joke on my mother. (*laughs*) But 1928 was so significant for a lot of reasons. One, it was just a few days before Herbert Hoover was elected President. Two, everything was starting to go downhill. My father was in real estate so he owned a great amount of property in Brooklyn. My earliest memories are of a kind of luxury. When I was born we were rather well to do. My father and mother would dance at these outdoor palaces they used to have in Brooklyn. I also remember sitting in the back of a Pierce Arrow touring car, which was a very luxurious vehicle, singing a song in Greek about a young boy who falls in love with an older girl. "I Love the Young Girl" is roughly the title of it. The sun was shining white. It was the sunniest day in the world. That's my earliest childhood memory. And then in 1931 a bank in Austria folded. That was, I think, the real beginning of the Depression for us. Everybody put liens on my father's property and we were broke for eight or nine years. We were never poor. We were just always broke. We didn't have any money. My father didn't work, but my mother was some sort of a genius. A dollar a day and she could feed all four of us. My brother was born four years later, so he got the bad side, he got the depression side.

KU: As you were talking about the song, I remembered one statement where you said cinema was, "Girls, Girls, Girls!" Could you talk about that?

AS: François Truffaut had said pretty much the same thing. There are a lot of ways of saying it. For example, there's an old saying that an actress is more than a woman, and an actor is less than a man. I think it's rather reverse sexism in a way. But I think the reason most of us go to the movies, men and women both, is sexual. Movies are always much more attractive than people in real life and the world is much more romantic and exciting. That's always been the appeal. By saying "Girls, Girls, Girls!" I just wanted to demystify a lot of things. There's a family story, and I'll probably use it in my memoirs: one day my mother was pushing me in a standing stroller and we were passing a theater. I jumped out of the stroller and rushed into the theater. My mother ran in to get me, but when she tried to get me out of the theater, I began raising hell. I was screaming! The manager came over and said he'd let us both sit there without paying if my mother could keep me quiet. And boy did that movie keep me quiet.

KU: Was that your earliest movie memory?

AS: Well, I don't remember what I actually saw in that thing. As I said it's a family story and I've always accepted it and made it part of my biography. There's one movie I do remember very vividly, save for the title. It was a movie that was originally a silent and they added some sound to it. They kept reviving it intermittently so it's very hard to say when it is I actually first saw it. It took place underwater and there were a lot of people in diving outfits walking slowly, dreamlike, through it. That I remember and I think the reason I always remembered it vividly was because I came out of the womb not too long before. There was something womblike about it. But these anecdotes that I've dredged up is because of the way my life has turned out, and it's easy to magnify their importance. The movies were not my whole life. There were periods when I hardly ever went to the movies. A lot of other things happened in my life, but I didn't really, really get into movies until about the time I went to college. In that time there were a lot of theaters in New York that were showing revivals but we didn't have television or videotapes. Nowadays it's so easy to catch up on things if you want to.

KU: I'm looking at the television and VCR you have now. Times certainly have changed.

AS: I don't have a DVD yet.

KU: Not yet. Getting to that place, maybe?

AS: I may get one eventually, but right now I'm just swamped with all these tapes. I barely have time to see them. We got an upgrade on our television cable. We have two hundred channels.

KU: Oh boy.

AS: Yeah, you can channel surf all night. And there's all kind of weird channels that show all kind of rock music and pop and old jazz.

KU: There's a saying you have in several of your reviews where you talk about being of a certain era music-wise.

AS: Jerome Kern time warp. (*laughs*)

KU: Jerome Kern time warp that's it. Has music had an important effect on your life?

AS: Yeah. Actually my nostalgic memories of life in Brooklyn had more to do with radio. I remember once I was listening to some of the George Gershwin songs from *Porgy and Bess* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1935 stage production), particularly "I Got Plenty of Nothin'," a very appropriate song for that period. That and other songs very much link me to a certain time – the music and radio dramas. I probably heard more movies on *Lux Radio Theatre* (1934 – 1948), with Cecil B. DeMille announcing them, than I ever saw. He had a mellifluous radio voice. If you've heard him in *Sunset Boulevard* (Billy Wilder, 1950) you know he had a really fantastic voice. He used to narrate the beginnings of all these current movies and that's how I experienced them. Radio was a big thing in that time because we all huddled around it.

KU: Did you hear the original Orson Welles broadcast of *War of the Worlds* (Welles, 1938 radio broadcast)?

AS: No that's one thing that I didn't hear at the time. I've heard it since. I think the hysteria it caused was mostly in New Jersey, because that's where it was set, sort of pre-*Sopranos* (David Chase, 1999-present) I suppose. We were Republicans most of that period. My line is we were the only Republican family to vote in Brooklyn in 1936. We didn't like Roosevelt very much, and Welles occasionally appeared around him. Welles to me was a kind of noisy troublemaker. He would lose his temper. We were so conservative.

KU: I just saw recently some of his *Don Quixote* (Orson Welles, released 1992) in which he inserted himself at several ages because he shot it over three decades.

AS: Oh yeah. Well that was a later period. Of course I had a more complicated view of him eventually. I had a more complicated view politically and I became more liberal as I went on.

KU: In reading your work it seems that, as you've gone on, you've incorporated a lot more viewpoints into your worldview. It's not just one-way or the other. It can be a lot of things.

AS: Oh yeah, it's a very tricky thing. I'm now in the center more or less. I've moved from the right to the center you might say. One day in 1948, I found myself walking on the street and I had a Truman button on. It was like my road to Damascus. Suddenly I realized that I'd changed, that I was at least a Democrat. I wasn't a Republican any more. As late as 1946, when I was eighteen, Republicans all won those Congressional races and I was very happy that they won. Sometime after that these liberal professors at Columbia eventually got to me and what they said made sense, so I became more or less a liberal, but a very centrist one. I always remained anti-Communist, but I also became very anti-conservative.

KU: I watched *A King in New York* (Charles Chaplin, 1957) recently and that dealt with the House Un-American Activities Committee to an extent. I liked the gag with the fire hose that Chaplin does in that, where he sprays the HUAC committee.

AS: Yeah, well Chaplin was a fellow traveler. He was a little too left for me but I wasn't crusading about Chaplin. I actually think Chaplin's very foolish and naïve politically. There's a story from the '30s that he visited Albert Einstein and said, "I have a plan to save the world." And Einstein said, "Do you know anything about economics?" And Chaplin said, "No." And Einstein said, "Don't waste my time." But Chaplin knew something about economics apparently because in 1928 he looked around and he saw the farmers were really suffering and going bankrupt. So he sold all his stock. And he was one of the few people, unlike Groucho Marx and my father, who weren't wiped out in the crash. My father, he was a big problem. He always wanted more and more. He was investing not just in stocks but also in real estate, and he just never put aside any cash. We were a family and he didn't provide for us really, but it wasn't because he was spending the money on drink or women or anything. My brother was very much like my father when it came to finances. My brother died in a skydiving accident in 1960.

KU: I remember hearing about that. I think you might have mentioned that at the American Museum of the Moving Image (AMMI) when you introduced *The Shop Around the Corner* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1940).

AS: Maybe, maybe, I don't know. I've mentioned it quite a few times in print.

KU: I know that incident affects some of your viewings of movies. When you talked about it you acknowledged the personal investment we all have in movies.

AS: Yeah, and I've been trying to get started on a sort of personal memoir and I have to say I find I've been sort of scattering it around in my reviews all these years.

KU: Pauline Kael wrote in her introduction to *For Keeps (2)* that, "I'm frequently asked why I don't write my memoirs. I think I have."

AS: Yeah well she's very personal. I was talking to somebody recently about her salvaging *Last Tango in Paris* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1972). People really hated it and she wrote this thing in *The New Yorker* about *Le Sacre du Printemps* (Igor Stravinsky, 1913 musical performance) and all that stuff. Well I sat behind her in the New York Film Festival and I could see she was really into it and really excited. I think what she communicated in that review was this orgasmic involvement in film. She's a very sharp and smart journalist.

KU: In spite of all the differences that you've had, have you spoken with her?

AS: No we don't speak. But we don't carry any grudges about each other. I'm very sorry that she's out of it because of the Parkinson's. It's not something I rejoice in. There's something Northrop Frye said once, "Ever since the Iliad we've come to believe that the fall of an enemy is tragic rather than comic," and I feel that way. It's sad. She's older than I am, and that was a shock when I first met her. I could see that life had been a little hard on her. That made her much more formidable an adversary because she didn't have the usual narcissistic vanity. With the babes like Sontag and Steinem you could appeal to that side of them. You couldn't with her. She wasn't buying any of that.

KU: How about books in your life?

AS: I was a reader at a very early age. Books, newspapers, anything I could lay my hands on. I was very much a print freak, much more than anything else. I have no visual sense. I can't draw at all, not even minimally. I've often said I have no visual sense and, when I became a film critic, I had to develop one. In the beginning it didn't matter because like most people I *looked* at movies, I didn't *see* them. I was influenced very much by what had been written before by people like Greerson and Meyer Levin. I was very influenced by the social consciousness thing. So it was very funny when people began tagging me as an "art for arts sake" person. It was very ironic because I began as a very political person, very interested in social issues more than anything else. But then the French came along, Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rohmer, and Bazin. They were not Marxist like most of the serious film writers before them were. They looked at things without a sociological predilection and they began seeing a lot of things that we hadn't. When I reviewed *East of Eden* (Elia Kazan, 1955) for *Film Culture* in 1956 or 1957, I think it was Chabrol who described my review as "annoying." And he was right. I was describing the film in purely sociological terms, so the French *saw* one movie and we *listened* to another. But if you just look at that film, if you just see what's happening visually, it's quite a different movie. This doesn't mean I think that movies have to be stupid and clumsy, but I do at times have to readjust my viewing and really study films again.

KU: In your teaching career, how do you find your students have changed over the years?

AS: I think in the late '60s, early '70s I had a lot more sass than I do now. And kids thought they knew it all, you know the Vietnam generation. They were all of them very insulting. But it was livelier – they talked a lot and were full of themselves. And I liked that because I could hone my techniques. Now they just sit there and don't participate that much, particularly the girls. But then at the end they come up with these fantastic papers.

KU: Do you teach undergraduate or graduate?

AS: Both.

KU: Is there a difference between the two levels would you say?

AS: For a while there I thought the graduate students were less *belles lettres* than the undergraduates. Somehow the undergraduates wrote better, more literary. But this is not the case now. I think on average this is probably the best group of graduate papers I've ever seen. I think kids are very smart today, contrary to what people are saying. I think the educational problem is different than it used to be. When I was going to school, way back in the dark ages, we were given all these empty conceptual boxes and we had to fill them in with information and experience. Now kids are bombarded with information from all over, about a hundred times more than we ever had, so we have to run after them and put boxes around what they know. But it's hard to know what we're getting. We're all getting different proportions of things. It's an educational challenge.

KU: Let's talk about some of the movies out right now. What have you seen that you recommend or don't recommend?

AS: I'm a little behind a lot of the current movies. I hope to catch up to them. I can't even keep up with all the tapes that people send me. It's a lot of time. But lately, I've found movies are more and more original, but not overwhelming. In other words, everybody says they want something new but when they get something really new it's too strange for them to react to or to catch up to.

KU: I'll bring up *Memento* (Christopher Nolan, 2000).

AS: *Memento* is a good example. *Memento* is interesting. There's a lot of interesting acting that goes on in it. But it's open-ended. And I think Christopher Nolan keeps one step ahead of his audience and, finally, I think he winds up one step ahead of himself. Well that's typical of these open-ended things. But they're more interesting than the attempts to replicate the old classics. I think very seldom does anything like that work. A movie that I saw that I liked a little bit was *Save the Last Dance* (Thomas Carter, 2001). I like – she's a student at Columbia so I have to be careful what I say – Julia Stiles. She's interesting. I spotted her in *Ten Things I Hate About You* (Gil Junger, 1999) and I followed her somewhat. And there's a very interesting interracial thing going on in *Save the Last Dance* that makes it very unusual, very different from anything in the past. So I like the open-endedness of things not the open-endings of things. I like the shattering of taboos, although one of my students wrote a paper in which he complained that you never saw people go to the bathroom in old-fashioned movies. But now I see everybody going to the bathroom. Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky could write whole books without people going to the bathroom. I don't know if that's so essential to see people sitting in a toilet bowl. That I could do without.

KU: As I recall *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) is one of the first times we see a toilet flush on screen.

AS: Yeah, well there was also a kind of a shock in 1928 with *The Crowd* (King Vidor, 1928) where you actually saw a toilet. You actually saw *that*. But now it's a lot of bathroom humor and so forth. But it's still interesting. I still find all these interesting movies to see. You know there are Korean directors who made eighty movies and we've never seen any of them. It's like with Japanese cinema. We discovered that these people had been making movies for years and years. The quantity is just astounding. That's why I wasn't worried about the strike. It appears there's not going to be a strike but even if there had been, I'd have just caught up on things from abroad. It would have been enough, as far as I'm concerned. But I think it's just so typical that *The Mummy Returns* (Stephen Sommers, 2001) made seventy million dollars. I haven't seen it but I believe everybody who says it's awful.

KU: Won't be checking that out I assume?

AS: Well I'll be checking it out I think on television, cable or video, sometime.

KU: I remember at AMMI you remarked about *Pearl Harbor* (Michael Bay, 2001) rather gruffly.

AS: Well I don't know. *Pearl Harbor* might be something. It's so strange, I can remember Pearl Harbor and a lot of the audience for *Pearl Harbor* thinks it's some exotic thing. I don't know. I think it's going to be one of those things where I'll sit there and I'll just disbelieve it.

KU: I was listening to a radio interview you did about three years ago when *You Ain't Heard Nothin' Yet (3)* came out and you said, and have said since, that, "Movies will never die."

AS: Oh yeah. I said that in a review of this movie with this actress that resembles Renee Zellweger. She's too much of a Renee Zellweger look-alike if you ask me. But yes, movies will never die and for an interesting reason. It's something Bazin sort of indicated and something that I've always felt – movies are not entirely an art form. For example, no director created Greta Garbo's cheekbones and a tree is a tree. Bazin used some of the same argument against photography. There's a lot of art in film but it's not entirely art. A lot of it is just reality and consequently the reality is always changing. When I was in the hospital in the mid '80s, people at the Museum of Modern Art brought me a triptych of my three goddesses: Margaret Sullavan, Vivien Leigh, and Greta Garbo.

KU: Girls, Girls, Girls.

AS: Girls, Girls, Girls. But while I hold those three in the highest regard, I'm still looking. You know, if I were in life as I am in my movie reviewing I'd be the biggest Don Juan, the biggest cad, in history. Anyway, you're always looking for new people, new things, a new world, and so that's why movies will never die. People will always want new vocations and new personalities.

KU: It's interesting thinking about that with all the Death of Film proclamations that are out now. Have you read Godfrey Cheshire's article *The Death of Film/The Decay of Cinema* (4)?

AS: I don't think I read that.

KU: Well, it basically addressed the technological changes that are happening in movies now where it's moving from film into digital technology.

AS: It's interesting: the other day I was looking at the Ebert show with Richard Roeper and Ebert was hitting that point again. Apparently he debated somebody in Cannes and Ebert was very much for film as opposed to digital. I'm wrestling with an idea. I've often said that kids who were born after television never experienced that initial awe that I did when I ran into that theater. I'd never seen anything like it! It was another world. Where did it come from? There was this beam of light! Certainly it's changed now. Kids don't have that same awe. They're probably more sophisticated about it than I am. They know more about the technology than I do. But something strikes me about that and it's something Bazin said just casually, "It's too early to tell how much film is going to change our consciousness." And I think what people are forgetting is that there are two stages with film and TV and everything. The first stage is the way you see it be it half-drunk in a bar or at home with family or friends. You're seeing something always. Once you've seen something, some of it sticks and it takes on a different dimension in your mind. That's the second stage. For about a century now we've been looking at movies and I think some things stick and some things don't and that's what's interesting. That's why I love teaching kids and showing them these old classics and seeing the things that work with them. There are things that some of them can't understand and things that just last. One thing I found over the years is that W.C. Fields and the Marx Brothers date worse than anything. Kids don't respond to them at all. They know they should but they don't. Whereas a lot of movies that were considered soap operas at the time of release, kids go crazy over now. They really react to the sentiment and the emotion. They really feel, if anything, stronger than people did at the time. So this interested me. The sentiment lasts.

KU: So will technology then be transcended?

AS: Technology I think is incidental. I mean a lot of the talk about what's happening is about economic situations. And also the question of digital animation. I think animation was more powerful when it was less omnipresent. I think there's too much animation now. To me, live action cinematography and narrative is pretty much everything. I don't say that's the only thing and I can see that there are impressive things done but they don't create the same kind of unconscious thing. Something like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (David Hand, Walt Disney, 1937) did but I think it's because there was something about *Snow White* that was really hyper-narrative.

KU: Now animation has gone into live-action films as well, like *The Perfect Storm* (Wolfgang Petersen, 2000). The storm was basically animated on the computer.

AS: Oh yeah, well that one doesn't bother me. It bothers me sometimes and it doesn't others. It didn't bother me in *The Perfect Storm*. I think *The Perfect Storm* was very much underrated. *Mrs. Miniver* (William Wyler, 1942) had little toy boats running around pretending to be destroyers and we accepted that. I don't think that's important. Although I did feel in *Gladiator* (Ridley Scott, 2000), a movie I didn't like, that all those digitalized crowds had no life to them. The crummiest collection of extras in the old *Quo Vadis?* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1951) had much more force and fire than those in *Gladiator*.

KU: Because they were actually there.

AS: They were there and they were flesh and blood. But there again I think people are missing the point. You still have the same basic problem: To make people feel things. I mean now you look at some of the process shots in *Notorious* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1946) and you know Ingrid Bergman and Cary Grant are not sitting in Rio, but who cares because you have Bergman and Grant to look at. (*laughs*)

KU: I agree. Could you trace a line for us through your film writing from *Film Culture* to the *Village Voice* to, now *New York Observer*?

AS: Jonas Mekas is very crucial to it. He walked into this class I was taking at Columbia when I was going to teacher's college. He was starting a new magazine called *Film Culture*. This was the winter of 1954, beginning of 1955. I came aboard for the second issue. There was no money in it, but I edited some manuscripts. In return for doing the editing he let me review a film. Then I contributed on and off to *Film Culture* until about *The American Cinema* (5) period, but I wasn't doing it regularly. One day in 1960 I had sort of stopped writing. I had been a reader at Fox. I was doing other things. And I got a job at the census in 1960. I was a technical officer in Brooklyn. Don't ask me how. I'm saving that for my memoirs. Anyway I bumped into Jonas in the street, and he said, "I'm editing my film *Guns of the Trees* (Jonas Mekas, 1964) and I'm doing a column for the *Village Voice*. Would you like to fill in for a week or two?" I said, "Sure." It was the first time I had ever heard of the *Village Voice*. The first film I reviewed, August 11, 1960, was *Psycho*. I got so many angry letters about it. It was my first *Cahiers du Cinéma* review you might say.

KU: What was it about the review that spurred anger?

AS: The idea that I promulgated that Hitchcock was a major avant-garde artist. Everybody knew what Hitchcock did. Most people liked him, but didn't take him seriously. So that was the beginning. I did a few more pieces and then Jonas came back. Then I took off for Europe in 1961. This was after my brother died. I began to do things recklessly rather than prudently. It was getting me nowhere. In Europe I had letters of accreditation from *Harpers* and *Saturday Review* and the *Village Voice* to submit articles from Cannes. I didn't write a word. I developed a terrible case of writer's block. So I went to Paris and spent several months there and then came back. It was a period of finally defining who I was and what I was going to do. Then I came back and, through fortuitous circumstances I walked right into the *Voice* and I began doing a parallel column to Jonas.

KU: You were in your thirties at this point?

AS: Yeah I came back at the end of 1962. I was thirty-four. So then I began writing weekly for the *Voice*. I kept writing until about 1984 or 1985. I had a terrible illness. I was out for seven months and I nearly died. But the *Voice* and Columbia University, where I taught and still do, were both fantastic and generous. Both had a tremendous medical plan and, not only that, they both kept me on full salary for the seven months. That's why I'll never say anything against the *Voice*. But when I got back I had some problems with various people. I wasn't politically as far left as everybody else at the *Voice*. I sort of had political problems there. And at that point I just felt so sick of it.

KU: You were there over twenty years right?

AS: Well it was twenty-nine years: 1960-1989. I figured after that I'd go to my mountain cabin and write *Moby Dick* (6). But just about the time I left the *Voice*, *New York Observer* called me and asked, "How would you like to do a movie column?" I thought about it for about five seconds and I said, "Okay." There was something very bad about it, though. I said, "You already have a film critic." He was a nice kid from NYU and he wrote very good columns. He still contributes occasionally. But I didn't want to squeeze anybody. I had enough of that politicking at the *Voice*. They said they wouldn't do it, but of course they lied. They kept him for a few weeks and then they squeezed him out. I felt very badly about it.

KU: In spite of that, do you find it a good place to be writing now?

AS: It's a different place, I don't write as long as I did at the *Voice*. At the *Voice*, writers had paradise. You could write as long as you wanted and they just made more space. Now I don't get any continuations on the pages. I've got my page and that's it. And I've been increasingly squeezed by movie ads. Movie people want their ads to appear on my page. It's very flattering, but of course it cuts me down a bit. I've had to write shorter and it's a different kind of writing than I did at the *Voice*. At the *Voice* I could spill out my guts. Here I have to pick and choose.

KU: Do you feel that you want to continue writing as long as you possibly can?

AS: Oh yeah, writing and teaching. I want to go on forever until I die. I have no desire to retire. I'm going to be seventy-three this year. I certainly would not want to stop teaching before eighty. I don't think there's anything that can make me stop.

Endnotes

1. Emanuel Levy (ed.), *Citizen Sarris: American Film Critic – Essays in Honor of Andrew Sarris*, Scarecrow Press, Inc., Lanham, Maryland, 2001
2. Pauline Kael, *For Keeps: 30 Years at the Movies*, Penguin USA, September, 1996
3. Andrew Sarris, *You Ain't Heard Nothin' Yet: The American Talking Film, History and Memory, 1927 – 1949*, Oxford University Press, Inc., November, 1999
4. Godfrey Cheshire, *The Death of Film/The Decay of Cinema*, New York Press, 1998
5. Andrew Sarris, *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions, 1929 – 1968*, Da Capo Press, Inc., 1968, 1985, 1996
6. Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, 1839

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