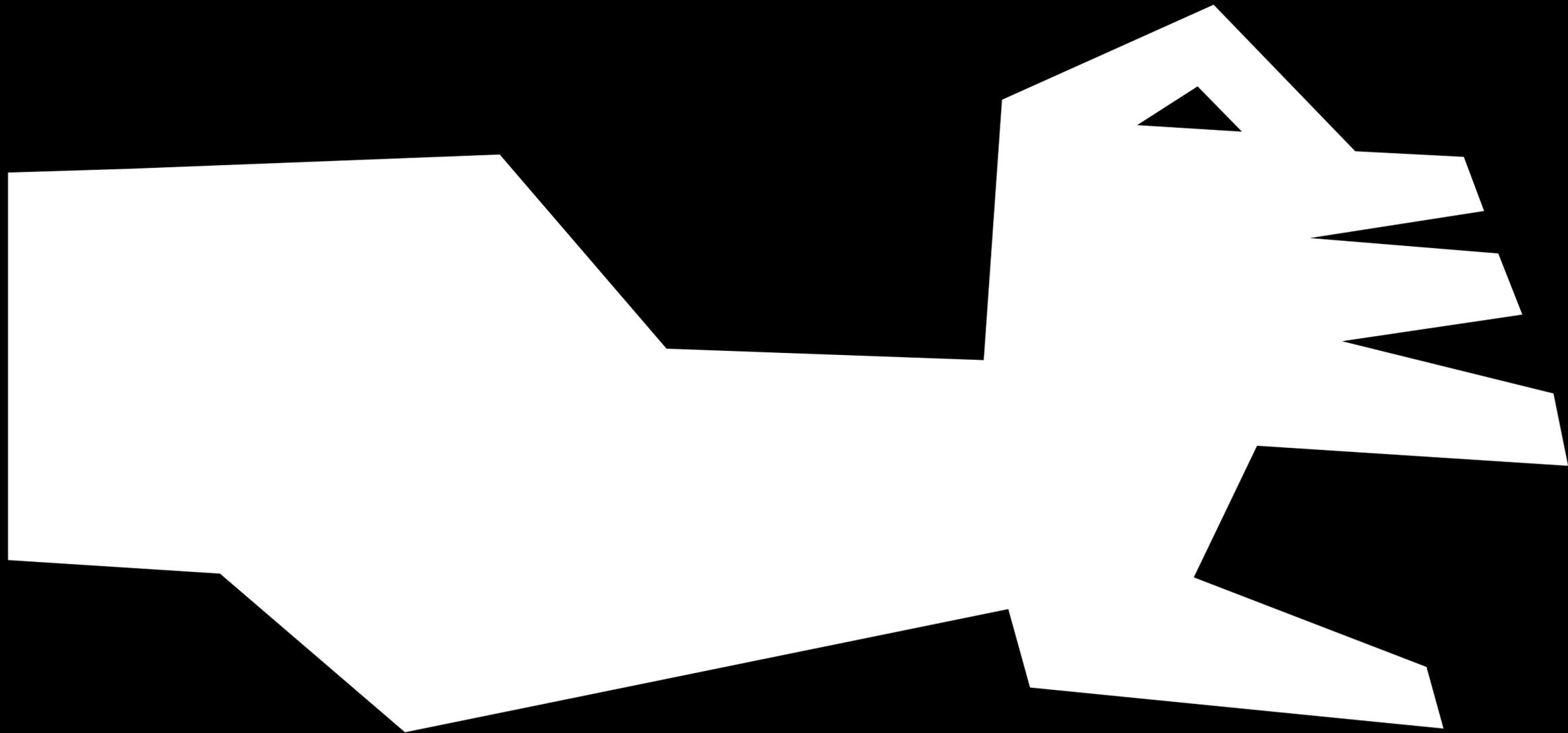


THE POWER OF ONE ARM

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HOW SAUL BASS REINVENTED
THE MOVIE TITLE



"A SIMPLICITY WHICH ALSO HAS A CERTAIN AMBIGUITY AND A METAPHYSICAL IMPLICATION THAT MAKES THE SIMPLICITY VITAL. IF IT'S SIMPLE SIMPLE, IT'S BORING."

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SAUL

MASTER OF INTRODUCING

Saul Bass, 1920, New York -1996, Los Angeles, was a major American designer and filmmaker. He attended the Art Students League in Manhattan before going on to design film advertisement in Hollywood in the 1940s. His extensive collaborations with Alfred Hitchcock, Otto Preminger, Stanley Kubrick, and numerous other film directors opened up a new field for graphic designers. His groundbreaking work in the music industry and corporate identity further consolidated his name as one of the new breed of designers in the 20th century. Bass won an Academy Award for the Best Documentary for his own short film, *Why Man Creates*.



"HE WAS SO TALENTED THAT HE COULD HAVE BEEN MANY THINGS. I BELIEVE HE WOULD HAVE MADE AN IMPACT IN ANY FIELD HE ENTERED. YET, AMAZINGLY, AS A TEENAGER HE HAD WANTED TO BE A GRAPHIC DESIGNER AND THAT DREAM CAME TRUE - AS DID HIS LATER DREAM OF MAKING FILMS."

ART GOODMAN

*Saul Bass at
his desk
in Los Angeles,
1958*

SIMPLIFIED

NEW KIND OF ABSTRACTION

In the early 1950s, Saul found his new levels of confidence and his work increasing emphasis on bolder and more symbolic forms, as well as narrative ad emotional content, he searched less for universally applicable formulae and relied more on his own instincts. Traces of earlier influences reserved as his designs moved more to the dramatically simplified forms, flat color, single image and minimal text seen in the early twentieth-century German posters that he had admired in this youth.

Problem-solving and a conscientious attitude toward content continued to underpin his work, but Saul allowed himself much greater freedom to draw upon this “inner well of intuition,” his strong sense of humor and the human dimensions of projects. Bass’ most well-known title sequence which illustrates this ability is in another Preminger film, “The Man with the Golden Arm.” To present the movie which tells the story of a heroin addict, Bass uses a series of moving white abstract lines on a black background which eventually combine into one single arm, representing the subject matter of the film. At the time, Hollywood typically portrayed drug addicts as worthless, low class drug fiends. Bass’ off-kilter lines combined with the jarring music soundtrack signaled viewers that Preminger’s film would not offer

the standard interpretation of drug addiction, and it also indicated that there would be no preconceived judgments made about the protagonist’s moral character.

Bass went on to create numerous other title sequences for popular films and was often asked to produce the accompanying promotional material as well. By utilizing symbols as representations of each film’s key elements and reproducing them in all aspects of the film’s advertisements, Bass created a method of branding a film with a recognizable identity, just as companies are typically branded today. posters for him, but also worked on his films. Bass’ involvement in the legendary shower scene in Psycho was controversial in retrospect; however, his involvement has since been documented by storyboards and sketches.



THE
MAN WITH
THE GOLDEN
ARM

with ARNOLD STANG
 DARREN McGAVIN
 ROBERT STRAUSS
 JOHN CONTE
 DORO MERANDE

GEORGE E. STONE
 GEORGE MATHEWS
 LEONID KINSKEY
 EMILE MEYER



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ked on his films. Bass' involvement in the legendary shower scene in Psycho was controversial in retrospect; however, his involvement has since been documented by storyboards and sketches.[3] At the end of Bass' career, there was a brief but fruitful collaboration with Martin Scorsese, who in 1991 not only used the film composition of the time for Cape Fear, a remake of the 1962 thriller A Bait for the Beast, but also sought something visually appropriate - and found it with Bass. Shortly before his death, Bass and his wife Elaine designed the highly acclaimed opening credits for Scorsese's Casino from 1995.

Title sequences of "The Man with the golden Arm," 1955

production manager
 JACK McEDWARD
 assistant directors
 HORACE HOUGH
 JAMES ENGLE
 script supervisor
 KATHLEEN FAGAN
 men's wardrobe JOE KING
 women's wardrobe
 ADELE PARMENTER
 camera operator
 ALBERT MYERS

makeup JACK STONE
 BERNARD PONEDEL
 BEN LANE

hair styling HELENE PARRISH
 HAZEL KEATS

lighting technician
 JAMES ALMOND

head grip MORRIS ROSEN

titles designed by
 SAUL BASS



EXPRESSIVE

POWER OF SYMBOLISM

In 1954, Saul Bass encountered a changing Hollywood. Television was taking over. New things had to be invented. The opening credits, which were mostly static, without movement or meaning, meaningless signs? Away with them! It was not for nothing that Bass had been a student of the Bauhaus-inspired painter, filmmaker and theoretician György Kepes. He thought art more functional and effective. Art and movement, the young motion designer was perfectly trained in. His ideas went into depth, understood the opening credits as something independent and serving. Bass' designs were also more graphic, playing with repetitive colors. His gift for reduction didn't exist before.



*The arm
symbolize the
drug addiction
of the
main karakter.*

A preference for the color red and animation of all kinds accompanied him throughout his life. Added to this was a love of continuous experimentation with a variety of innovative techniques and effects. But even more, Saul Bass realized that he could prepare the climate of the film with the very first frame. He „only“ had to capture the entire film with an open yet expressive visual motif.

He received his first commission from Otto Preminger, for whom he then designed all the posters and opening credits, including for „The Man with the Golden Arm“ with Frank Sinatra. And these opening credits were a sensation at the time. Bass immediately became the hottest designer in Hollywood. Because he had created something completely new: conceptual title design. On the posters, he no longer simply depicted drawn heads of Hollywood stars, as was customary at the time, but designed emblematic motifs that became the logo of the film. In the opening credits he no longer showed a scene, but a simplified, symbolic design language, which is above all abstract and yet tells all the essential elements of the film and its atmosphere. In „The Man with the Golden Arm“ Saul Bass' graphics congenially merge with Elmer Bernstein's music.

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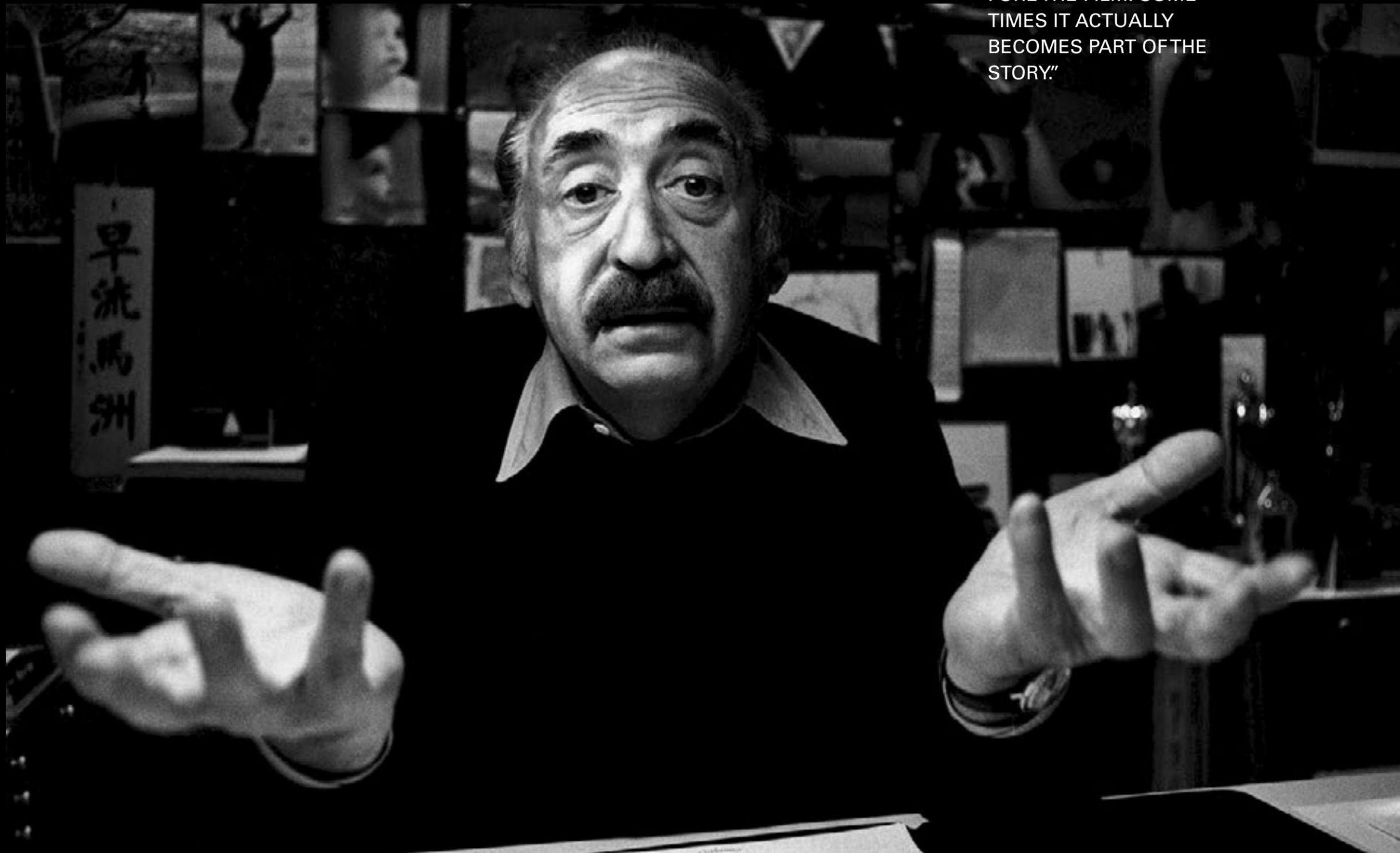
A recurring element, even on the cinema board.



A powerful arm, instead of photography.

INNOVATIVE

REINVENTION OF
MOVIE TITLE



"A TITLE CAN ACT AS A PROLOGUE. IT CAN ACTUALLY TELL YOU ABOUT THE TIME BEFORE THE FILM. SOMETIMES IT ACTUALLY BECOMES PART OF THE STORY."

He loved to probe „the emotional heart of the problem,” always trying to give form to feeling. The more expressive and symbolic nature of Saul’s work in the 1950s was also also a response to the postwar American fascination with psychology, which nurtured his long-term interest in the human psyche and symbols. But Saul no longer expected psychology, or anything else, to provide certainties.

He understood more deeply than many Modernists of his generation, be they designer or scientists, that many things are not „knowable.” This dates back to his adolescent interest in artifacts from cultures about which little is known except for evidence from physical remains. In the 1950s, Saul generated a virtual explosion of work in nearly every area of design from advertising, including billboards and illustration, to identity design, environments and architecture. He created trademarks for numerous companies and reshaped the images of others through distinctive advertising, packaging and television commercials. To clients willing to embark on the adventure with him, Saul brought his appetite for ideas, his playfulness and delight in engaging viewers in spirited games of visual thinking.

“I BEGAN DEALING WITH TITLES IN TERMS OF SETTING MOOD, CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE, AN ATTITUDE AND A GENERALIZED METAPHOR FOR WHAT WAS THE FILM ABOUT. AND SETTING UP THE SUBTEXT OF THE FILM.”



IMPACTFUL

INSPIRATION OF GENERATIONS

The youth of the 50s, influenced by music and art, is amazed when „the man with the golden arm“ hits the cinemas in 1956. „The screen has found in Saul Bass the creative artist capable of distracting the spectator from his own immediate experience...those who know him see Bass constantly in love with the well-presented image, marvelously modulating each emotion, and with a sensibility perfectly balanced by a sense of humor.“Saul brought a Modernist design sensibility to film titles and revolutionized not only what they looked like, but also how they were thought about.

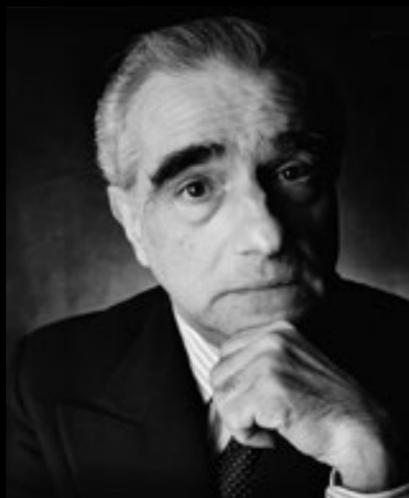
Saul's early film titles were major markers of modernity. They presented the new Hollywood and postwar America to audiences around the world. Hundreds of people have spoken to me about the impact that the titles for *The Man with the Golden Gun* had upon them in the mid to late 1950s; the examples that follow give

a flavor of the responses. In Britain, the so-called youth revolution of the late 1950's and early 1960s was marked by a strong mix of art and music; many involved recall Saul's work as inspirational in their teenage years. My husband, Andy Hoogenboom, then an art student exhibiting sculpture and playing bass in Alexis Korner's Blues Incorporated, was one of those who came of the age during the heavily United States influenced cultural mélange.

Enthusiastic audience as the opening credits appear on the screen.

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*Martin Scorsese, 78,
film director,
producer, screenwriter,
actor.*

“HE WAS A LEGEND IN MY EYES. HIS DESIGNS, FOR FILM TITLES AND COMPANY LOGOS AND RECORD ALBUMS AND POSTERS, DEFINED AN ERA. IN ESSANCE, THEY FOUND AND DISTILLED THE POETRY OF THE MODERN, INDUSTRIALIZED WORLD. THEY GAVE US A SERIES OF CRYSTALLIZED IMAGES, EXPRESSIONS OF WHO AND WHERE WE WERE AND OF THE FUTURE AHEAD OF US. THEY WERE IMAGES YOU COULD DREAM ON. THEY STILL ARE.”



*Katsama Asaba, 80,
a Japanese
graphic designer.*

“I USED TO BE A FILM FREAK, AND WENT TO SEE MOVIES EVERY DAY... THE TITLE BACK SO STRUCK ME THAT I HARDLY REMEMBER THE MOVIE ITSELF. IT WAS EXTREMELY INNOVATIVE, AND MADE ME AWARE THAT TITLE COULD SURELY BE CONSIDERED AS RESPECTABLE DESIGN WORKS.”



*Charlie Watts, 79,
drummer of
the Rolling Stones.*

“I LOVED THAT TITLE SEQUENCE OF COURSE, AT THE TIME I DIDN'T KNOW THE NAME SAUL BASS, I ONLY REALIZED WHO HE WAS WHEN I WENT TO WORK IN GRAPHIC DESIGN. AT THE CHARLES HOBSON AGENCY IN LONDON. AS A LAYOUT MAN. SAUL BASS WAS THE PERSON EVERYONE IN THE AGENCY ADMIRER. HE WAS THE HOT DESIGNER... WE ALL ASPIRED TO THAT BEAUTIFUL SIMPLIFICATION. THEN CAME ANATOMY OF A MURDER. AFTER THAT HE WAS LIKE GOD.”

koksen ist achtziger.



vieviel koffein

IMPRESSUM

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