

[Exchange]

LE PETIT SOLD-OUT

From emails exchanged on August 27 about an unauthorized screening of Jean-Luc Godard's Film Socialisme scheduled for that evening at the New York City activist art organization 16 Beaver Group in collaboration with the film collective Red Channels. On August 23, Scott Foundas, an organizer of the New York Film Festival, which was hosting the film's official U.S. premiere, demanded that the 16 Beaver screening be canceled and notified the film's international distributor, Wild Bunch. Vincent Maraval is a producer as well as a sales agent for Wild Bunch.

Dear Scott,

As a co-organizer of 16 Beaver Group, I was forwarded your recent emails. I have to say I was alarmed by the arrogant and legalistic tone of your email. At screenings like this we are invested in having a productive and in-depth discussion that takes seriously cinema as a political project—the kind of treatment for which *Film Socialisme* seems to call.

We had no idea that *Film Socialisme* was considered a commercial project. We had planned a screening before your lineup was announced. We planned to screen a digital file, for free, which has been made available (not through us) for free for some months now. It was my impression that this mode of circulation had been encouraged by the filmmaker. Given our cultural cachet among a younger set of filmgoers, such a screening would facilitate a renewed interest in the recent work of the Great Master, perhaps making Godard cool and relevant again. I would suggest that were you in a different mood about this matter, the NYFF and Wild Bunch should be thanking us for providing this free service. Our screening has been canceled, but since you have demanded proof, we request that you, Scott Foundas, come to 16 Beaver to discuss why the screening cannot take place. Within this discussion, we would hope to hear a specific application of intellectual-property law to *Film Socialisme*, perhaps even a close reading of the final scene. I imagine you've seen it? The last lines of the film fading in over an FBI copyright warning, QUAND LA LOI N'EST PAS JUSTE, PASSE AVANT LA LOI . . . NO COMMENT.

We would also be interested in hearing about different modes of writing about film—how does one go from film criticism to legal threats, and what does that feel like? We have been holding talks and discussions for many years about the cultural dimensions of economic neoliberalism. These questions of institution

and professionalization are of great interest to us. We would like to hold this event, "Socialisme Will Not Take Place," sometime prior to the festival.

Best Regards,
Benj Gerdes

Dear Sir,

The problem is that you seem considering that films belong to you and you ignore the copyrights. For films to be made, we need money and against money copyrights. Jean-Luc never encouraged his films to be seen for free. He never encouraged piracy. Jean-Luc just says that we should not pay rights for using footages of other films because while authors have rights they also have obligations, obligations to make available their footages for other artists. I know by heart

[Denial]

FURRY LOGIC

From a memorandum issued in August by Judge Ronald Folino of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. Forty-four-year-old Gary Guy Mathews is a self-described "furry," or a person who identifies with a specific animal, and often wears a dog costume.

Mr. Mathews seeks to change his name to "Boomer the Dog." In his petition, Mathews states: "I've been known as Boomer the Dog by friends in the community for more than 20 years. I want to bring my legal name in line with that." It is easy to see that the proposed name is likely to result in confusion in the marketplace, business records, and public documents. Moreover, the proposed name change would have unintended consequences, putting the public welfare at risk. Consider the following example: petitioner witnesses a serious automobile accident and telephones for an emergency medical response. The dispatcher queries as to the caller's identity, and the caller responds, "This is Boomer the Dog." It is not a stretch to imagine the telephone dispatcher concluding that the call is a prank and refusing therefore to send an emergency medical response. I am denying petitioner's request. Although petitioner apparently wishes it were otherwise, the simple fact remains that he is not a dog.

the position of people like you, which is to deny property for your personal use but you big generosity to make GODARD relevant stops when it comes to remunerate the author himself. Quentin TARANTINO called his company A BAND APART in tribute to GODARD. A journalist asked GODARD what he was thinking about TARANTINO admiration and he replied, "I don't give a shit, I would prefer him to give me money," but of course he let him call his company that way without asking for anything.

So, we thank you for your attempt to "make GODARD relevant" but we work on that since many years now with the support of national distributors worldwide and festivals that bring us advertisement and high-profile screenings, and I even have the feeling that the announcement of his career OSCAR for next November has nothing to do with the announcement of your screening through a "file made available." I would have liked to come to explain to your viewers what piracy is and comment on your political statement that makes everything available for free because QUAND LA LOI EST INJUSTE, LA JUSTICE PASSE AVANT LA LOI but I can't be there as I will be in Venice and Toronto trying to exploit and run a commercial operation. I hope we can find you a better material than a file next year and screen FILM SOCIALISME to your friends and debate about the possibility of leaving with your projector and your TV screen.

Best Regards,
Vincent Maraval

[Mea Culpa]

NOTHING BUT REGRET

From an August 2003 letter written by James Jae Lee as part of a plea bargain on a charge of smuggling an illegal immigrant across the United States–Mexico border, for which Lee was sentenced to eighteen months in prison. In September, Lee was shot and killed by police after taking hostages at the Discovery Channel headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Your Honor,

I just wanted to write to you on my own behalf as to what I have done before you sentence me.

My life seemed over. After years and years of dead-end jobs, failed attempts at a normal life, trying in vain to give some meaning to my life, only to end up disillusioned and cynical. Severely depressed and feeling down, there I was

in a Tijuana hotel being further subjected to more of life's brutality. I was just finished being choked and robbed. Then they offered me work. I had nothing left, so I tried it. I started to smuggle people for them.

For one brief moment in my whole worthless life I felt good about myself. I felt like I was really helping people. I have never saved a person's life, but it felt the same as I imagine it would have felt. For once my life seemed to actually benefit the lives of others.

That feeling quickly eroded to a deep shame and an awakened sense of guilt. Every day I wake up to sadness and depression. I know I was wrong. And I now know how dangerous smuggling can be. I feel nothing but regret. Life has been a nightmare for me, a living, breathing nightmare.

Looking at my life through my probation report shows a bad family relationship, a string of dead-end jobs, few friends, and no personal relationships or offspring. You won't receive a touching letter from a little girl begging for mercy for her daddy. No such person exists. Nor will a deluge of letters come from distraught family members. No one cares. Nor will there be an overload of letters of support from personal friends. I have no friends. After thirty-six years of my life, I have absolutely nothing to show for it.

But I would like you to consider how this part is a positive reflection on me. If I had children, I would be a bad father, so isn't it good that I never had any? As for family, all I can say is that I avoid them to preserve my sanity. I think that they are better off without me in their lives. As to any friends, I have been and always will be a loner. My life as a child consisted of being alone in my room drawing pictures out of comic books. Needless to say this didn't help me to develop any good social habits.

This is the only good thing about me: I can draw. But if knowing how to draw is all it took, I would be successful today. In my experience, I have found that it is not. Enclosed are samples of my best portraits. I can complete one in about fifteen to twenty minutes. My goal is to be able to complete an oil portrait in thirty minutes to an hour in various styles of different masters. I would really appreciate it if you sent me somewhere I could paint with oils and acrylics. When I get out I am going to try to do that for a living. I already have several referrals to find work doing portraits at fairs and tattoo shops.

When I get out of prison, I undoubtedly will have the same personality traits as I had before. I wish I could point a finger at someone or something and magically be someone else. But I can't. My goal in life is to stay out of prison and live life with as little pain as possible. I