

PITTSBURGH POLICE FILM SERIES

Sponsored by the Lemberg Center for the Study of Violence at Brandeis University, the Pittsburgh police films were shot by John Marshall in 1969 and 1970. Marshall used a Bogdanowicz modified Auricon with 12-120 Zoom, and later and Eclair NPR with 9.5-95 mm Angenieux Zoom. Sound was recorded using Nagras with Sennheiser shotgun mikes.

In spite of the racially tense climate in the city, following civil disorders in which 2000 people were arrested (although no one was killed) in response to the death of Martin Luther King, permission to film was granted by the Director of Public Safety and by each Station's Inspector. Individual officers provided access, and in each case the people involved gave their consent. Several years later, the Department and individual policemen were invited to participate in the discussion film *The 4th and 5th and the Exclusionary Rules*, but the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association would not allow participation. The Pittsburgh Police Department now has copies of most of these films, all of which have been shown to Department members.

The films are designed for use in law schools, community relations projects, sociology and urban studies programs, for use by the police themselves. In Pittsburgh, sequences shown to recruits in training and to off-duty officers provoked lively discussions about the conduct and decisions made by officers in the actual filmed events. Opinions were often divided on particular cases, as well as on the basic issues of police role. Recruits and officers argued about the extent to which the police must function as "social workers," becoming involved in domestic situations, and about their biases about men and women. "We always believe the woman and arrest the guy." said one policeman.

Underlying most of these films are the issues of privacy and civil liberties versus police intervention, interrogation, and search and seizure. More specifically, the films may be grouped into several clusters that address various dimensions of these broad issues:

A. The Job: Films which focus on the variety and ambiguity of police roles include: *A Forty Dollar Misunderstanding*, *Vagrant Woman*, *Nothing Hurt But My Pride*, *Youth and The Man of Property*, *Inside/Outside Station Nine*.

B. Searches and Seizures: Fourth Amendment issues are addressed in such films as *Three Domestics* (in the first sequence, a warrant has been issued; in the third case, a man is simply hauled away) *Wrong Kid*, and *After The Game*. In the latter case, the police must choose between violating the boys' Fourth Amendment rights, and ignoring the dangers of glue-sniffing in which the teenagers are involved.

Pride, Youth and The Man of Property, Inside/Outside Station Nine.

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C. Asking Questions: Fifth Amendment issues are at stake in *Investigation of a Hit and Run* and *The Informant*. In the latter film, a young black man is booked on a burglary charge and presses for information about "communists" and "agitators" in the racially tense city. Relevant to this group B is also the discussion film, *The 4th and 5th and the Exclusionary Rule*.

D. Public Place: *You Wasn't Loitering* and *Henry is Drank* dramatize the issues of civic order versus civil liberties, of public versus private.

The films in these series lend themselves especially well to analytical treatments in "clusters" such as these, since many are short sequences and none are narrated. The grouping suggested here represent examples, and numerous other combinations may be constructed in order to explore and illustrate particular themes.

Films

AFTER THE GAME b/w, 9 minutes

Police search for drugs in a house where they arrest a group of boys who return from a basketball game and are accused of having a loud party and sniffing glue.

A FORTY DOLLAR MISUNDERSTANDING b/w, 8 minutes

White policemen intervene when a black woman calls to complain that her boyfriend stole forty dollars.

THE 4th AND 5th AND THE EXCLUSIONARY RULE b/w, 80 minutes

This film consists of sequences from the Pittsburgh police footage intercut with a panel discussion moderated by Professor James Vorenberg of Harvard Law School. Community organizers, police, students, and lawyers discuss the issues raised by four sequences, including the implications of the 4th and the Constitutional amendments and the Exclusionary Rule of Evidence for search, seizure and interrogation procedures. The film demonstrates the multiplicity of roles in police work and examines the conflicts between how the police define their duties and what the public expects of them.

HENRY IS DRUNK b/w , 7 minutes

Pittsburgh police observe a man's questionable driving pattern and request him to leave his car and take a cab.

THE INFORMANT b/w, 24 minutes

This film focuses on a black burglary suspect who, during interrogation by the police, offers his services as an "undercover" informant -providing the police will suppress his charge.

INSIDE/OUTSIDE STATION 9 b/w, 90 minutes

A number of sequences show some of the events and people in the daily lives of several policemen, including their intervention in domestic quarrels, the handling of a hit-and-run case, the approaches taken toward loitering youths, police, offers his services as an "undercover" informant -providing the police will suppress his charge.

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INVESTIGATION OF A HIT AND RUN b/w 35 minutes

This film follows the investigation of a hit-and-run accident by two officers, with the initial reports, the questioning of people who witnessed the 18-year-old suspect, and his girlfriend's subsequent interrogation and statement. A number of factors complicate the case: the suspect was without a driver's license; he reported the car stolen to cover himself; he could not be persuaded to confess; and the girl was pregnant. The police use considerable pressure on the girl and treat her eventual statement as though it were a confession.

A LEGAL DISCUSSION OF A HIT AND RUN b/w, 28 minutes

A Harvard Law School class, led by Professor James Vorenberg, discusses the salient legal points about the police investigation and interrogation and the rights of witnesses or suspects after the class has screened the film *Investigation of a Hit and Run*.

MANIFOLD CONTROVERSY b/w, 3 minutes

A customer tries to explain to police why he feels he has been cheated out of an exhaust system by a garage owner.

901/904 b/w, 65 minutes

In this film we accompany petrol cars 901 and 904 as they ply the streets of Pittsburgh. The diversity of situations to which the policemen are called upon to respond is striking: from a man who is furious because he cannot get his \$20 deposit refunded on an exhaust system that does not fit in his car, to an elderly white man who says he wants to shoot the black teenagers playing handball on his house wall, to a group of white teenage youths loitering in the streets on a sultry summer day. Scenes from short films, such as *Henry is Drunk* and *A Forty Dollar Misunderstanding*, are intercut with other material, including footage in the police station where the men talk about their experiences.

The striking element in many of these scenes is the level of frustration, anger, and at times a feeling of impending violence. This is true of the policemen themselves (from "I'm not talking nice no more" to some brutal beatings), as well as the people of the city, who speak of guns and fear. As Laura Nader points out in the film *Little Injustices*, the typical American ignorance of and lack of access to the law so often leads to not the resolution but the escalation of conflict. As one irritated man exclaims to the officer who seems to dismiss his complaint as though he was simply a cantankerous old pest, "That's where I'd like to know the definition of breaking the law!"

Viewing this film, we also understand the exhaustion that police work entails, for the policemen often have no real solutions themselves. It is clear why policemen are so often the victims of public rage, and why they in turn may vent their own rage and frustration on the public.

NOTHING HURT BUT MY PRIDE b/w 15 minutes

This film consists of several sequences related to arrests after street fights involving policemen and discussions of the incidents by the police in cars and at the station.

THREE DOMESTICS b/w, 36 minutes

This film shows Pittsburgh police intervening in three domestic situations:

1) A woman in a black household wants the police to remove the man she has been living with in common law. They arrange for his arrest on an assault and battery charge;

2) A woman accuses her boyfriend of beating her, and the man accuses her of lying. The police remove the man with some difficulty;

3) A boisterous and drunken father is removed from his house to spend the night in jail at the insistence of his wife and older son. Throughout the sequence, the father is cared for by his younger son.

TWENTY-ONE DOLLARS OR TWENTY-ONE DAYS b/w, 8 minutes

A black man arrested for disorderly conduct and resisting arrest tells his story in night court.

TWO BROTHERS b/w, 4 minutes

This short film shows a family's attempt to resolve a dispute among themselves over a brother's damaged car, after the police have been called to intervene.

VAGRANT WOMAN b/w, 8 minutes

An unemployed woman who has been living in her car is questioned by police. They offer her advice and finally take her to the Salvation Army.

WRONG KID b/w, 4 minutes

The police, looking for a suspect, question the wrong youth.

YOUTH AND THE MAN OF PROPERTY b/w, 7 minutes

A suburban couple calls the police to intervene after being harassed by a youth.

YOU WASN'T LOITERING b/w, 15 minutes

This film treats the problem of "loitering." In a number of sequences, police warn youths, police administrators discuss enforcement of loitering laws, officers are insulted, and several youths are arrested.

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