What Lies Beneath: The Films of Robert Zemeckis Screening Schedule September 29–October 18, 2015 The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters

Tuesday, September 29

7:00 **The Walk.** USA. 2015. Directed by Robert Zemeckis. Written by Zemeckis and Christopher Brown. With Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Ben Kingsley, Charlotte Le Bon. Developing the line of Cast Away and Flight, Zemeckis's newest film is another story of high-altitude isolation, a recreation in vertiginous 3-D of the French high-wire artist Philippe Petit's 1974 stroll between the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center. Running time TBA.

Wednesday, September 30

7:00 **The Lift.** 1972. 7 min. **I Wanna Hold Your Hand.** 1978. Screenplay by Robert Zemeckis, Bob Gale. With Nancy Allen, Bobby Di Cicco, Marc McClure, Wendie Jo Sperber. It's February 9, 1964—he day The Beatles are scheduled to appear on *The Ed Sullivan Show*—and a disparate band of New Jersey teenagers are determined to participate in this historic moment. Written with his USC classmate Bob Gale, Zemeckis's first feature is a Frank Tashlin-esque celebration of pop chaos with unexpected moments of grace. 104 min.

Thursday, October 1

- 4:30 **A Field of Honor.** 1973. 14 min. **Used Cars.** 1980. Screenplay by Robert Zemeckis, Bob Gale. With Kurt Russell, Jack Warden, Gerrit Graham, Deborah Harmon. It's morning in Ronald Reagan's America, and a spectacularly unscrupulous car salesman (Kurt Russell) is ready to take his career to the next level—running for political office. But first he has to raise some campaign funds by turning the sleepy lot where he works into a carnival of caveat emptor capitalism. 113 min.
- 8:00 **Romancing the Stone.** 1984. Screenplay by Diane Thomas. With Michael Douglas, Kathleen Turner, Danny DeVito. A lonely writer of romance novels (Kathleen Turner) finds herself living an adventure that outstrips her wildest fantasies when she travels to Colombia in search of her kidnapped sister. The only produced screenplay of Diane Thomas, whose life was cut short by a car accident, the film combines outlandish adventure with an affecting love story, as Turner's character reluctantly solicits the help of a roguish American smuggler (Michael Douglas, who also produced). 106 min.

Friday, October 2

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Satuday, October 3

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- 2:00 **Back to the Future.** 1985. Screenplay by Robert Zemeckis, Bob Gale. With Michael J. Fox, Christopher Lloyd, Lea Thompson, Crispin Glover. A supercharged DeLorean sends teenager Marty McFly back to 1955, where he finds himself presiding over the romance of his parents (Lea Thompson and Crispin Glover)—if he can get past his future mom's inconvenient crush on him. Long trapped in turnarounds and plagued by casting problems, *Back to the Future* unexpectedly emerged as a box office smash, and it stands today as one of the best-loved American films. 116 min.
- 5:00 **Back to the Future Part II.** 1989. Screenplay by Bob Gale, from a story by Robert Zemeckis, Gale. With Michael J. Fox, Christopher Lloyd, Lea Thompson. The inevitable sequel to *Back to the Future* propels Marty McFly from 1985 to the distant future of October 21, 2015, where he must intervene to save his own son, Marty Jr., from a life of crime. The special effects, by Industrial Light and Magic, represented a breakthrough in digital compositing, allowing Marty to glide through a meticulously detailed suburb of the future (designed by Rick Carter) on his personal Hoverboard. 108 min.
- 8:00 **Back to the Future Part III**. 1990. Screenplay by Bob Gale, from a story by Robert Zemeckis, Gale. With Michael J. Fox, Christopher Lloyd, Mary Steenburgen, Lea Thompson. Shot back-to-back with *Back to the Future Part II* and released six months later, the concluding chapter in the trilogy sends Marty back to the American West of 1885, where Doc Brown needs rescuing from a band of outlaws. More leisurely and less gag-oriented than the first two installments, *Part III* mainly belongs to Christopher Lloyd's lovably mad scientist, who is allowed a romantic interlude with a heartbreaking Mary Steenburgen. 119 min.

Sunday, October 4

- 2:30 **Romancing the Stone.** 1984. Screenplay by Diane Thomas. With Michael Douglas, Kathleen Turner, Danny DeVito. A lonely writer of romance novels (Kathleen Turner) finds herself living an adventure that outstrips her wildest fantasies when she travels to Colombia in search of her kidnapped sister. The only produced screenplay of Diane Thomas, whose life was cut short by a car accident, the film combines outlandish adventure with an affecting love story, as Turner's character reluctantly solicits the help of a roguish American smuggler (Michael Douglas, who also produced). 106 min.
- 5:30 Who Framed Roger Rabbit. 1988. Screenplay by Jeffrey Price, Peter S. Seaman, from the novel by Gary K. Wolf. With Bob Hoskins, Christopher Lloyd, Charles Fleischer. The darker themes beneath the bright surfaces of Zemeckis's films broke through with this multiplex masterpiece, set in an alternate Hollywood of the late 1940s where cartoon characters are the designated Other, confined to a ghetto and subjected to attempted genocides—when they aren't being paraded around for the amusement of the oppressive human majority. Bob Hoskins is the private detective who crosses the line when he befriends the title character (memorably animated by Richard Williams and voiced by Charles Fleischer), an insecure animated star concerned that his cantilevered wife (with the voice of Kathleen Turner) is having an affair. 104 min.

Monday, October 5

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Thursday, October 8

8:00 **Death Becomes Her.** 1992. Screenplay by Martin Donovan, David Koepp. With Meryl Streep, Bruce Willis, Goldie Hawn. Zemeckis's growing interest in digital technology coincided with a darkening of his comic vision in this grotesque satire. In a take on the Hollywood cult of eternal youth (obliquely based on the Bette Davis vehicle *Old Acquaintance?*), two old frenemies, an actress (Meryl Streep) and a writer (Goldie Hawn), compete for the affections and services of a failing plastic surgeon (Bruce Willis). But then a new beauty expert appears—a mysterious European woman (Isabella Rossellini) who is 71 but seems 50 years younger, thanks to a secret potion she happens to have for sale. 104 mins.

Friday, October 9

8:00 **Forrest Gump.** 1994. Screenplay by Eric Roth, from a novel by Winston Groom. With Tom Hanks, Sally Field, Robin Wright. The searing irony of Zemeckis's epic vision of baby-boom America—governed by randomness, passivity, and solipsism—sailed past critics (who hated it) and the Academy (who gave it six Oscars), smuggled in as it was behind Tom Hanks's tremendously engaging performance. Behind the bromides lies a 20th-century *Huckleberry Finn*, a portrait of a society divided into the lucky and the luckless, victors and victims. 142 min.

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7:30 **Contact.** 1997. Screenplay by James V. Hart, Michael Goldenberg, from a novel and story by Carl Sagan, Ann Druyan. With Jodie Foster, Matthew McConaughey, David Morse. Zemeckis's subversive touch is particularly pronounced in this project—an adaptation of a spacey new-age novel by the astronomer Carl Sagan—which was begun by another director and completed by Zemeckis. From the moment a communication from space is decoded as an Adolph Hitler rant, still bouncing around the universe, the film undercuts cosmic mysticism with human frailty, with Jodie Foster as an astrophysicist consumed by daddy issues. 150 min.

Sunday, October 11

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- 5:30 What Lies Beneath. 2000. Screenplay by Clark Gregg, Sarah Kernochan. With Michelle Pfeiffer, Harrison Ford, Diana Scarwid. The social whirl of Zemeckis's early comedies definitively gives way to the darker tones and profound sense of human isolation of his later work in this psychological thriller, conceived to be filmed during a production break on Cast Away. Michelle Pfieffer is a lonely Vermont housewife who becomes convinced that her next door neighbor has been murdered, a suspicion that only earns the pity and skepticism and of her scientist husband (Harrison Ford). 130 min.

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- 8:00 **Cast Away.** 2000. Screenplay by William Broyles, Jr. With Tom Hanks, Helen Hunt, Nick Searcy. Consumed by his work as a systems engineer for FedEx, Chuck Noland (Tom Hanks) neglects his relationship with his longtime companion (Helen Hunt), yet discovers the limits of self-reliance when an airplane accident leaves him stranded alone on a Pacific island. Hanks is at the height of his powers in Zemeckis's most plangent film to date. 143 min.

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- 8:00 **The Polar Express.** 2004. Screenplay by Robert Zemeckis, William Broyles, Jr. With Tom Hanks, Daryl Sabara, Nona Gaye, Eddie Deezen. Employing newly developed digital animation and motion capture techniques to film Chris Van Allsburg's acclaimed children's book, Zemeckis permanently (if unintentionally) altered the nature of Hollywood cinema with this 3-D release. Another tale of a lonely boy's longing for connection, the film provocatively mixes imagery from Walt Disney and Leni Reifenstahl, though the technology of the time was not yet equal to the director's vision. 100 min.

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Thursday, October 15

8:00 **Beowulf.** 2007. Screenplay by Neil Gaiman, Roger Avary. With Ray Winstone, Anthony Hopkins, Angelina Jolie. Ongoing developments in motion capture and digital animation encouraged Zemeckis to undertake this ambitious animated adventure for adult audiences, a free adaptation of the Old English epic with Ray Winstone as the swaggering hero and Angelina Jolie as the original helicopter mother. Moving beyond character animation, Zemeckis here uses digital techniques to create extreme long takes and complex, deep-focus spaces. 115 min.

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- 8:00 **Flight.** 2012. Screenplay by John Gatins. With Denzel Washington, Don Cheadle, Kelly Reilly. Returning to live-action filmmaking after a 12-year absence, Zemeckis develops his now characteristic themes of isolation and escape into a drama about an airline pilot (Denzel Washington) whose act of heroism (a brilliant crash landing) threatens to expose his hidden dependency on drugs and alcohol. This is precise, emotionally subjective filmmaking, with moments of technical finesse worthy of Hitchcock. 138 min.

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