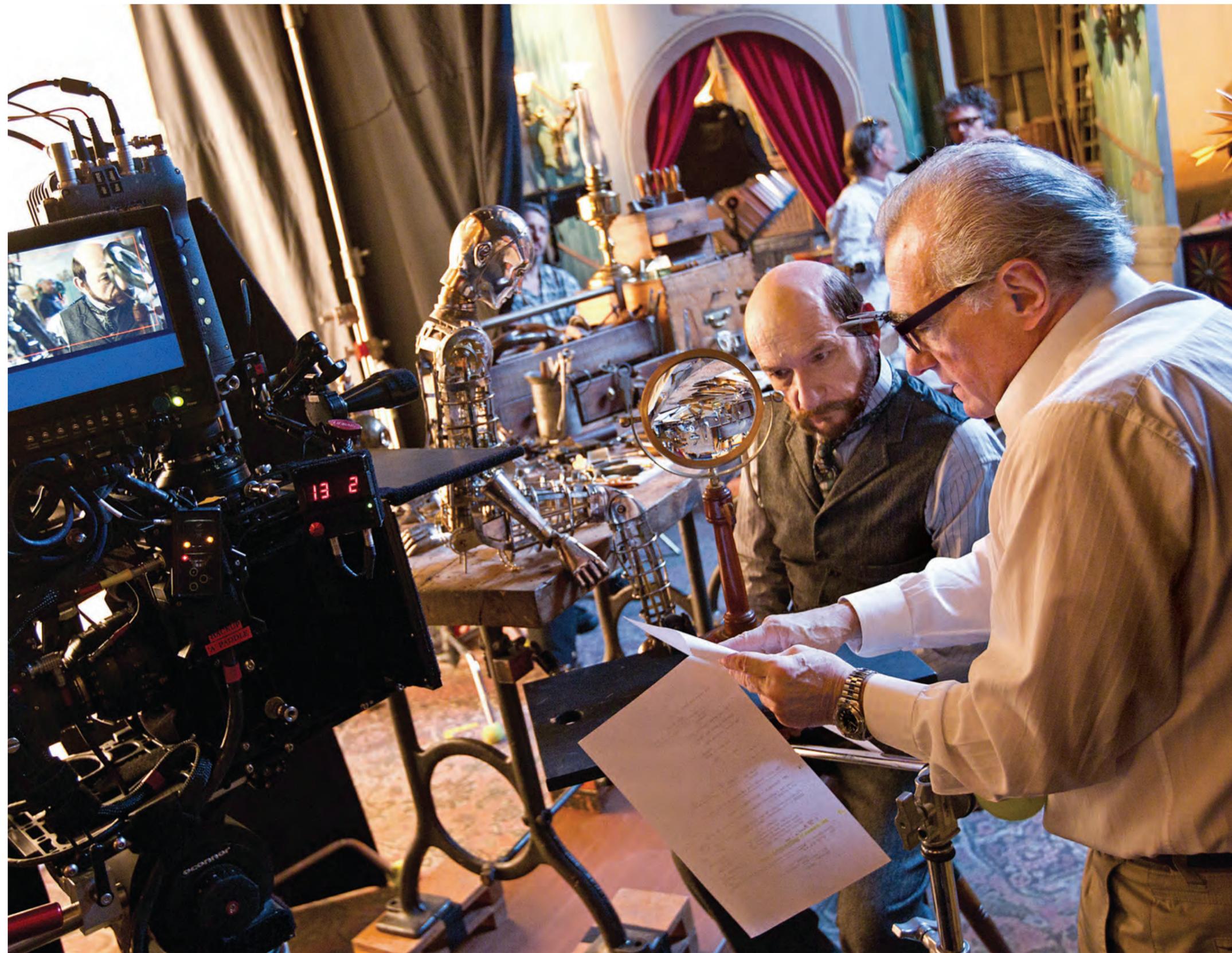


# Movies About Movies

With so much raw material all around them, directors can't resist the temptation to depict the machinations of filmmaking—both on the set and in studio executive suites. The result is often great entertainment.



**CELLULOID HEROES:** (opposite) Film pioneer Georges Méliès (Ben Kingsley) is rediscovered in Martin Scorsese's *Hugo* (2011). Scorsese re-created the glass studio where Méliès made his classic *A Trip to the Moon* in 1902. (above) In *Sunset Blvd.* (1950), Billy Wilder (left) shot Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson) visiting Cecil B. DeMille, who was shooting *Samson and Delilah* on the Paramount lot. After the scene, Wilder supposedly said to DeMille, "Very good, my boy. Leave your name with my secretary. I may have a small part for you in my next picture."





**WORKING CLASS:** In *Barton Fink* (1991), the Coen brothers, Ethan (top) and Joel (right) follow a New York playwright, newly arrived in Hollywood, to hotel hell. In one scene, cinematographer Roger Deakins tracked into the bathroom and down the sink drain. “The shot was a lot of fun, and we had a great time working out how to do it,” said Joel.



**BOFFO BOX OFFICE:** John Schlesinger directed Nathanael West’s apocalyptic 1939 Hollywood novel, *The Day of the Locust* (1975), as an epic, climaxing at a movie premiere at Grauman’s Chinese Theatre. With the masses pressed against police barricades to greet the arriving stars, the scene turns into a riot.



**FIVE CENTS:** Peter Bogdanovich directs Burt Reynolds in *Nickelodeon* (1976), an homage to early filmmaking. To capture the look of that era, Bogdanovich had his cinematographer, László Kovács, light everything to accommodate black-and-white, even though it was shot in color.



**TOY SOLDIERS:** Ben Stiller (right) directs Nick Nolte and Danny McBride on the Hawaii location of *Tropic Thunder* (2008), a comedy about actors working on a Vietnam War picture. Stiller’s visual approach to the broad humor of the film was to shoot in natural settings that felt as dramatic and real as possible.



**TAKE TWO:** Art imitates life as François Truffaut (center) plays a harassed director struggling to finish a melodrama shooting in the south of France in *Day for Night* (1973). The character wears a hearing aid as an in-joke about the director turning a deaf ear to all the questions he’s asked on the set.



**THREE-RING CIRCUS:** Federico Fellini directs the finale of *8½* (1963), which includes an alien spaceship on the beach. The film was shot, like most Italian movies at the time, without sound recording on set. Dialogue was dubbed during postproduction. Its working title was *La Bella Confusione* (The Beautiful Confusion).

PHOTOS: (TOP) MARY EVANS/CIRCLE FILMS/RONALD GRANT/EVERETT COLLECTION; (BOTTOM LEFT) AMPAS; (BOTTOM RIGHT) MARY EVANS/RONALD GRANT/EVERETT COLLECTION

PHOTOS: (TOP) COURTESY OF PARAMOUNT PICTURES; (BOTTOM) AMPAS



**SET PIECE:** Vincente Minnelli (on crane) directs Gilbert Roland and Lana Turner in the quintessential Hollywood movie *The Bad and the Beautiful* (1952). Minnelli cast Kirk Douglas as a ruthless producer and directed him to play for charm. After takes, Douglas would say to him, "I was very charming in that scene, wasn't I?"

**MONSTROUS:** Bill Condon (left) directs Brendan Fraser and Ian McKellen as the now-elderly James Whale, who imagines himself as the monster he created years earlier in *Frankenstein*. *Gods and Monsters* (1998) "was a movie that was about movies, but it's also about the way we experience movies. They change us ... and that's what Whale did."



**OLD SCHOOL:** Michel Gondry fashions a handmade set for *Be Kind Rewind* (2008), a whimsical film about bumbling video store clerks who have to reshoot all of the films in their inventory. To further the homemade quality, Gondry used residents of Passaic, N.J., as extras and actors throughout the film.



**HISTORY LESSON:** In *Baadasssss!* (2003), Mario Van Peebles, with Saul Rubinek, re-created his father Melvin Van Peebles directing the seminal 1971 film *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*, which helped launch a string of so-called blaxploitation pictures. Melvin told his son not to portray him as being too nice.





**DARK SOUL:** Clint Eastwood (left) directed and played a character very much like John Huston in *White Hunter, Black Heart* (1990), based on a novel by screenwriter Peter Viertel about the making of *The African Queen* on location. Eastwood fashioned his performance after the direct, no-nonsense style of Huston, John Ford, Howard Hawks, and William A. Wellman.



**CASTING CALL:** Robert Townsend's *Hollywood Shuffle* (1987) was a satiric look at black actors in Hollywood. Townsend (left) put \$40,000 of the film's \$100,000 budget on 10 credit cards. Shooting without permits, the crew wore UCLA T-shirts to pass themselves off as students learning how to film on location.

PHOTOS: (TOP) WARNER BROS.; (BOTTOM) COURTESY ROBERT TOWNSEND; (OPPOSITE) WARNER BROS.



**HOT SEAT:** George Cukor was a master at pushing actors to their emotional brink. For Judy Garland's breakdown scene in her dressing room in *A Star Is Born* (1954), he drove her so hard she vomited before the first take. But the hard work paid off with her only Academy Award nomination for best actress.