

From Hitchcock to Bogdanovich

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When acclaimed film director, screenwriter, actor and critic Peter Bogdanovich took the stage at Tulane on Wednesday (Jan. 27) to share stories about filmmaking legends, he cautioned the audience that his presentation might be “lousy.” The regular bursts of laughter and applause from the overflow crowd were a good indication that the evening was anything but.



Peter Bogdanovich, left, greets Tulane student Lindsey Barber, right, during a booksigning session after his talk on Wednesday (Jan. 27). (Photo by Sally Asher)

The two-hour event, held in the Freeman Auditorium on the uptown campus, drew largely from Bogdanovich's bestselling book, *Who the Devil Made It*, an extensive collection of interviews with late filmmaking greats such as Alfred Hitchcock and Howard Hawks.

“If a director has a strong personality or personal interest in a film it will be apparent,” said Bogdanovich, whose best-known directorial efforts include *The Last Picture Show*, *What's Up, Doc?* and *Paper Moon*.

Throughout the evening, Bogdanovich shared stories and anecdotes from his decades in the filmmaking business, illustrating them with clips from movies. He showed a scene from Hitchcock's *Notorious* with Ingrid Bergman and Cary Grant, explaining the use of a “MacGuffin” ? a technique used by Hitchcock ? to build suspense.

“A MacGuffin,” he explained, “is something the characters care about but not the audience.” In *Notorius*, it is the uranium hidden in a champagne bottle.

Bogdanovich held a lengthy question-and-answer period at the conclusion of the event.

When questioned about the future of the film industry, given the ease of access to video cameras and editing software, Bogdanovich said, “I don't think technology makes a picture.” He quipped that current box office sensation *Avatar* has extraordinary special effects but a lousy storyline ? or so he has heard.

Bogdanovich also met with creative writing classes earlier in the day. His visit was sponsored by the [Department of English](#) Creative Writing Fund, the [Newcomb-Tulane College](#) Office of Cocurricular Programs, the Duren Professorship Program, the Honors Program and the [Department of Communication](#).

Catherine Freshley received a bachelor of arts in economics and English from Tulane in May 2009.