



Martin Scorsese sees red

PHOTOS: AP AND REUTERS



Seeing 'The Red Shoes' as a boy started Martin Scorsese on a journey leading to a career, a mentor and friend, and a quest to bring Powell and Pressburger to a new generation

BY STEVE ROSE
THE GUARDIAN, LONDON

“Movie directors are desperate people. You're totally desperate every second of the day when you're involved in a film, through pre-production, production, post-production, and certainly when you're dealing with the press.” Martin Scorsese isn't talking about his own career, but that of one of his heroes, the British director Michael Powell. And in particular, Scorsese is referring to the all-consuming creative passion Powell and Emeric Pressburger captured in their 1948 classic *The Red Shoes*. That swooning Technicolor tragedy was ostensibly set in the world of ballet, with Moira Shearer fatally torn between her personal and professional loyalties; equally, it is a portrait of artistic sacrifice and compromise in the film-makers' own industry. “Over the years, what's really stayed in my mind and my heart is the dedication those characters had, the nature of that power and the obsession to create,” Scorsese says, before finding the right analogy in another Powell and Pressburger title: “It made it a matter of life and death, really.”

Had he not been so entranced by *The Red Shoes* as a boy, Scorsese might never have become a movie director. Watching the film

for the first time — aged nine, at the cinema with his father — was the start of a lifelong relationship with Powell's movies, one that ultimately led to a friendship with the man himself; now, nearly 20 years after Powell's death, it extends to a stewardship of his legacy. Scorsese took the stage on Friday at Cannes to introduce a new restored print of *The Red Shoes* — a culmination, of sorts, to Scorsese's ongoing mission to rehabilitate his hero. Scorsese was instrumental not just in initiating the physical restoration of Powell and Pressburger's deteriorating back catalogue, but in restoring Powell's career and reputation when they were at their lowest ebb. He even, inadvertently, found him a wife.

Scorsese considers Powell and Pressburger's run of films through the 1930s and 1940s to be “the longest period of subversive film-making in a major studio, ever”. But when Scorsese first met Powell, in 1975, that run had come to an abrupt halt. Peeping Tom, Powell's first effort as a solo director, had been released in 1960, and its combination of violence, voyeurism, nudity and general implication of the audience (not to mention the film industry, again) was too strong for the British censors and critics. He

hadn't worked since. So he must have been somewhat taken aback to discover that an eager young American director was trying to track him down, and that other young American film-makers were going back to his work.

“We'd been asking for years about Powell and Pressburger,” says Scorsese. “There was hardly anything written about their films at that time. We wondered how the same man who made *A Matter of Life and Death*, *The Red Shoes*, *Black Narcissus*, and *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* could also have made *Peeping Tom*. We actually thought for a while Michael Powell was a pseudonym being used by other filmmakers.”

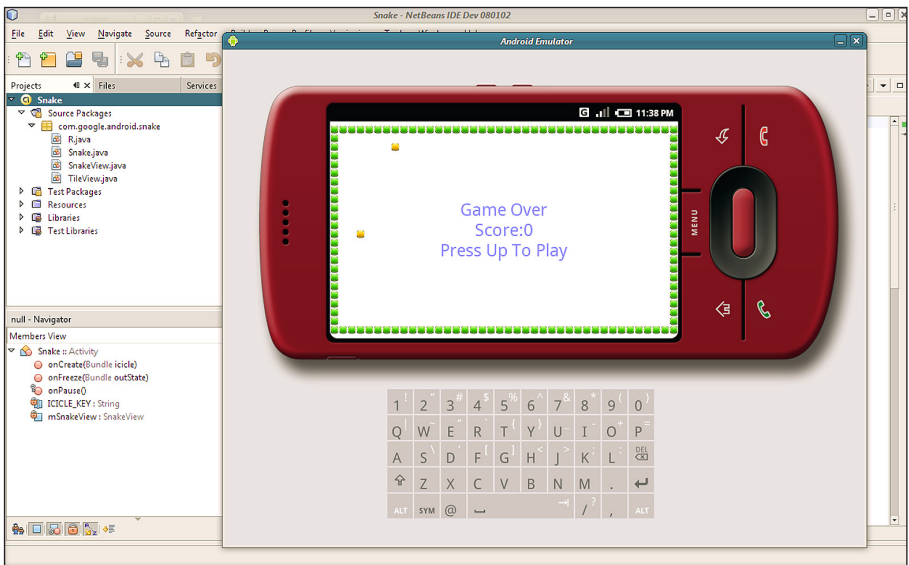
Scorsese came to Britain for the Edinburgh film festival with *Taxi Driver*, and a mutual contact arranged a meeting at a London restaurant. “He was very quiet and didn't quite know what to make of me,” Scorsese recalls. “I had to explain to him that his work was a great source of inspiration for a whole new generation of filmmakers — myself, Spielberg, Paul Schrader, Coppola, De Palma. We would talk about his films in Los Angeles often. They were a lifeblood to us, at a time when the films were not

necessarily immediately available. He had no idea this was all happening.”

It's easy to forget how obscure most movies were in the days before DVD, video on demand, or even VHS. Studio boss J Arthur Rank lost faith in the commercial potential of *The Red Shoes* on first seeing it, and sent only a single print to the US. So for two years it played continuously at a single movie theatre in New York, before eventually breaking out to become a huge success, picking up Oscars in 1949 for best art direction and music. Scorsese saw it that first time in color; after that, the only way to see such movies was on television. “Even with commercial breaks, in black and white, and cut to about an hour and a half, it still had a powerful magic,” he says. “The vibrancy of the movie and the sense of color in the storytelling actually came through. Then, eventually, the prize was to track down a 16mm Technicolor print. I was able to do that a few times.” The rest of the Powell/Pressburger back catalogue Scorsese would track down one film at a time. “We were in a process of discovery.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

[TECHNOLOGY REVIEW: TAIWAN]



Android, which currently runs on Google's G1 cellphone, is poised to challenge the dominance of Microsoft Windows.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ANDROID

BY GARETH MURFIN
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Android is an operating system like any other — apart from the fact that it is free and open source. For this reason it has distinct advantages over the competition, which may give it that competitive edge and result in it becoming a household name like Microsoft Windows is.

Price

Being free has obvious advantages — almost any device shipped to a consumer needs an operating system, something to make the machine usable. In most cases this operating system is Microsoft Windows, which costs around NT\$4,000 a pop. This obviously adds to the cost of the machine, which makes it less attractive to customers. If a popular alternative were available for free, this would lower the cost of the PC and make it more attractive to the

consumer.

Of course there are already free and open source operating systems (OS) out there that have yet to topple Microsoft — Linux and UNIX based operating systems such as Ubuntu, FreeBSD or Solaris to name but a few. Some of these are gaining momentum and indeed shipping for free with PCs, but none have yet to seriously challenge Microsoft's Windows. Who can say whether in the next decade Microsoft will retain its desktop dominance? One of the largest stumbling blocks for a competing operating system is familiarity: Are users ready to move to something new? This may be tricky given that almost every computer user on the planet uses Microsoft's OS.

Open source

An “open” piece of software is one where its code is all available online to download for free. This means

programmers can read the internals of the OS and make changes themselves. This is important because any device that is produced needs an OS — but not all of them are suitable or compatible. An open OS can be made to work by a team of programmers, and then this OS can be shipped with the device with little or no licensing issues. Hundreds of dedicated programmers and managers can work together to improve an open OS, thus supporting more and more hardware — all the while this code is available for other developers to build on at no extra cost.

Android is Google's own OS, which is currently targeted at cellphones.

Taiwan's HTC is the first hardware manufacturer to put out an Android device — with many more coming in the next 12 months. The HTC Dream — also known as the Google G1 — runs the latest version of Android. The device is very capable and runs the OS nicely,

with a little keyboard, trackball and touchscreen, which make using it not unlike a miniature PC.

Using an OS on such a small device can't be much fun, unless, like Android, it has been optimized for use on small touchscreen devices. It's much like the iPhone: touch an icon to select it, swipe your finger to switch to a different function.

Android has been designed with a slightly dumbed down feel from a “power user” point of view, but this allows users to get acquainted with the way it works more easily.

The easy to use personal organizer/cellphone feel captures what companies like Symbian have pioneered for years — a simple, logical and fast operating system for phones. You will have used Symbian OS if you have operated any of Nokia's S60 devices.

Android builds on and improves on these principles and has a slightly more

human feel, mostly provided by the novelty of the touchscreen. A list of 500 contacts can be navigated in seconds by toggling the list upwards with a slight hand movement.

Not just a mobile OS

It won't be long before we see many more Android devices, and not just phones. Things like netbooks, Internet tablets and portable media players running Android have all been announced and confirmed by huge corporations such as Sony Ericsson, Archos, Samsung, Acer and Motorola, among others. None of these devices are available for review yet, but they will almost certainly be running Android version 1.5, which is the latest release from Google.

Many people would say that comparing Android to Windows is not really a fair comparison considering that Windows is a desktop operating system and Android is a cellphone

operating system. But these lines are becoming blurred by the day. Android will be running on the desktop in the not too distance future. This is coupled with the fact that touchscreens are becoming very popular. Microsoft has admitted that the mouse will be dead soon, which paves the way for things like a touchscreen-only OS.

Android will dominate within the next decade. Each new small, cheap notebook is bound to ship with Android, leading to a lowered demand for Microsoft in the small PC market — even the iPhone could end up losing its cellphone market share without somehow allowing iPhone clones to be manufactured.

Google has once again chosen a model that holds the potential for a growth explosion. The aim is to get Google not just on our Web browsers but also into our pockets and rucksacks and ultimately on our desktop PCs.