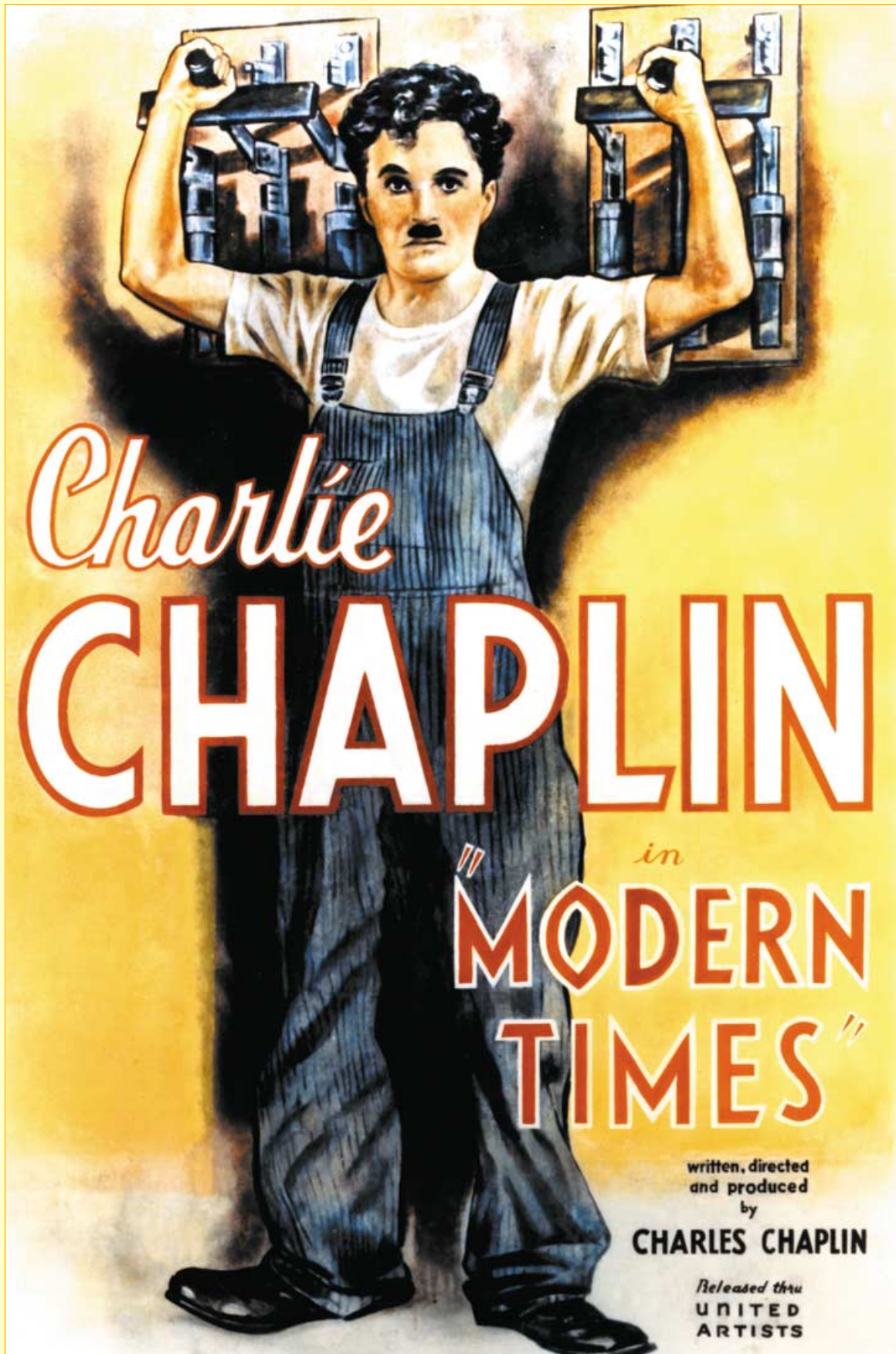


# 5 Protest films

IDENTITÉS  
CONFLITS



Charlie  
**CHAPLIN**  
in  
**MODERN  
TIMES**

written, directed  
and produced  
by  
**CHARLES CHAPLIN**

Released thru  
**UNITED  
ARTISTS**

# CLOSE-UP 5

## 1. Protest voices

1. Describe the pictures on these two pages with the help of the following words.  
camera operator – shoot a film – billboard  
*panneau publicitaire* – brass band *fanfare* –  
amateur [ˈæmətə] musician – worried –  
idle [ˈaɪdl] *oisif* – *wander error sans but* –  
working class area [ˈɛəriə] – semi-detached  
[ˌsemɪdɪˈtætʃt] houses *maisons mitoyennes*
2. What issue do you think is raised in each film?
3. Match each picture with a plot summary and the biography of a film director.
4. Answer the following questions.
  - a. Why are Michael Moore and his crew standing in front of a Buick billboard?
  - b. What have the band players just learnt or what are they waiting for?
  - c. Explain the title of the film *Sweet Sixteen*.
5. What does each film actually denounce?



*Roger & Me* (1989) – Michael MOORE

*Brassed Off* (1996) – Mark HERMAN



### Plot summaries

**1** This documentary is the film-maker's first film. It was shot in his hometown in Michigan, where 30,000 individuals lost their jobs in the mid-1980s due to the closure<sup>1</sup> of a General Motors' plant<sup>2</sup>. His aim was to contact GM's chairman and have him spend a day in "the unemployment capital of America" for him to realize that the gap between rich and poor was growing in the USA and that the future was gloomy<sup>3</sup> for working-class people.

1. [ˈkləʊzə] – 2. *usine* – 3. *sombre*

**2** Liam<sup>1</sup> is struggling to lead a normal life in the dismal<sup>2</sup> streets of Glasgow, a city where unemployment is rampant<sup>3</sup> and there is little hope for the city's youth. He is waiting for the release of his mother who is serving a jail sentence for a crime that her boyfriend, a drug-pusher<sup>4</sup>, actually committed. Liam is determined to rescue his mother and sets out<sup>5</sup> to raise cash for a home...

1. [ˈli:əm] – 2. [ˈdɪzməl] *lugubre* – 3. [ˈræmpənt] *endémique* – 4. *revendeur de drogue* – 5. *entreprendre*

**3** A small Yorkshire mining town is threatened with being shut down. The spectre of unemployment looms large<sup>1</sup> for the town's men. Their only hope is to enter their brass band into a national competition. Their chances of winning are slim<sup>2</sup> until Gloria, the granddaughter of a former bandleader and childhood sweetheart of a band member, turns up with her flugelhorn<sup>3</sup>... But hasn't she been hired<sup>4</sup> by the British Coal Board<sup>5</sup>?

1. *s'approcher dangereusement* – 2. *mince* – 3. [ˈflu:ɡəlˌhɔ:n] *bugle* – 4. *engager* – 5. *Charbonnages*



*Sweet Sixteen* (2002) – Ken LOACH

### Biographies

**A** Born in 1954 in East Yorkshire, England, he started making cartoons but soon decided to turn to live action. His first feature film was *Blame it on the Bellboy* (1992). But it is the critically acclaimed film presented here which launched his career and won him the French Cesar for Best European Film. He followed it up with *Little Voices* in 1998.

**B** Born in 1954 in Flint, Michigan, this author and film-maker has become famous for his provocative documentaries in which he tackles major issues with a sharp sense of humour. He is one of America's most fearless commentators. His best-known films: *The Big One*, *Bowling for Columbine* and *Fahrenheit 9/11*.

**C** Born in 1937 in England, he is an internationally acclaimed director whose radical political messages provoke a strong response from audiences and politicians alike. As most of his films feature struggles within the working-class communities, his cinema has often been characterized as social-conscience realism. His most famous feature films: *Kes*, *Family life*, *Riff-Raff*, *Raining Stones*, *Land and Freedom*, *Ae Fond Kiss*.

## 2. Talking point

1. Do you think that protest films are a good way of raising people's consciousness?
2. Do you like this kind of film? Can you tell the class about one that was a mind-opener for you?

### 3. The visitor



1. Find the English equivalents of the following words (in the right order):

*couloir de la mort – être dur – en forme – engraisser – chapelure – cinglé – bande.*

2. Who does the audience see while hearing Matt's letter? What is she doing? Why?
3. Why is Matt on death row?
4. How does Matt feel about his living conditions?
5. What is Matt's attitude towards Sister Prejean?
6. How does Chaplain Farley react to the nun's initiative? Why?
7. What does the slogan on the billboard reveal?
8. What do you know about the death penalty in the USA today?

**Tim ROBBINS** (born in 1958) is a screenwriter, actor, director and producer. He is married to Susan Sarandon. *Dead Man Walking* earned him an Oscar for Best Director and Susan Sarandon a Best Actress Oscar. Both of them spoke out against the war in Iraq and are famous for their numerous humanitarian stands.



**MATT** (*voice-over*<sup>1</sup>): Dear Sister Helen, Thank you for writing to me. I'm writing from my home, my-six-by-eight-foot cell. I'm in here 23 hours a day, we don't work on death row. We're special here, they keep us away from the general population of the

5 prison. We're the elite, because we're going to fry.

*Sister Helen Prejean drives through a light rain. We see a billboard. It says: "Get tough! Join Governor Fredericks. Stop Crime!"*

**MATT** (*voice-over*): It's hard not to get soft in this cell, I try to get my muscles in shape, but it's hard not to get fat. Rice, potatoes,

10 pancakes and beans. Sometimes I feel like a sow<sup>2</sup> on a farm that's being fattened up for a Christmas slaughter<sup>3</sup>.

*Prejean drives up to the front gate of the Louisiana State Penitentiary. Several armed, blue-uniformed guards occupy a small, glassed-in office. One of them comes to the car, and she shows him a letter. They*

15 *direct her to Visitor Processing.*

**MATT** (*voice-over*): I had a dream once that I was about to be fried in the chair and a guard came into my cell with a chef's hat on and started to roll me around in breadcrumbs. Maybe you think I'm a weirdo to have dreams like that but your mind does funny

20 things when you're locked up and surrounded by people that want to kill you. Anyway, thanks for writing. I don't get many letters. Visitors either. No one in my family seems able to make the trip out here. I understand. It's a long drive from Slidell.

*Prejean waits. Chaplain<sup>4</sup> Farley comes in from offices along the side*

25 *wing of the building. His face is kind, but tired. Farley is a Catholic priest chaplain of the prison.*

**FARLEY:** Good morning, Sister.

**PREJEAN:** Good morning, Father.

**FARLEY:** Have you ever been in a prison before?

30 **PREJEAN:** No. But Sister Clement and I sang some songs at a Juvenile Detention Center in New Orleans.

*A pause. Farley is looking at a paper on his desk.*

**FARLEY:** Matthew Poncellet. I remember him from the news. Him and another fella<sup>5</sup> shot two children in the back of the head on

35 *Lover's Lane. Raped<sup>6</sup> the girl and stabbed<sup>7</sup> her several times. Do you know what you're getting into?*

*Prejean is at a loss for words.*

**FARLEY:** So what is this, Sister? Morbid fascination? Bleeding heart<sup>8</sup> sympathy?

40 **PREJEAN:** No. He wrote me and asked me to come.

**FARLEY:** There is no romance here, Sister. This is a bunch of con men<sup>9</sup> and they'll take advantage of you every way they can. You must be very, very careful.

Tim ROBBINS, *Dead Man Walking* (1996)

1. *voix off* – 2. [saw] *trueie* – 3. ['sɒ:tə] *abattage* – 4. ['tʃæplɪn] *aumônier* – 5. (= fellow) *type* – 6. *violer* – 7. *poignarder* – 8. *âme sensible* – 9. *escroc*