

KIRK DOUGLAS

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Mr. Tino Balio
Wisconsin Center for Theatre Research
The University of Wisconsin
1166 Van Hise Hall
Madison, Wisconsin 53706

Dear Mr. Balio:

The file of communication between us on the formation of a Kirk Douglas collection at the University of Wisconsin is almost extensive enough to be of some historical significance. Seriously, I am delighted that we are now definitely proceeding with the establishment of such a collection. You may be interested to know why I prefer to base this collection at Wisconsin. It is the first university, as far as I know, to see the significance of such ~~collections~~ in tracing the historical development of film making as one of the most important modern art forms. I feel that Wisconsin would be best suited to retain that all my records will reflect.

After twenty-five years of film making, there is an interesting point of view reflected in my memorabilia. This is beyond the value of over fifty annotated original manuscripts and correspondence, which show how an actor works.

I came into film making at a time when the studios were at their height. At that time, I believe I was the first actor to function independently, without being under contract to a major studio. This, of course, is the common practice now. I believe I was the first star to form his own independent company, which is still functioning. Currently, independent production companies have become a common practice, and the studios have now become very little more than financing and real estate operators.

Another facet of my collection that intrigues me is the proof of what I have always maintained - there is no art form that is more of a collaborated effort than movie making. For example, ask anyone to define a producer. It's almost impossible. It's very often important to ascertain who bears the greatest responsibility for the success or failure of a film. The pendulum of importance swings. At the present time, I

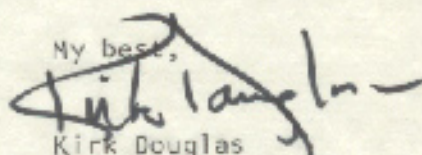
think the least importance is very often placed upon the writer. In my opinion, he is most important. The letters in my collection, for example, between Elia Kazan and me on making THE ARRANGEMENT and with Dalton Trumbo on the making of LONELY ARE THE BRAVE and SPARTACUS, show the importance of all the elements in making a picture. The correspondence substantiates this through all areas of film making, including the selling and distribution. In this area, the correspondence indicates entire points of view on how an actor and a studio go about the selling of a picture.

Correspondence between the State Department and me reflects a whole theory that I tried to present to our Government of how best to use the unique reservoir of talent which could be placed at their disposal - the American movie star. This entire area of correspondence, reports and scrapbooks of world tours that I have taken on behalf of the State Department and the USIA reflects, I feel, a very interesting use of the "film star" by a government.

Of course, the collection has all the other aspects of it that you would expect it to have, but I felt these were particularly interesting facets. I'm sure there are many others that I am too close to to evaluate.

I want you to know, Mr. Balio, that I am relieved that there will be a proper home for this part of my life. I would like to be reassured that I will have free access to this collection for myself directly or for my representatives. I have entertained some offers presented to me to do an article or a book on certain aspects of my collection, especially some of the letters between Elia Kazan and me on THE ARRANGEMENT. Another is a book on my world tours for the State Department. I have also been in the process for some time of writing my autobiography. I assume I will have access to the collection for that purpose.

I would like the ending of my collection to include the beginning of a collection based on my son, Michael Douglas. He has just finished starring in his second motion picture. He may easily be the greatest contribution I have made to the art of film making.

My best,

Kirk Douglas

P.S. Sometime in the future I would like to visit the university and, if you like, give some talks on certain facets of film making.