

BY STEVE CHAGOLLAN

IN THE WAKE OF JONATHAN DEMME'S passing on April 26, much was made of the heart and humanity at the core of his work. "I am the best, most loyal friend of every character in the film," he told *DGA Quarterly* in 2015. As a result, even the scariest characters in his movies, like Dr. Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs* or Ray Sinclair in *Something Wild*, were given dimension that left one profoundly moved. Demme was also nothing if not eclectic, ranging from exploitation films for Roger Corman, to spare independent gems and large-scale literary adaptations, to concert films and conscientious documentaries. A lifelong student who never settled into any one style, Demme

grew as a director with each picture. "I'm in a new phase now," he said less than two years before his death, but for him that was a state of perpetual being.



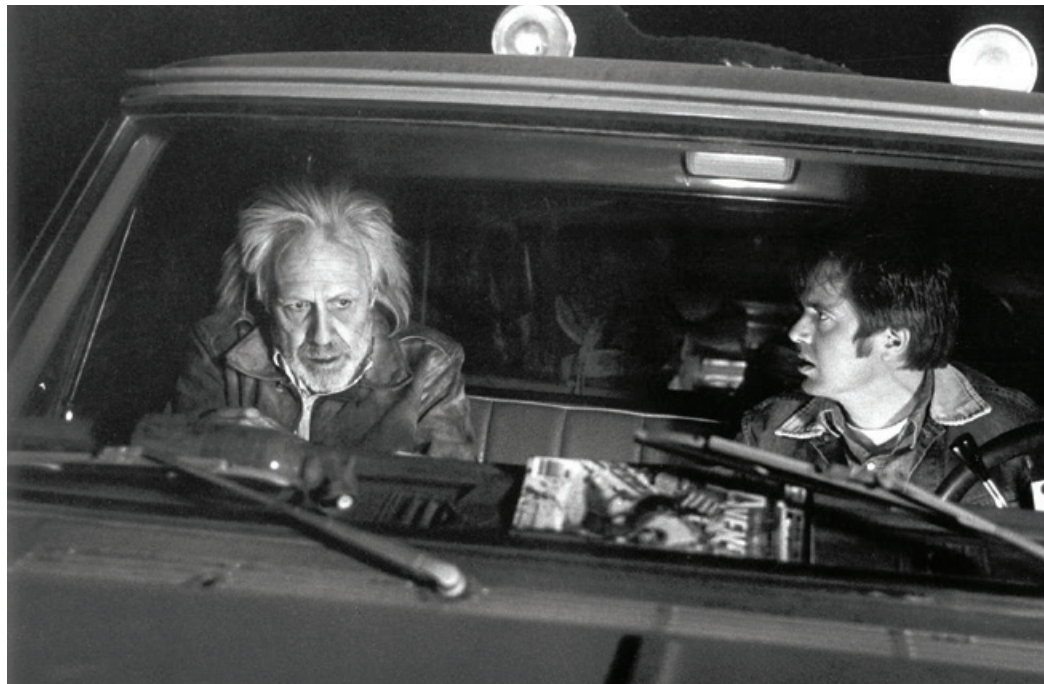
THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS
(1991)

This adaptation of the Thomas Harris novel earned Demme a DGA Award and a directing statuette at the Academy Awards, which showered its top five honors on the film—a feat not achieved since Frank Capra's *It Happened One Night* in 1935. "You have to make your antagonist every bit as interesting as your protagonist," said Demme of the serial killer Hannibal Lecter and the FBI agent whom he torments, Clarice Starling.

DEMONSTRABLY DEMME

MELVIN AND HOWARD
(1980)

Demme's breakthrough feature, which opened the 18th New York Film Festival, prompted *The New York Times*' Vincent Canby to call the filmmaker "a social satirist in the tradition of Preston Sturges." Filled with kooky eccentrics and quirky detail, the film never condescends to its characters' impossible dreams but is instead suffused with love and hope.



SOMETHING WILD
(1986)

This might be the most music-fueled of Demme's narrative features, with 49 songs, and a soundtrack for the ages. "That whole movie is scored almost entirely with source cues," explained Demme. And after his discouraging studio experience with *Swing Shift* (1984), Demme considered the film "a rebirth experience."

"We wanted it to feel and sound like a documentary." —JONATHAN DEMME



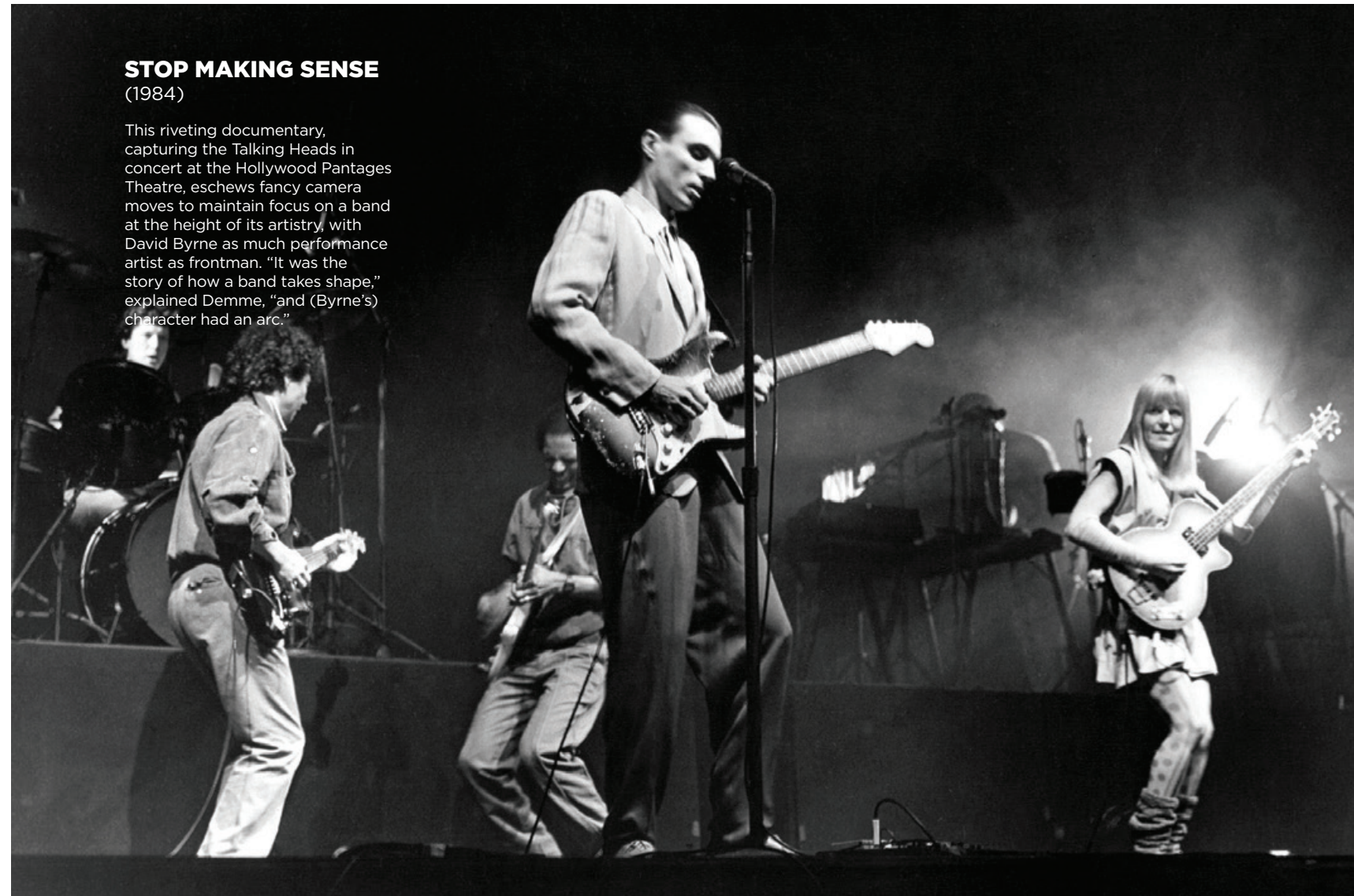
RACHEL GETTING MARRIED
(2008)

This was Demme's tribute to the Dogme film movement. "We wanted it to feel and sound like a documentary," Demme told *DGA Quarterly*. "A number of the vows of chastity were honored there, including no music added." "Added" is the operative term here, since the movie is filled with music, but performed by musicians at a wedding, so it's all organic.



STOP MAKING SENSE
(1984)

This riveting documentary, capturing the Talking Heads in concert at the Hollywood Pantages Theatre, eschews fancy camera moves to maintain focus on a band at the height of its artistry, with David Byrne as much performance artist as frontman. "It was the story of how a band takes shape," explained Demme, "and (Byrne's) character had an arc."



PHOTOS: PHOTOFEST; (BOTTOM, RIGHT) EVERETT

PHILADELPHIA
(1993)

The first major studio film about AIDS marked, as *The New York Times* pointed out, "a turning point in the way mainstream movies treated gay men and lesbians, who had previously been handled with hush-hush delicacy or flamboyant caricature." Under Demme's direction, Tom Hanks would win an Oscar.



HEART OF GOLD
(2006)

This was the first of three films Demme directed on the music of Neil Young, who wrote the title tune for Demme's *Philadelphia*, which played over the end credits. "You have to tell a story," said Demme about his music documentaries. "We wanted to emphasize the relationships between band members... so you usually wind up [with] between seven and 12 cameras."



"[We filmmakers] were fascinated by the way U.S. government intersects with multinational corporations that profit from war and chaos." —DEMME on directing *The Manchurian Candidate*



THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE
(2004)

Demme worked with one of his biggest budgets, \$80 million, for this remake of the John Frankenheimer classic released in 1962. Although Demme was disenchanted with the "committee" experience, David Ansen of *Newsweek* called the film "a hugely entertaining thriller" that took nothing away from the original "while delivering pleasures all its own."