

Protesting the Colorizing of Classic Black-and-White Films

**A Published Letter to *Calendar Letters*, in the *Los Angeles Times*,
And the Basis for an Editorial Reply Broadcast on KABC-TV**

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The debate over "colorizing" classic black-and-white films looms far larger than the cinema: It also sheds light on the crux of current economic policy; and in the process, it offers hope on both fronts.

Director John Huston speaks for most in the Hollywood creative community ... when he condemns this computerized paint-by-numbers bastardization of such black-and-white classics as his *Maltese Falcon*.

Huston cites purely aesthetic and ethical concerns. However, because the copyrights on these works have expired or the rights have been sold, the process has apparently been legal; and superstition mogul Ted Turner et al. insist that "colorization" is necessary, to presumably attract more viewers.

Ahh, therein lies not only the problem but also the solution ... and a lesson for our national economy as well. Perhaps unwittingly, Turner has, by such logic, conceded that the economy is *demand*-sided (If it were *supply*-sided, then the audience would simply accept whatever it was shown, colored or not)—that is the lesson for our economy as a whole.

The solution to this particular "colorization" problem is just as obvious—because the economy is necessarily demand-sided (How many businesses profit without sales?) it is not only the right but also the responsibility of us consumers to demand, via our Nielsen-monitored viewing habits, only the black-and-white versions of films created that way.

In short, because money is the only language the "colorizing" businessmen understand, we, the people, must band together in a boycott of "colorized" films (which is not too painful, given their gaudy, fuzzy quality).

From the Boston Tea Party, in the 1770s, to the housewives' meat boycott, in the 1970s, the American economy has responded to demand-side pressure—the cash register (as visited after a TV commercial) is another of our ballot boxes.

And to Ted Turner I say: Mr. T., I must confess that I, too, was utterly intrigued with the possibilities raised by the magic of "colorization" (whose surrealism might be voluntarily used in original creations); however, after carefully listening to and thinking through all the pros and cons, I have seen the light—and it is black-

and-white! Let's preserve our good ol'
entertainment as it was created, just as you, Mr.
Turner, as by supporting Jacques Cousteau, have
so actively helped preserve our good ol'
environment as it was created.

The color of movies isn't always the color of
money!