



Moviedrome: Bringing the Cult TV Series to the Big Screen

# Get Carter

## Get Carter

**Director:** Mike Hodges  
**Production Company:** Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer  
**Producer:** Michael Klinger  
**Production Supervisor:** Robert Sterne  
**Location Manager:** Derek Gibson  
**Assistant Director:** Keith Evans  
**Continuity:** Doreen Dearnaley  
**Casting:** Irene Lamb  
**Screenplay:** Mike Hodges  
**From the novel Jack's Return Home by:** Ted Lewis  
**Director of Photography:** Wolfgang Suschitzky  
**Camera Operator:** Dusty Miller  
**Stills Photography:** Bob Penn  
**Special Effects:** Jack Wallis  
**Editor:** John Trumper  
**Production Designer:** Assheton Gorton  
**Art Director:** Roger King  
**Costume Designer:** Vangie Harrison  
**Make-up:** George Partleton  
**Hair:** Allan McKeown  
**Music Composed/Played by:** Roy Budd  
**Lyrics by:** Jack Fishman  
**Sound Recording:** Christian Wangler  
**Dubbing Mixer:** Hugh Strain  
**Dubbing Editor:** Jim Atkinson  
**Stunt Director:** Johnny Morris  
**Studio:** Elstree Studios  
**Cast:**  
Michael Caine (*Jack Carter*)  
Britt Eklund (*Anna Fletcher*)  
John Osborne (*Cyril Kinnear*)  
Ian Hendry (*Eric Paice*)  
Bryan Mosley (*Cliff Brumby*)  
Geraldine Moffat (*Glenda*)  
Dorothy White (*Margaret*)  
Alun Armstrong (*Keith*)  
Glynn Edwards (*Albert Swift*)  
Tony Beckley (*Peter*)  
George Sewell (*Con McCarty*)  
Rosemarie Dunham (*Edna Garfoot*)  
Bernard Hepton (*Thorpe*)  
Petra Markham (*Doreen*)  
Terence Rigby (*Gerald Fletcher*)  
Godfrey Quigley (*Eddie Appleyard*)  
John Bindon (*Sid Fletcher*)  
Kevin Brennan (*Harry*)  
Maxwell Rees (*vicar*)  
Liz McKenzie (*Mrs Brumby*)  
John Hussey, Ben Aris (*architects*)  
Kitty Attwood (*old woman*)  
Denea Wilde (*pub singer*)  
Geraldine Sherman (*girl in café*)  
Joy Merlyn, Yvonne Michaels (*women in post office*)  
Alan Hockey (*scrap dealer*)  
Carl Howard (*'J'*)  
USA 1971  
112 mins  
Digital 4K

Moviedrome transmission date: 20 May 1990

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'What is a cult film? A cult film is one which has a passionate following but does not appeal to everybody. Just because a movie is a cult movie does not automatically guarantee quality. Some cult films are very bad. Others are very, very good. Some make an awful lot of money at the box office. Others make no money at all. Some are considered quality films. Others are exploitation.'

From 1988 to 2000 *Moviedrome* was presented by Alex Cox and then Mark Cousins. Across that time, more than 200 features were shown, and generations of movie fans and filmmakers would be informed and inspired by the selection, alongside the wit and wisdom of the introductions that preceded each screening. *Moviedrome* was a portal into the world of weird and wonderful cinema. This two-month season features some of the most notable titles screened and wherever possible they are preceded by the original televised introduction.

Nick Freand Jones, season curator and producer of *Moviedrome*

**Alex Cox:** *Get Carter* is a nasty British gangster film. For some reason, all British movie gangsters are extremely nasty – from Richard Attenborough's Pinky Doyle in *Brighton Rock* in 1947 through Richard Burton's and Bob Hoskins' anti-heroes in, respectively, *Villain* (1971) and *The Long Good Friday* (1980), up to and including *The Krays* (1990). All our gangster heroes (unlike Edward G. Robinson or Jean Paul Belmondo) are schizoid, sadistic arseholes who shoot people in the kneecaps and sentimentalise about their mums. Rather like the real thing, in fact.

Jack Carter, a racketeer from London, goes up north to Newcastle to attend his brother's funeral and wreak 'orrific vengeance on the Geordies who did him in. Carter is played by Michael Caine, who's really good as the fastidious brute, investigating an unseemly trail of cover-ups, bribes, double-crosses and sudden violence. He is an evil man; the only difference between him and his adversaries is that they are not as self-righteous as he. In that way, *Get Carter* resembles *High Plains Drifter* (in which Clint Eastwood pretends to save a western town in order to destroy it) or a Jacobean revenge play.

On the train up north, Carter reads *Farewell My Lovely*, but he's no Philip Marlowe. Nor is he even a Yojimbo, Kurosawa's samurai hired assassin in the film of the same name. *Get Carter* was directed by Mike Hodges in an energetic early 1970s' style, at a time when American studios were investing heavily in British films. As well as splendid Newcastle locations, it features cameos by Ian Hendry (as Eric Paice, the scheming chauffeur) and the noted playwright John Osborne in the role of Mr Big.

Alex Cox's original introduction for *Moviedrome*. Also published in *Moviedrome: The Guide* (BBC, 1990). With thanks to [moviedromer.tumblr.com](https://moviedromer.tumblr.com)

In bringing Ted Lewis's novel *Jack's Return Home* to the screen as *Get Carter*, its makers had a specific approach in mind: the violence, for once, could not be choreographed in the established movie manner, where the hero would scarcely be scratched after receiving a severe battering. They wanted to show violence truthfully – and it is this heightened sense of realism, amongst other factors, that has helped to make *Get Carter* one of the most memorable and influential British films of the early '70s.

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### Welcome to the Moviedrome

Fri 4 Jul 18:30

#### The Wicker Man (Final Cut)

Fri 4 Jul 20:45 (+ intro by Alex Cox and Nick Freand Jones) Fri 18 Jul 18:00; Mon 28 Jul 21:00  
**Walker**

Sat 5 Jul 15:10 (+ intro by filmmaker and Moviedrome presenter Alex Cox); Tue 29 Jul 20:40

#### The Fly (1958)

Sat 5 Jul 18:30 (+ intro by season curator and Moviedrome's producer Nick Freand Jones); Sun 13 Jul 15:20

#### The Fly (1986)

Sat 5 Jul 20:55; Sun 13 Jul 18:20

#### The Great Silence Il grande silenzio

Sun 6 Jul 12:10 (+ intro by filmmaker and Moviedrome presenter Alex Cox); Tue 15 Jul 20:40

#### Sweet Smell of Success

Sun 6 Jul 18:00 (+ intro by filmmaker and Moviedrome presenter Alex Cox); Mon 21 Jul 21:00

#### An American Werewolf in London

Mon 7 Jul 18:30; Sat 26 Jul 21:00

#### Get Carter

Mon 7 Jul 20:45; Thu 17 Jul 20:30; Tue 22 Jul 18:10

#### Les Diaboliques

Tue 8 Jul 20:35 (+ intro by season curator and Moviedrome's producer Nick Freand Jones); Sat 12 Jul 11:35

#### Two-Lane Blacktop

Wed 9 Jul 20:45 (+ intro by season curator and Moviedrome's producer Nick Freand Jones); Sat 19 Jul 18:20

#### Witchfinder General

Fri 11 Jul 18:20 (+ intro by Reece Shearsmith); Mon 14 Jul 20:50

#### California Dolls (aka All the Marbles)

Sat 12 Jul 15:10; Wed 23 Jul 20:40 (+ intro by season curator and Moviedrome's producer Nick Freand Jones)

#### Shaft

Sat 12 Jul 18:20; Sat 19 Jul 20:50

#### Scarface

Sat 12 Jul 19:50; Sun 27 Jul 14:10

#### Exotica

Mon 21 Jul 18:10; Wed 30 Jul 20:45 (+ pre-recorded intro by filmmaker Atom Egoyan)

#### La Haine

Fri 25 Jul 21:00; Thu 31 Jul 18:00

#### Clockers

Sat 26 Jul 18:00; Thu 31 Jul 20:20

### With thanks to

Bob Cummins and Sharon Maitland

## Sight and Sound

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**SIGHT  
AND  
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The book rights had been bought by producer Michael Klinger, and Michael Caine decided to go into partnership with Klinger (already a friend) to get the film made. 'It was a chance to show gangsters as they really are', says Cain. 'The tradition in British films until then, with the exception of *Brighton Rock*, was that gangsters were either very funny or Robin Hood types, stealing from the rich and giving to the poor. Not a realistic portrait, I think you will agree.' This was also the view of the man Klinger and Caine chose to script and direct their project, Mike Hodges.

'Until then, gangsters had been kind of jolly characters in British films,' says Hodges. 'But there was a meanness to them as well as a softer side, and I really wanted to bring this out. I wanted to give the film that sense of hardness you saw with the Krays and the Richardsons when their cases finally went to court. I wanted to be as honest as I could with the original material, and ended up making the film even harder than the book.'

One aspect of the book slightly altered by Hodges was the character of Carter. 'In the book the character's much softer,' he explains. 'Remember when he's in the bar and asks for his drink in a thin glass? In the book he says, "In a thin glass please." It's interesting. Michael gave him an edge – he really knew Carter and made him much more ruthless than he was in the book; harder and much more cynical. However, although you knew this man was sick – that he was psychotic – there was a sadness in him. He knows he's different. Embedded in the hardness is something that makes you realise that he knows there's something about him that's rather sick.'

Because of its violent (not to mention sexual) content, the film came in for inevitable criticism. 'Mike Hodges did a great job on the picture. Maybe too great, since when it came out we were slammed by most critics for the violence,' says Caine. 'It was too realistic for people who had become used to the choreographed nonsense you usually saw in those days.' Indeed, the American critic Pauline Kael described the film as 'virtuoso viciousness', and even today it comes across as strong stuff.

'I think that in its own way it was ahead of its time,' prefers the director. 'I remember Don Siegel seeing the film and being completely stunned, because nothing quite like it had come out of Britain before. I think its quality influenced many other films, too. You'd think that influence would destroy it, because it's been seen so many times, but it just seems to grow in stature. It's hard and ruthless, without a shadow of a doubt. At the time it probably appeared even more so, though we've had a lot of films since which have been even more sadistic.' Another reason for *Get Carter's* success is that it's a cracking story, very well cast and perfectly told. It is the ultimate in hard-edged realism – and a production filmmakers should continue learning from for a long time to come.

Howard Maxford, *Film Review*, November 1997