

= Angel Heart =

Angel Heart is a 1987 American neo @-@ noir psychological horror film , and an adaptation of William Hjortsberg 's 1978 novel Falling Angel . Written and directed by Alan Parker , the film stars Mickey Rourke , Robert De Niro and Lisa Bonet . The story follows Harry Angel (Rourke) , a New York City private investigator hired to solve the disappearance of a man known as Johnny Favorite . Angel 's investigation takes him to New Orleans , where he becomes embroiled in a series of brutal murders .

Following publication of the novel , Hjortsberg began developing a screenplay for a film adaptation , but found that no film studio was willing to produce his script . The project resurfaced in 1985 , when producer Elliott Kastner brought the book to Parker 's attention . Parker began work on a new script , and in doing so , made several changes from Hjortsberg 's novel . The independent film studio Carolco Pictures produced Angel Heart with a budget of \$ 18 million . Principal photography commenced in March 1986 and concluded in June of that year ; filming took place on location in New York and New Orleans .

Before its release , Angel Heart gained controversy for its casting of Bonet (then known for her role on the family @-@ oriented sitcom The Cosby Show) and her graphic sex scene with Rourke , which faced censorship issues from the Motion Picture Association of America . Parker was forced to remove ten seconds of sexual content to avoid an " X " rating and secure the " R " rating that the film 's distributor , Tri @-@ Star Pictures , wanted . An unrated version of the film was later released on home video . Angel Heart received mixed reviews and underperformed at the North American box office , grossing \$ 17 million during its theatrical run . It has since gained a cult following , with some reviewers calling it one of the best horror films ever made .

= = Plot = =

In 1955 , Harry Angel , a New York City private investigator , is hired by Louis Cyphre to track down John Liebling , a crooner known as " Johnny Favorite " who Cyphre had helped become successful . Cyphre stands to benefit from unspecified collateral on Favorite 's death and suspects that a private upstate hospital , where the war invalid Favorite was receiving psychiatric treatment for shell shock , is issuing false reports . Angel goes to the hospital and discovers that a backdated transfer record has recently been added by a physician named Albert Fowler . After Angel breaks into his home , Fowler admits that 12 years ago he was bribed by a man and woman to allow Favorite to leave while maintaining the fiction that he was still a patient at the hospital . Believing that Fowler is still withholding information , Angel locks him in his bedroom . Hours later , he finds the doctor murdered .

Unnerved , Angel tells Cyphre that he no longer wants the job , but agrees to continue after Cyphre offers him \$ 5 @,@ 000 . He soon discovers that Favorite had a wealthy fiancée named Margaret Krusemark but had also begun a secret love affair with a woman named Evangeline Proudfoot . Angel travels to New Orleans and meets with Margaret , who divulges little information , telling him that Favorite is dead . Angel then discovers that Evangeline is also dead , but is survived by her 17 @-@ year @-@ old daughter , Epiphany Proudfoot , who was conceived during her mother 's love affair with Favorite . When Epiphany is reluctant to speak , Angel tracks down Toots Sweet , a blues guitarist and former Favorite bandmate . After Angel uses force to try to extract details of Favorite 's last @-@ known whereabouts , Toots refers him back to Margaret . The following morning , police detectives inform Angel that Toots has been murdered . Angel returns to Margaret 's home , where he finds her murdered , her heart removed with a ceremonial knife . He is later attacked by enforcers of Ethan Krusemark ? a powerful Louisiana patriarch and Margaret 's father ? who tell him to leave town .

Angel returns to his hotel and finds Epiphany on his doorstep . He invites her into his room , where they have aggressive sexual intercourse , during which Angel has visions of blood dripping from the ceiling and splashing around the room . He later confronts Krusemark in a gumbo hut , where the latter reveals that he and Margaret were the ones who helped Favorite leave the hospital . He also

explains that Favorite was actually a powerful magician who sold his soul to Satan in exchange for stardom , but then sought to renege on the bargain . In 1943 , Favorite kidnapped a young soldier and performed a Satanic ritual on the boy , murdering him and eating his still @-@ beating heart in order to hide from the devil . Angel has a panic attack and runs into the bathroom . He returns to find Krusemark drowned in a cauldron of boiling gumbo .

Angel goes to Margaret 's home , where he finds a vase containing a clue to the soldier 's identity : a set of dog tags with his name stamped on them . Cyphre then appears , and Angel deduces that " Louis Cyphre " is a homophone for Lucifer . Cyphre confirms that he is the devil and proclaims that he can at long last claim what is his : Favorite 's immortal soul . In a fugue state that Cyphre induces , it is revealed that Angel has murdered Fowler , Toots , the Krusemarks and Epiphany .

A frantic Angel returns to his hotel room , where the police have found Epiphany raped , brutally murdered and wearing Angel 's dog tags . When Angel reveals that Epiphany was his daughter , a detective tells him that he will " burn " for what he has done to her , to which Angel replies , " I know . In Hell . " During the end credits , Angel is seen standing inside an iron Otis elevator which is interminably descending . As the screen fades to black , Cyphre can be heard whispering , " Harry " and " Johnny " , announcing his dominion over both their shared souls .

= = Cast = =

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

Following publication of his 1978 novel *Falling Angel* , William Hjortsberg began work on a film adaptation . His friend , production designer Richard Sylbert , took the book 's manuscript to producer Robert Evans . The film rights to the novel had been optioned by Paramount Pictures , with Evans slated to produce the film , John Frankenheimer hired to direct and Hjortsberg acting as screenwriter . Frankenheimer was later replaced by Dick Richards , and Dustin Hoffman was considered for the lead role . After Paramount 's option expired , Hjortsberg discussed the project with Robert Redford and wrote two drafts . Hjortsberg felt that no film studio was willing to produce his script . He reflected , " Even with [Redford] behind the script , studio executives weren 't interested . ' Why can 't it have a happy ending ? ' every bigshot demanded . "

In 1985 , producer Elliott Kastner met with Alan Parker at Pinewood Studios to discuss a film adaptation of the novel . Parker , who had read the book following its publication , agreed to write the screenplay . He met with Hjortsberg in London before moving to New York , where he wrote most of the script . After completing the first draft in September 1985 , Parker traveled to Rome , Italy , where he brought the script to Mario Kassar and Andrew G. Vajna . The two producers agreed to finance the film through their independent film studio , Carolco Pictures , and Parker was given creative control . Pre @-@ production work began in January 1986 in New York , where Parker selected the creative team , reuniting with several of his past collaborators , including producer Alan Marshall , director of photography Michael Seresin , camera operator Michael Roberts , production designer Brian Morris and editor Gerry Hambling .

= = = Writing = = =

Parker made several changes from the novel . He titled his script *Angel Heart* as he wanted to distance his film adaptation from the source material . While *Falling Angel* is set entirely in New York City , Parker had the second half of his script take place in New Orleans , based on the novel 's perpetual allusions to voodoo and the occult . He discussed the story setting change to Hjortsberg , who approved of the decision and said that he had considered setting his novel in New Orleans . *Angel Heart* is set in the year 1955 , whereas in the book , the events take place in 1959 . Parker

explained , " The book is set in 1959 and I moved it to 1955 for a small but selfish reason . 1959 was on the way to the 1960 ' s with its changing attitudes as well as environments . 1955 for me still belonged to the 1940 ' s ? and , because of the historical pause button of World War II , conceivably the 1930 ' s ? so quite simply , setting it in this year allowed me to give an older look to the film . "

Other script changes from the novel involved characterization and dialogue . Parker sought to make Harry Angel a character that evoked sympathy . He said , " In the tradition of the down @-@ at @-@ heel gumshoe , his phlegmatic surface disguised an intelligence capable of unraveling a complicated , larger @-@ than @-@ life story with a degree of belief and conciseness . Also he had to be attractive to audiences while enlightening them , little by little , along the way . " Parker also established Angel as being born on February 14 ? Valentine ' s Day ? the same date as his own birthday . He explained that " the heart reference seemed to have some resonance " . Parker also wanted to create a realistic depiction of Louis Cyphre , as opposed to the character ' s " larger @-@ than @-@ life " personality in the novel . Another script change involved the ending and the identity of the killer . While Angel is framed for the murders (presumably by Cyphre) in the novel , Parker established the character as the killer for the film ' s ending .

= = = Casting = = =

Parker originally wanted Robert De Niro to play the role of Harry Angel , but the actor expressed interest in playing Louis Cyphre . De Niro did not fully commit to the role until after many discussions with Parker . The director reflected , " I had been courting [De Niro] to play [Cyphre] in Angel Heart for some months and we had met a few times ? and he had continued to bombard me with questions examining every dot and comma of my script . I had walked him through the locations we had found , read through the screenplay sitting on the floor of a dank , disused church in Harlem and finally he said ' yes ' . "

Jack Nicholson was also considered for the role of Angel . Parker met with Nicholson in Los Angeles to discuss the project . Parker said , " I did my pitch and he was most gracious , although , to be honest , he was quite distracted at the time ... my movie and the possibility of him taking part seemed to slip from his immediate area of concentration and interest . " Parker also met with Mickey Rourke , who expressed a strong interest in playing Angel and secured the leading role after a meeting with Parker in New York .

Various actresses auditioned for the role of Epiphany Proudfoot before Lisa Bonet secured the part . Bonet was then known for her role on the family @-@ oriented sitcom The Cosby Show , and her casting in Angel Heart sparked significant controversy . Parker cast Bonet based on the strength of her audition and was unaware of her role on The Cosby Show . On preparing for the role , Bonet said , " I did a lot of meditation and a lot of self @-@ inquiry . I did some research on voodoo . My earnest endeavor was really to let go of all my inhibitions . It was really necessary for me to be able to let go of Lisa and let Epiphany take over . "

Parker had difficulty finding an actress for the role of Margaret Krusemark . " Although it ' s a small part in the film , the character is omnipresent in the dialogue and [the actress] had to have the right balance of class and eccentricity , " he said . " I read many actresses for the part without much success . " Rourke suggested English actress Charlotte Rampling , who secured the role after Parker contacted her to discuss the part .

In January 1986 , Parker held an open casting call at a New York nightclub known as The Kamikaze , with more than 1 @,@ 400 people auditioning for various roles . Actress Elizabeth Whitcraft , who had a small role in Parker ' s previous film Birdy was cast as Connie , a journalist who aids Angel in his investigation . Parker held another casting call in New Orleans , where he requested that local musicians audition for possible roles in the film . Clarence " Gatemouth " Brown and Deacon John Moore were among the many musicians who auditioned for roles . Moore was cast as Toots Sweet ' s bandmate . Parker then returned to New York , where he auditioned other musicians , including Bo Diddley and Dizzy Gillespie . Blues guitarist Brownie McGhee , who plays Toots Sweet , was cast during the film ' s principal photography .

= = = Filming = = =

During the casting process , Parker and producer Alan Marshall began scouting locations in New York City . The director looked at Harlem , believing that the neighborhood was " as un @-@ photographed as other parts of New York are over @-@ used . " On January 20 , 1986 , he travelled to New Orleans , where he continued writing the script . Parker looked at unused buildings located on Royal Street that could act as a hotel , and an abandoned house on Magazine Street that would serve as the home of Margaret Krusemark (Rampling) . He returned to New York where he looked at Staten Island and Coney Island . Parker 's script required a total of 78 locations in New York and New Orleans .

Principal photography began on March 31 , 1986 and concluded on June 20 , 1986 , on a budget of \$ 18 million . Filming began in Eldridge Street , Manhattan , New York City , which acted as Harry Angel 's neighbourhood . Production designer Brian Morris and the set decorating team spent two months designing the set prior to filming , hoping to recreate 1950s New York . Because of the warm weather conditions , ice trucks were used to create fake snow . Filming then moved to Alphabet City in Manhattan , where several bar scenes and Angel 's intimate bedroom scene with Connie (Whitcraft) were filmed .

The production team then moved to Harlem to film a chase scene set during a procession before moving to Coney Island , where the cast and crew underwent severely cold weather conditions . The location was used to film a scene in which Angel questions a man Izzy (George Buck) about the whereabouts of Johnny Favorite , while Izzy 's wife Bo (Judith Drake) stands waist deep in the ocean . The original actress who was cast as Bo was injured when she was knocked off her feet by a wave while delivering her first line . The actress refused to reshoot the scene , which led to her being replaced by her stand @-@ in , Drake , who Parker found to be a better actress for the role .

Production returned to Manhattan to film the opening credits sequence . Filming then moved to Harlem , New York , where a hospice was used to film a scene involving the character Spider Simpson (Charles Gordone) , and many of the hospice 's elderly residents acted as extras for the scene . On April 17 , 1986 , the production team moved to Staten Island to film exterior and interior scenes involving the character Dr. Fowler (Michael Higgins) . Filming then moved to Hoboken , New Jersey , which doubled for a scene set in a New Orleans train station . From April 28 to April 29 , the production team returned to Harlem , where Parker filmed Rourke and De Niro 's scene in a Harlem mission . The two actors next filmed a scene at Lanza 's , an Italian restaurant located on the Lower East Side .

By May 3 , 1986 , production had moved to New Orleans . In the town of Thibodaux , Louisiana , Parker and his crew discovered an entire plantation workers ' village that would serve as a graveyard . He said , " The graveyard was a dressed set , but much of what we filmed was already there . " An unused Louisiana field was used to create a racetrack where Angel meets the wealthy patriarch Ethan Krusemark (Fontelieu) . On May 13 , the crew encountered some difficulty filming a chase scene involving Angel , as they had to deal with shying horses , trained dogs , gunshots , two hundred chickens , and a horse specially trained to fall on top of Rourke 's stuntman .

Production then moved to Magazine Street , where production designer Brian Morris and the art department attempted to recreate 1950s New Orleans . Parker said of the set , " As in New York , we had dressed and clad every single storefront as far as the eye could see in order to be authentic to the period , and drained everything of all primary colours for our monochromatic look . " Filming then moved to Jackson Square where the crew filmed one of the final scenes , in which Angel runs from Margaret 's home . The production then filmed a voodoo ceremony scene choreographed by Louis Falco . Falco , who had previously choreographed Parker 's 1980 film Fame , based the scene on an actual Haitian ceremony .

The sex scene involving Rourke and Bonet was filmed in one of the unused buildings located on Royal Street and took four hours to shoot . Parker limited the crew down to himself , cinematographer Michael Seresin , camera operator Michael Roberts and the camera assistant . To make the actors more comfortable , Parker played music during the shoot . Production then moved

to a corner of New Orleans , which doubled for flashback sequences set in 1943 Times Square , New York . The crew then discovered an unused bus depot , which was used to film scenes set in Ethan Krusemark 's gumbo hut . Filming then moved to the St. Alphonsus Church , where the crew filmed a dialogue scene between Angel and Cyphre . Production returned to Royal Street in the French Quarter , where the final confrontation between Angel and Cyphre , and the film 's ending were shot .

= = = Editing and censorship = = =

After filming concluded in June 1986 , Parker spent four months editing the film in Europe , with 400 @, @ 000 feet of film and 1 @, @ 100 different shots . The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) gave the original cut an " X " rating ? a rating widely associated with pornographic films . The board , composed of industry executives and theater owners , expressed concerns over several seconds of the intense sex scene involving Rourke and Bonet , in which Rourke 's buttocks are seen thrusting in a sexual motion . The board voted 6 to 5 to reclassify the film to an " R " rating ; a reclassification required a two @-@ thirds majority vote .

The film 's distributor , Tri @-@ Star Pictures , refused to release it with an X rating , as the film would have fewer theaters willing to book it and fewer venues for advertising ; Steve Randall , executive vice @-@ president of marketing for Tri @-@ Star , stated that it was the studio 's " firm policy not to release an X @-@ rated film . " With only a few weeks before the film 's release , the studio was desperate for the less @-@ restrictive R rating , but Parker was reluctant to alter the film . He filed another appeal , in which the board voted 8 to 6 in favor of the X rating . Parker then removed ten seconds of sexual content from the scene . " That scene was very complex , very intricate , and the cutting quite rapid , involving 60 to 80 cuts in the space of about two minutes , " he said . " Eventually , I cut only 10 seconds from the scene , or about 14 feet of film . " On February 24 , 1987 , the film was granted an R rating . Parker later stated that the MPAA 's concerns were " a wasteful , pointless and expensive exercise " .

= = = Music = = =

The film score for Angel Heart was produced and composed by South African composer Trevor Jones , with saxophone solos by British jazz musician Courtney Pine . Parker hired Jones after being impressed by his orchestral score for the 1986 film Runaway Train . Jones viewed a rough cut of Angel Heart prior to scoring the film . He stated , " When I sat in the screening room all by myself and began to see those images , I was shaking like a puppy when the movie ended and when I got out of the room I told [Parker] that it was a great picture , but that I didn 't understand what exactly he wanted from me . He told me that he expected me to deliver something special to the picture and ... to approach the movie from whenever I chose . "

For the score , Jones wanted to explore the concept of evil : " Evil is the greatest of human fears ... I tried to give that feeling to the score using daily ordinary music that would bridge the world of [Harry Angel] to that which he 's getting into , the black magic , his search . It was like a psychological journey for me always trying to relate to the fears and emotions of the audience . " He composed the score electronically on a synclavier . Parker chose Glen Gray 's 1937 song " Girl of My Dreams " as a recurring song performed by the unseen character Johnny Favorite . He wanted the song to act as a motif that would haunt viewers as it had haunted Harry Angel . Jones incorporated elements of the song into his score . In addition to Jones 's score , the soundtrack features several blues and R & B performances , including " Honeyman Blues " by Bessie Smith , and " Soul on Fire " by LaVern Baker . Brownie McGhee performed the songs " The Right Key , but the Wrong Keyhole " and " Rainy Rainy Day " , with Lilian Boutte acting as a vocalist .

During post @-@ production , Jones mixed the music tracks at Angel Recording Studios , a recording studio built in an abandoned church in Islington , North London , with final mixing taking place at Warner Hollywood Studios in Los Angeles . Parker said , " One of the great advantages of working with contemporary recording techniques is that we can mix onto film in a recording studio

with all of the various components and options of modern , multi @-@ track recordings . I 've always been very mistrustful of conventional scoring , whereby a hundred musicians sit in front of the projected film and the conductor strikes up the orchestra . " A motion picture soundtrack album was released by the recording labels Antilles Records and Island Records .

= = Release = =

= = = Theatrical release = = =

In North America , Angel Heart opened in wide release on March 6 , 1987 , distributed by Tri @-@ Star Pictures . The film debuted at number four at the weekend box office , garnering ticket sales of \$ 3 @, @ 688 @, @ 721 from 815 screens , with an average of \$ 4 @, @ 526 per theatre . The film 's overall domestic gross was \$ 17 @, @ 185 @, @ 632 , which is below its estimated budget of \$ 18 million .

= = = Critical response = = =

The review aggregation website Rotten Tomatoes sampled 23 reviews , and gave Angel Heart a score of 78 % , with an average score of 7 out of 10 . William Hjortsberg , author of Falling Angel , voiced his support of the film adaptation , stating , " [Alan] Parker wrote an excellent script and went on to make a memorable film . Casting Robert De Niro as Cyphre was a brilliant touch . " Although initially supportive of Bonet 's decision to appear in the film , Bill Cosby dismissed Angel Heart as " a movie made by white America that cast a black girl , gave her voodoo things to do and have sex " .

Initial reactions among film critics were mixed . Vincent Canby of The New York Times praised the cinematography and production design , but criticized Rourke 's performance as being " suitably intense , but to such little effect " . Rita Kempley of the Washington Post wrote that Angel Heart " is over @-@ stylized , and we 're over @-@ stimulated when the soundtrack goes berserk , from a few thumpity @-@ thumps to a visceral , ventricles a @-@ pumping score " . Pauline Kael of The New Yorker criticized Parker 's direction : " There 's no way to separate the occult from the incomprehensible ... Parker simply doesn 't have the gift of making evil seductive , and he edits like a flasher . " Kael also criticized De Niro : " It 's the sort of guest appearance that lazy big actors delight in ? they can show up the local talent . "

On the syndicated television program Siskel and Ebert and the Movies , Gene Siskel gave Angel Heart a " thumbs down " , while his colleague Roger Ebert praised the film and gave it a " thumbs up " . In his review for the Chicago Tribune , Siskel wrote that " Parker seems more concerned with style and with hiding the film 's big mystery than with pacing . " Siskel also criticized the film 's controversial sex scene for not being " as shocking as the rating board would have you believe . "

Ebert , writing for the Chicago Sun @-@ Times , gave the film three and a half stars out of four , writing that " Angel Heart is a thriller and a horror movie , but most of all it 's an exuberant exercise in style , in which Parker and his actors have fun taking it to the limit " . Ian Nathan of Empire called the film " A diabolical treat with Rourke and De Niro in top form . " Almar Haflidason of the BBC wrote , " The movie maintains intrigue at every turn and Rourke is spellbinding . Robert De Niro , Charlotte Rampling , and the assembled cast are all excellent . But this is Mickey Rourke 's movie , and he puts in a mesmerising performance . " Richard Luck , writing for Film4 , concluded in his review , " The book 's so good it deserves a better movie , but Rourke 's performance is such that Angel Heart stands out from the necromancy movie crowd . "

= = = Cultural impact = = =

While not initially a success with North American audiences , Angel Heart has gained a cult following . Filmmaker Christopher Nolan stated the film was a major influence on his 2000 film

Memento . Video game developer Ken Levine stated that Angel Heart was one of several films that inspired the first @-@ person shooter game BioShock Infinite .

In 2010 , Wired magazine ranked the film at number 22 on their list of " The 25 Best Horror Films of All Time " , and in 2012 , Mark Hughes , writing for Forbes , ranked Angel Heart at number nine on his list of the " Top 10 Best Cult Classic Horror Movies of All Time " . Den of Geek writer Ryan Lambie ranked the film at number six on his list of " The Top 20 Underappreciated Films of 1987 " , writing that " Parker brings a wonderfully shadowy quality to his noir thriller , which takes in New York and New Orleans . Some viewers may be able to predict where this twisty , murky thriller 's going to take them , but the ride remains one worth taking thanks to the quality of the acting and direction . " Film critic Tim Dirks of the film @-@ review website Filmsite.org added the film to his list of films featuring the " Greatest Film Plot Twists , Film Spoilers and Surprise Endings " , based on two of the film 's major plot twists ? Harry Angel being revealed as Johnny Favorite , and Louis Cyphre revealing himself as Lucifer . Screen Rant writer Tim Butters added Robert De Niro 's performance on his list of " One of the 10 Best Movie Depictions of the Devil " .

= = = Accolades = = =

Angel Heart received several awards and nominations following its release . At the 10th Jupiter Awards , Mickey Rourke won a Jupiter Award for Best International Actor for his performances in both Angel Heart and A Prayer for the Dying (1987) . At the 9th Youth in Film Awards , Lisa Bonet won the Young Artist Award for Best Young Female Superstar in Motion Pictures . At the 15th Saturn Awards , Angel Heart received three Saturn Award nominations , though it failed to win any of the awards .

= = = Home video = = =

Angel Heart was released on VHS on September 24 , 1987 by International Video Entertainment (IVE) . The releases included the R @-@ rated theatrical cut , and an uncut version which restored the ten seconds of sexual content that was removed to satisfy the MPAA . Ralph King , senior vice president of IVE , said , " The scene cut from Angel Heart is both provocative and shocking , but it is by no means pornographic . We 're pleased to give the public the opportunity to see the film as Alan Parker originally meant the film to be viewed . "

The film was first released on DVD on June 23 , 1998 by Artisan Entertainment . Special features on the DVD included a theatrical trailer , production notes , a making @-@ of featurette , and information on the cast and crew . The DVD release received criticism for its poor video transfer and shortage of special features . Artisan later released the film on laserdisc on August 18 , 1998 . Lionsgate Home Entertainment re @-@ released Angel Heart with a " Special Edition " DVD on May 18 , 2004 . The Special Edition features additional material , including an introduction and audio commentary by Parker , a scene @-@ specific commentary by Rourke , a video interview with the actor , and the theatrical trailer . Lionsgate released the film on Blu @-@ ray disc on November 24 , 2009 . The Blu @-@ ray presents the film in 1080p high definition , and contains all the additional materials found on the Special Edition DVD .

= = Remake = =

In 2008 , it was announced that producers Michael De Luca , Alison Rosenzweig and Michael Gaeta were developing a planned remake of Angel Heart that would be produced by De Luca 's production banner Michael De Luca Productions . The producers had optioned the rights to both the film and the novel Falling Angel . De Luca expressed that he was a fan of the novel , stating , " It 's a great blend of genres with a great Faustian bargain , compelling , universal themes and a rare combination of literary and commercial appeal . "