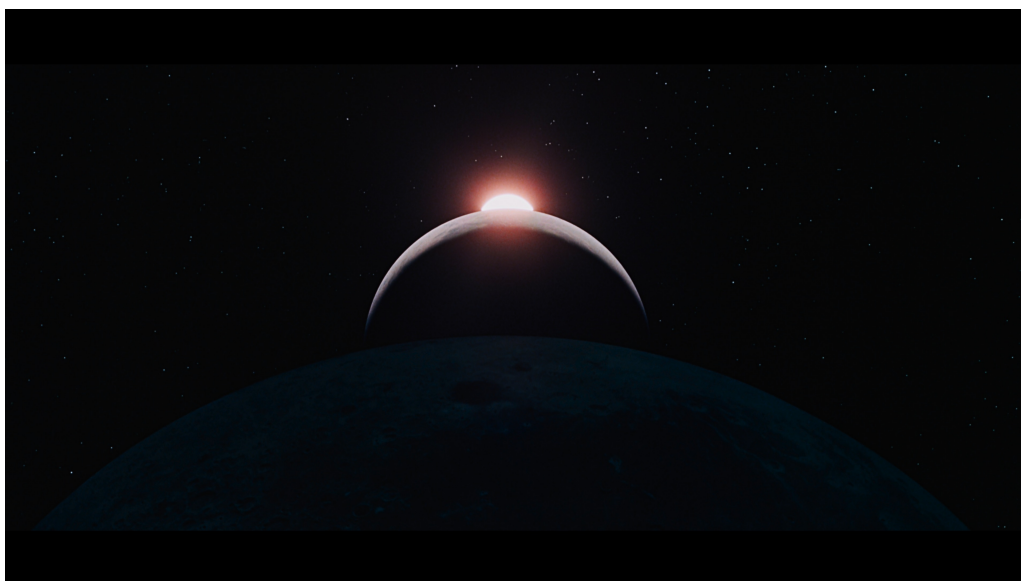


Films of 1968



Rules: Oscar nominees in major categories were watched. BAFTA and Golden Globes nominees were usually watched as well. A 1968 US release was usually stuck to concerning eligibility. A few foreign language films were included, but only stand outs as well as available spaghetti westerns. Given that in 1968, the Hays Production Code ended and the first Rating System started, how many liberties the film took will factor in. Also during this time films started to be films on-location more, which will also be factored in.

Tier 11: B-Moves So Bad You'll Hate Yourself

73. **Love After Death:** A cheaply-made Argentinian film, dubbed into English. I thought it was a B-movie horror; a dude is buried alive and comes back from the dead to exact revenge on his unfaithful wife. Yet, the film has little interest in a plot and it quickly devolves into a sexploitation film, with people going around having softcore sexual interactions. And this happens in a film that is only 70 minutes! It isn't good. Any redeeming horror qualities are thrown out the window with the lack of plot.
72. **Voyage to the Planet of Prehistoric Women:** The film is most notable for having a few minutes worth of content shot and directed by Peter Bogdanovich. He only shot a few minutes as the film is an overdub and editing of a *Soviet* science fiction film. The dub is baaaad. The plot barely exists (in-part because the dub is so bad), though the voice-over narration – also done by Bogdanovich – does make the film not a complete and utter disaster. Besides its place in film history, or a love of B-movie sci-fi films, there is nothing of value of here.
71. **Girl in Gold Boots:** Frequently listed as one of the worst films ever made, and rightfully so. Directed by Ted V. Mikels (who appears in this tier again with *The Astro-Zombies*). The script is awful, both in terms of lacking a plot and dialogue. The actors deliver their lines so flat, you may start laughing at times. And even at 94 minutes it feels long. It is a mess of a movie, but if you like bad B-movies it fits the bill.
70. **The Astro-Zombies:** A B-movie co-written by Wayne Rodgers (of Trapper John fame). The movie is a bad science-fiction film with little plot. The editing is awful (lots of bad swipe cuts). The dialogue is rather bad. The effects are often as bad as you'd expect. The plot is nonsensical (there is a scene

with a topless women, covered in body paint, dancing to someone playing bongo drums). It is at least, at times so-bad-it-good.

69. **The Vengeance of She:** A sorta sequel to *She* (though most of the main actors left). The movie turns out exactly how you'd expect a sequel to a B-movie with none of the main actors reappearing turns out. Which is to say very bad. the main actress was chosen for her, uh, umm, yeahhhh, rather than any acting chops. With Hammer, some of the miniature sets are nice, but not enough to overcome the poor plot, writing, and acting.

Tier 10: Not Good Movies That You Can't Tolerate

68. **The Mini-Skirt Mob:** Technically an outlaw biker gang film, but it attempts to have a more grounded plot; the leader of a female biker gang wants to get revenge on her ex. There is not much biker b-roll, nor does it feature many genre conventions. Now, none of the ladies in the biker gang look like they belong in a biker gang, but rather a school dance (the title gives it away; they are all in miniskirts). It's bland, boring, with poor character development. But it at least attempted something.
67. **Angels from Hell:** Another outlaw biker gang film (watching all of these best pay off for the context surrounding *Easy Rider* in 1969). This can't be in the last tier as it isn't a straight-up stereotypical B-movie. Yet, it still has all the flaws of the genre; pointless 'action', destruction, and padding the already brief runtime with lengthy sequence of motorcycles driving around. There could have been an interesting plot around the gang leader having returned from Vietnam, and it does use it a few times successfully (he demanding his rights and the ending), but there is not much emotional depth added to his character. The lead Tom Stern is essentially a nobody and it detracts. The side plot with making movies about biker gangs could have provided more meta-commentary but it never does. The ending with the cops turning on the bikers (without justification) is decent, but can not save the movie. Had it leaned into the anti-cop or Vietnam vet narratives and really explored them, a good movie could have been made.
66. **Mrs Brown You've Got a Lovely Daughter:** I haven't seen something this bad about London-area Greyhounds since *Ted Lasso* (Season 3). And I like Herman's Hermits! There is essentially no plot. The band members can not act. The songs are poorly incorporated into the film. Lance Percival (*Yellow Submarine*) is enjoyable in a support role, yet his character has no reason to exist. The Hermits were no where nears as good as The Beatles, but they still deserved a better movie than this one.
65. **Chitty Chitty Bang Bang:** The film is a not-good children's movie. Kid's movies can be tolerable, but they need something for the adults. This one does not. Dick Van Dyke's (*Fitzwilly*) charm does not exactly come thru the screen. The musical numbers are entirely forgettable (and frequently in the same simple tune). The two silly spies do allow for about ten minutes of so-bad-its-good entertainment as the spies leaned into the absurdity of the film. An intelligent writer would have given The Child Catcher a villain song, but again that would have made the film good (we'll ignore that The Child Catcher is a stand-in for a Nazi, and is an anti-Semitic character). The film can't be in the bottom tier, because it isn't an awful B-movie, but it still has little to offer.
64. **The Ballad of Josie:** A faux-feminist film that missed the moment. A Western starring Doris Day, and with a solid supporting cast of character actors: George Kennedy, Andy Devine, and John Fiedler among others. Yet, as instantly as Doris Day sets out on her own, her character disturbs the apple cart in ways that are not transgressive, even to a 1960s audience; she wears blue jeans!, she holds a gun (in such a pathetic way). And at risk of spoiling the film, she ends up re-marrying! because women are meant to be married.

63. **She-Devils on Wheels:** The second, and better, of the two female-center outlaw biker gang films on the list. This one has all of the conventions of the genre, but if focused on a female gang. The gang is made up of actual female bikers which provides great authenticity (and helps the film rank this high), but none of the can act; lines are delivered flat, they block out the other actors, etc. They aren't helped by a flat script either (though the script does allow for multiple feminist ideas to come thru). The film has far too much b-roll to pad the length up to 80 minutes. There is a decent amount of gore/carnage (directed by Herschell Gordon Lewis) but it does feel dated at times, while some of the excessiveness has staying power. This is one of the few films in the genre that could have been rather good, if the bikers could have acted with an more fleshed out script.

Tier 9: Not Good Movies That You Can Tolerate

62. **The Savage Seven:** Probably the best outlaw biker gang of the year as here the gang teams up with local Natives to team up against the man. This is the first with some 'deep' social commentary because disaffected youth. Now, it is annoying that the two Native leads are played by white characters. And the film suffers from far too many (and lengthy) fist fights. The film starts to crumble at the end, but given the genre this is one of the better ones.
61. **Boom!:** Starring Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. Written by Tennessee Williams. Directed by Joseph Losey (*Accident*). It has all the makings of a great film and yet is a complete flop. Taylor overacts. Burton acts like he didn't want to be there; he has none of his normal charisma. Williams' dialogue is bland and rambling. The purpose-build mansion on the cliffs does look awesome. And there is potentially a good idea in the script. But it doesn't come together at all.
60. **The Green Berets:** John Wayne's Vietnam film goes exactly how you'd expect. The North Vietnamese are murdering rapists, and communists are evil. Most characters are paper thin. The film is also divided into two almost separate parts: i) building and defense of an outpost, ii) the capturing of an enemy commander behind the lines. The two sections do not fit well together, besides the fact that The Green Berets are picked for the mission (the film does a poor job of showing why these special forces are special). The film was shot in Georgia, which is a poor stand-in for Vietnam. A deciduous forest does not a jungle make.
59. **Psych-Out:** Another hippie/drug movie, but this time the film makes you know doing drugs can be bad. The strength is a young trio of Jack Nicholson (*Hells Angels on Wheels*), Susan Strasberg (*The Trip*), and Bruce Dern (*The Wild Angels*). The plot is rather predictable and (the director's cut) is still pads the runtime with psychedelic shots. Admittedly some of which are decent, but the film itself is not.
58. **Charlie Bubbles:** A complete bore of a film starring and directed by Albert Finney (*Two for the Road*). The film about a disaffected wealthy writer. And that is all. The film attempts to show various interactions, all of which are a chore. As the film is not interested in why the character became disaffected. Rather it hopes changes in setting; the wealthy and metropolitan London with the downtrodden Manchester and countryside. Even at 90 minutes the film drags. The first good thing is the shot of the various in-home cameras showing the various rooms as characters move seamlessly between rooms/cameras. The second good thing is a young Liza Minnelli in a supporting role.
57. **Finian's Rainbow:** The red-headed step-child of Francis Ford Coppola's filmography, and rightfully so. The film is an over-long mess (like so many of the musicals this year). Fred Astaire has sadly lost his charm. Some of the sets are obviously sets. The songs are generally not good. 'When I'm Not Near the Girl I Love' could have been a bop if the melody was better; Tommy Steele did put in an enjoyable performance. The film is at it's best when making racial commentary. The commentary is very heavy-handed, but making fun of racist southern senators in 1968 was always a good idea.

56. **Yours, Mine, and Ours:** Family-friendly (with some conservative values) tolerable fun. Henry Fonda and Lucille Ball are always good and they easily elevate the film. With lesser talent this film would be down a tier or two (as there isn't much to it). The film is a little too casual with one of the sons being drafted into Vietnam (admittedly the father is a Naval Officer, but still). Some of the jokes are funny, but the plot meanders without much purpose.

Tier 8: Okay Films With A Redeeming Quality

55. **Bandolero!:** The film wastes its great cast with poor writing and some poor sets. Jimmy Stewart starts off great as the hangman, but then quickly reverts back to his standard moral-center character. Dean Martin has little room to shine. Raquel Welch (*One Million Years B.C.*) is in the movie, whose character seems forced into the film so that there would be a female character. George Kennedy (*Cool Hand Luke*) is good, but like the rest of the cast has an underdeveloped character. Although some of the shots of the desert look great then become contrasted with obvious set pieces that look like set pieces. The film assembled an all-star cast and then gave them nothing to do.
54. **Johnny Hamlet (Quella sporca storia nel West):** Take *Hamlet*, and make it a Spaghetti Western! If that seems borderline-pointless, you are right. The standard disclaimer of me not knowing much Shakespeare applies (though I do know *The Lion King*). There is a solid opening theme, a few nice shots, and some great geographic features used for on-location filming. That's about where the good things end. The plot has no interest in developing characters, and unlike most Spaghetti Westerns there is a clear delineation of who's good and who's bad (perhaps the bandit Santana is the only ambiguous one, but his subplot is a needless distraction). There is a small traveling acting troupe that literally is performing *Hamlet* (a real face-palm), and who's existence seems to be in providing a woman for Johnny to bed. The stunt work is often comically bad, this egregious drop kicks and people flying off horses, and buildings after being shot in ways that do not look natural.
53. **Murder a la Mod:** Brian De Palma's first released feature. It is mildly experimental and has a *Roshyomon*-type plot around the titular murder. The black-and-white cinematography often looks nice, but the issues come down to a poor plot and poor characters. The internal monologue for one character does not work at all (despite showcasing some voice-acting talent) as it does not fit in with the film and comes off as a forced joke. Luckily the film is only 80 minutes, so although it can drag it never gets unbearable.
52. **The Devil's Brigade:** The issue isn't that the film is bad, but it comes across as a bad *The Dirty Dozen*. And sadly both films went into production at the same time and *Brigade* is based on a true story. While *Dozen* had its share of flaws, it had a great cast and took the time to develop the infamous twelve. Here though, the film spotlights a few members of the brigade but rarely develops them beyond cliches. The plot is poor, drags, and has some dumb moments (taking a town without alerting the Germans being the worst offender; becoming besties after a single bar fight the second). The cast has big names, but most are past their prime (William Holden), or too young—and therefore placed in undeveloped supporting roles (Richard Dawson).
51. **Dracula Has Risen from the Grave:** It is a Hammer horror film so you know what you are getting. Yet it is better than their usual fare, partially because Christopher Lee as Dracula is such a good casting decision the franchise can stay afloat. Some of the shots look nice, and the blood-filled eyes of Dracula are a wonderful effect. The film veers a little too far into religion being the way to defeat Dracula for my tastes, as without it, the film could move up a few spots.
50. **The Shoes of the Fisherman:** A sprawling two-hour-and-forty-minute film. There are multiple subplots which serve little purpose (the newsman's affair being the worst offender). And perhaps the largest issue is that the film is tangentially about a potential war between Russia and China (in

the 1960s), which simply does not age well; also that becomes a silly subplot as the film is certainly not a political thriller. Yet, the film does hold up as a critique of the Catholic Church (especially pre-Francis; minus the sexual assault). The sets are incredible as the film did not have access to the inside of the Vatican; it had to be recreated and for the most part it succeeds. Anthony Quinn is also rather good, but not great in the leading role.

49. **Isadora:** A slow and plodding biopic that lacks direction and purpose. It is only salvaged by Vanessa Redgrave's (*Camelot*) performance. The film seemed more interested in showing events in Isadora Duncan's life, that showing what makes her tick. Is she simply a light-headed sex fiend (the film left out her apparent lesbian tryst)? Someone who believes in the power of art? A misunderstood genius? The film doesn't motivate much of her decisions, beyond those involving having sex with someone she finds attractive. The film would have been improved had it focused on a few sections on her life. Instead it jumps around to multiple relationships in her life and does not exactly provide a coherent view. Perhaps most notably is the frequent topless scenes, which for 1968 are bit out of the ordinary.
48. **Firecreek:** Another Jimmy Stewart Western that is let down by poor writing. The film is instantly dated with its traditional values front and center; needing to take the boys into hear the sermon. Another early scene shows a young girl almost get raped, but then she starts to like the guy after he gives her five dollars to buy a new dress (that he was responsible for ruining). But perhaps the real let down is that Stewart's character is suppose to finally be pushed over the edge and to defend the yet; yet the line takes far too long to cross (and where any sane person would already have been fed up). There is also a side plot about none of the townsfolk offering to help, and one can't help but wish they were watching *High Noon* instead. Henry Fonda's character is also a let down; he wants to be a leader of 'men' yet it clear from the first ten minutes he does not lead his gang of bandits. Stewart and Fonda are great actors, but they can't overcome their poor characters.
47. **Head:** Directed by Bob Rafelson and starring The Monkees. It is co-written by Jack Nicholson (*Ride in the Whirlwind* and *The Trip*), and boy is the film a trip. There is not a plot and the film is outlandish, absurdest, and breaks the fourth wall. Few of The Monkees can act. Except the tap dance sequence is amazing and a masterclass in editing. That sequence alone easily moved the film up a tier. Somehow the film does manage to tie everything back together, and deserves credit for the overall structure (despite the lack of structure). The film isn't great, and bogs down far too often, even at 85 minutes. Yet the final product is interesting and a solid example of the experimentation in the 60s.
46. **For Love of Ivy:** The film crumbles under its own weight. It wants to be about racial issues and interactions, while presenting the issues from both the black and the (well-meaning) white perspective. In trying to have-its-cake-and-eat-it-too, the film becomes cringe inducing (especially some of the 'well-meaning' lines from the white characters). Also, because of this the film tries to be hip and modern, but ends up being about conservative family values. That being said, Sydney Poitier is charming and great. Abbey Lincoln is also rather good as his co-lead. A young Beau Bridges is even in it, but isn't anything special; though he does nail the aimless hippie-adjacent rich kid of the era.
45. **Corruption:** Another Hammer horror film, with this one being set in modern times. Peter Cushing is enjoyable as the older and out-of-place-in-the-Swinging-60s doctor and lover of an attractive model. Things go wrong when the model has her face partially disfigured and then the fun starts. The gore by modern standards is sad, but by 1960s standards it comes across well; we have some dismembered heads! The film writes a character for the model (played by Sue Lynn), and her interaction/relationship with Cushing organically drives the plot. The killings are not there for fun, but make plot sense. And like any doctor-turned-murderer there is some remorse. The ending is rather good.

44. **Candy:** A sex-comedy that should have been funnier. The film excels when it lets its myriad of stars shine: Richard Burton (*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*), Walter Matthau, and James Coburn (*Our Man Flint*) being the best (Marlon Brando is also in it, but inferior). Yet the film veers into (progressively less-funny) vignettes. Had the film kept up the zany with great comedic actors the film could have been greatly improved. Also, the film never exactly figured out its commentary on the sexualization (and exploitation) of girls. Was the film simply insulting 'morals' of the day? A parody of 60s porn tropes? As a lot could have been said, while being funny, but the film never put it all today. It still is a cult classic because of its relative risqueness and its cast.
43. **Wild in the Streets:** A large chunk of the film's ranking here isn't about its quality, but rather its function as a time capsule and predictive power of future American politics. Set in 1968, in the middle of Vietnam, and while the voting age was still not 18, a teen idol rallies his supports to lower the voting age to 14. As even people at 37 are old squares, and, most importantly, young people make most of the population. The film goes off rails after the voting age is lowered (so then does the age for President, and so). But what is so painfully obvious is the entitlement-turned-into-political-power of the Boomers. Boomers seize power due to their size, and turn on the olds (the olds are literally rounded up; the film goes off the rails), yet we know in 55 years they'll still be in power; becoming the same fogies they rallied against. Yet, they'll still be in power due to their size. Then of the film has Gen X (kids under 10) realize they should rebel. Thankfully the film ends there, but we know that Boomers also used their political power to screw over the younger generations. That is why the film works. Also Shelley Winters (who'll appear twice more on this list) has a comedic roles she sinks her teeth into and crushes, a young Richard Pryor is wasted.

Tier 7:

42. **Greetings!:** Co-written and directed by Brian De Palma, the film is an often funny (though meandering) black comedy. It is was of the few films that actively explores avoiding the Vietnam draft, and often does so in a darkly funny way. There is not much semblance of a plot, which is a drawback, and the film bogs down at times and during the less-funny segments. A young Robert De Niro is rather great as a peeping tom who's plan to avoid the draft is to fake being a radical right-winger who wants to kill minorities. Gerrit Graham is also rather good as a man obsessed with uncovering the truth regarding the JFK assassination. The film's ending is hilarious, though partially ruined by cutting to the scene it is calling back; the viewer is smart enough to put that together. Watch it to see early De Niro and De Palma.
41. **The Fixer:** A prestige picture that doesn't work that well. Directed by John Frankenheimer (*Seconds* and *Grand Prix*). Written by Dalton Trumbo (*Roman Holiday*). Score by Maurice Jarre (*Lawrence of Arabia*). Alan Bates (*Georgy Girl*) in the lead. And yet what they combined to produce is a too-long, slog-at-times, speech-filled chore. The film does not accurately capture the conditions of unjust imprisonment. The film is horrid at keeping track of how long Bates' character has been in prison. Yet the film is coherent-enough with Bates being good enough (but not worthy of his Best Actor Nomination) that it can't rate lower.
40. **Coogan's Bluff:** Clint Eastwood in an Urban Western! Yet, the film does not do it for me. Too much of the film can be boiled down to city-folk-bad and cities-are-bad. The conservative values dominate the film and are unsubtle. The rule-following city cops only get in the way of Eastwood's quest for 'justice'. And although there are reasons for a cop to work slightly outside the bounds of the law (as most every action movie does), here is reason is almost always and constantly city-folk-bad. It becomes far too grating. There is a relationship between Eastwood's character and Susan Clark's character that only makes any sense because Eastwood is good looking (he literally looks at her patient's medical files and then leaves mid-date! she still ends up wanting him). All of these combine to interrupt a brisk action film and greatly lower the ranking.

39. **Ice Station Zebra:** The (few) underwater shots are rather good and one wishes there were more of them. Some of the effects are good, while others look iffy (the planes ‘flying’, and the satellite returning to earth). The arctic sets are decent, but the backgrounds are not that good. The film is big-budget entertainment, but needed more entertainment. The cast is good, but their characters rarely get developed. The espionage aspect isn’t too elaborate either. I am not sure how Kim Wexler loved this film.
38. **Barbarella:** The film should probably rank in a lower tier. The effects are often bad. It hits on a lot a science fiction cliches. The plot exists, but is bare bones; speaking of bare the costumes barely cover anything. Yet almost all of that can be forgiven because Jane Fonda (*Barefoot in the Park*) is so electric she can carry the film. Her charm, naivete, and wit elevate this to a classic B-movie. It also helps the rest of the cast is filled with stars; David Hemmings (*Camelot*) being the best. Milo O’Shea (*Ulysses*) and John Phillip Law (*Death Rides a Horse*) were also rather good.
37. **Charge of the Light Brigade:** First off, the print/transfer is in rough shape. Lots of scratches, muted colors, some yellow even seems in at times. It needs a proper restoration; once the film gets to Crimea some of the shots do look nice, but first half looks mediocre. I don’t think the film quite holds up as a classic anti-war film (it was made in the height of the Vietnam War). Partially because the characters are muddled (Vanessa Redgrave exists but almost acts as a side story). Characters are often one-dimensional (the film is meant to rip apart British aristocracy and by extension US leaders). There are some animations (stylized like political cartoons) that are nice, but somehow detract from the film (again the satire does not exactly land).
36. **Buona Sera, Mrs Campbell:** A perfectly fine comedy that could be funnier. Some of the jokes really do land (‘I couldn’t be Mrs Coca-Cola’). And the is comprised of many good-not-great actors who provide an added layer of comedy to the film: Gina Lollobrigida, Phil Silvers (*A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*), Peter Lawford (*Ocean’s 11*), Telly Savalas (*The Dirty Dozen*), and Shelley Winters (*Alfie*; who you wish was given more as she almost steals the show as a third-string character). But the film repeats some gags a few too many times and can’t keep the pace up given the zany situation. There is only one bad faceplam movement, but it does detract (a classic miscommunication resulting in a character spilling the beans). Lastly, one does wish the film took a little more advantage of its plot about three potential fathers.
35. **Up the Junction:** A British kitchen sink/Swinging 60s film that never fully comes together. Perhaps the biggest flaw is that it never attempts to explain the choices of the main character; a rich girl who wants to experience living within her means (eventually she goes on a rant about money corrupting, but as her boyfriend points out, every poor person would happily trade places). Given that framework the film comes across as awkward voyeurism; developing the main character more would have made for a lot better film. Then for social issues, outside of an abortion it does not really hit at women’s issues (almost all conversations revolve around who they are sleeping with that night). All of the class commentary doesn’t come through as well as it should. Yet it is still a decent social commentary.
34. **Hot Millions:** A comedy that isn’t funny enough. More (and better) jokes would have landed the film in the next tier. As the cast is great: Peter Ustinov (*Spartacus*), Karl Malden (*A Streetcar Named Desire, On the Waterfront*), Bob Newhart (*The Bob Newhart Show*), and Maggie Smith (*The Honey Pot*). The cast is that good, one wishes they had more to work with. The twist ending is rather nice and helps make up for a lot of the shortfalls.
33. **Joanna:** An independent British Swinging-60s film that doesn’t always land. The opening credits (in black-and-white) are rather good, especially the sound. The film then proceeds like a mediocre French New Wave film; little regard for plot and dialogue. The film isn’t exactly hard to follow, but it keeps bogging down as it jumps around from sexcapade to sexcapade. It also does not help that Genevieve Waite is not up to the task of playing the titular Joanna. The film picks back up when

Donald Sutherland appears as a wealthy but dying man. Sutherland is rather good—particularly his monologue about sunsets, and his character is openly sleeping with a black woman in 1968. The film goes even further by having Joanna take up a relationship with a black man. The social commentary is rather good, but the lack of plot and character development hampers the film. A better script could easily have moved this up a tier or two, even with the same actors; *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* is basic, but the script is tight and the cast was incredible, it ranks higher for a reason. Lastly, the end credits do not do it for me and partially spoil the entire film.

32. **Ace High (I quattro dell'Ave Maria):** The direct sequel to *God Forgives... I Don't!* (which I have seen but not rated due issues with the subtitles). Luckily this film contains four leads, two English-speaking in Eli Wallach (*The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly*) and Brock Peters, and with both Italian-speaking leads from the first film, Terrance Hill and Bud Spencer (I watched the dubbed as Wallach and Peters delivered their own lines). The film wants to be a comedic western, it starts with horses farting. Yet there are not enough joke through out, and Eli Wallach tries too hard at times to recapture the mystique of Tuco. The plot meanders too much without a real sense of direction. It is the talents of the leads that keep the film worth watch even as jokes fall flat.
31. **If You Meet Sartana, Pray for Your Death (Se incontri Sartana prega per la tua morte):** A Spaghetti Western that leans into what it means to be a Spaghetti Western. The drifter Sartana, played by Gianni Garko, can't seem to die and always gets his man. Well, lots of men. There is a lot of killing. A lot. Some with pistols, some with rifles, some with dynamite, some with gatlin gun, some with knives, some with rope; a lot of people die. And that makes for good fun. It leans into being a Spaghetti Western. Klaus Kinski even makes a brief appearance! The sex is more upfront than most as well. It knows what it is doing and it does it. Yet, none of the characters get developed beyond, 'I like money!', and the entire film is various people teaming-up and double-crossing each other in an attempt to find (or keep hidden) the missing gold. The comic relief coffin-maker is a bit much. But it easy to see why this film launched a franchise.
30. **Oliver!:** One can only assume that after a year with both MLK and RFK being assassinated, the Democratic Convention Riots, and the Vietnam War, Academy voters wanted to reward the picture where the poor kid with morals gets a happy ending (It also probably helped that veteran director Carol Reed (*The Third Man*) had never won an Oscar). There are approximately two good things about the film: i) the sets (especially the dirty and grimy sets of the London's underworld); it did win Best Art Direction, and everything Ron Moody does as Fagin. Moody is the star of the production, his acting and musical numbers are amazing; he lost Best Actor. The other actors are not that good. The songs are not that memorable. At times the musical numbers are extremely musical (essentially the cast ensemble numbers; the opening of the second act being rather egregious). Though the film does a good job of getting beyond the stage and making the film feel like a film and not a stage-bound play.
29. **The Lion in the Winter:** The main cast is full of knockouts: Kathrine Hepburn (who was rather good, but should not have won Best Actress), Peter O'Toole, Anthony Hopkins, and Timothy Dalton. The script is rather good (and witty), if a little long and meandering. The main basis of the film is essentially an early *Game of Thrones* (complete with the 1100s setting). Perhaps some people enjoy an early precursor. Though, my biggest gripe with the film is that the main thrust is the (failed) marriage of Hepburn and O'Toole's characters though perhaps they still get along. Except *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* perfected this dynamic two years earlier. One other item to note is the film's introduction and handling of a homosexual character is particularly good, especially for 1968.

Tier 6: Good Movies

28. **Charly:** An adaptation of *Flowers for Algernon*, a book I've never read, so I can not comment as to the issues that were present in the novel vs being unique to the film. As the film seemed more interested

in creating a love-interest instead of exploring either the science-fiction element, or developing the character of Charly (the plot is a mentally disabled man has an operation that makes in a genius, but only temporarily). Either of those two avenues could have produced a lot of deep insights. Yet, the film rarely gets into the interesting ideas on those topics. It also should be noted that the film is known for being one of the most blatant examples of Oscar campaigning; Cliff Robertson won Best Actor (he was good, but more like a fringe nominee).

27. **Romeo and Juliet:** Finally an adaptation that gets what the play is about, dumb and horny teens. The young characters are almost all played by teenagers (or people in their young twenties). Leonard Whiting is essentially the OG Troy Bolton (they look so freaking similar). I was not a fan of the costumes. Some of the cinematography is rather good, especially the shot of characters behind flames (the ending catacombs are also good). Now neither Whiting or Hussey are particularly good, rather they are horny teens which is what the plot requires. The film also does a nice job of dropping a lot of original dialogue, but only keeping a few of the most well known lines or common phrases.
26. **The Ruthless Four (Ognuno per sé):** A Spaghetti Western that for the most part feels like a rip off of *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. The film is not a shoot-em-up Western; there is only one or two gun fights. Instead, it is more focused on the characters digging for gold (again, it is a *Sierra Madre* rip off). Perhaps what saves the film is that some of the characters are well-written. What elevates the film is the nearly-explicit relationship between the characters of Manolo and Blondie (played by Klaus Kinski). I should add that the copy I watched did not have the best picture quality, so perhaps a restoration with better visuals could up the ranking.
25. **The Night They Raided Minsky's:** The first of two William Friedkin films on the list. This film is the more mainstream of the two. The strength of the film is the cast. Jason Robards (*Divorce American Style*) is good as the charming-yet-smarmy headliner of the show, Norman Wisdom has the clown who's off-stage persona is not a clown, and Britt Ekland as the Amish girl who's runaway to the big city. Elliott Gould runs the nightclub. The screenplay was co-written by Norman Lear and is funny, but could have been funnier. Friedkin adds a few good shots, especially his use of mirrors. The end product is a well-made and enjoyable film.
24. **The Thomas Crown Affair:** The film has an interesting premise, and two great leads (Steve McQueen and Faye Dunaway) and yet the writing lets them down. The cinematography is rather good (makes heavy use of split screens, the beach dune scenes are nice, and the Chess scene is a classic). Yet, there are at least two instances where the writing induces a face-palm; characters flat-out say their motivation. What could have been an interesting character study, with multiple motivations becomes straight-forward and explained to the audience. And once the motivations are known, the plot becomes uninteresting. The film could have been a lot better with a tighter plot and better writing as it looks great, it is well-paced, with great leads.
23. **Shame (Skammen):** Written and directed by Ingmar Bergman (*Persona*) the film deals with weighty themes surrounding war and relationships, yet for the most part it falls flat. The issue primarily comes from Bergman inventing a Civil War. By inventing a war, it becomes difficult to follow along (part of the reason to invent a war is to hammer home the idea that war is bad and both sides suck without any preconceived notions on the belligerents). But given that Vietnam was raging on, and 20 years ago in Eastern Europe both the Nazis and the Soviets were evil there was plenty of material. And so given that the war is made-up, the stakes then feel made-up as well. Like all Bergman films, it is impeccably shot and features multiple solid character studies (the couple's relationship is more important than the war itself, the war is simply a catalyst; another issue with the made up war, anything can happen to advance the plot as there is no history to beholden to). Bergman regulars Liv Ullmann and Max von Sydow are rather good.

22. **The Immortal Story:** Written, directed, and starring Orson Welles, this hour-long made-for-French-tv film looks great but lacks substance. The film has all of Orson's classic style; the camera angles, the blocking, the framing, the reflections. Almost every shot involving the bedroom is perfect. The types of shot compositions directors only dream of achieving. It is the visuals that allow the film to rank her. The plot is rather good, adapted from a short story, but the script is dialogue heavy and none of the actors can carry the dialogue (not even Welles as an old wealthy merchant). A few outdoor scenes have what sounds to be a cricket in the audio, and, like all crickets, is annoying. So annoying you almost lose focus on the film itself. It is worth watching because anything Orson Welles made is worth watching.
21. **Faces:** Perhaps a perfect example of American Independent Film. Written and directed by John Cassavetes, the film looks and feels like a Cassavetes film—the good and the bad. The Good: The camera work is exceptional, it moves and cuts freely to create an almost documentary feel. The visual style does not look like most American films being made. The film is also a raw portrait of a crumbling marriage. With the dissolution of the Hays Code, the film took full advantage. The Bad: shot in 16mm the film is very grainy. The film drags at over two hours. Although each scene has moments of excellence they extend far longer than they should. The viewer needs to be sucked back in after losing interest (the initial cut was three hours, and dear lord that would have been a chore). Had this been cut down to perhaps an hour-forty the film would easily move up the ranking.
20. **The Heart is a Lonely Hunter:** Adapted from the Carson McCullers novel, the source material (which I have not read) is both the best part of the film and its downfall. The film never establishes the relationship between Singer and Antonapoulos enough for the emotional weight and importance to carry through. Then with the other characters, the film bounces around from one to the other without interconnecting them besides that they all know John Singer; in a novel this convention works, but in a film is is not perfect. Luckily Alan Arkin is rather good, but not great; his performance seems to be over-praised, as the deaf-mute Singer (my guess is a lot of the praise is a result of him play a good character compared to his role in *Wait Until Dark*). Sondra Locke is rather good in her film debut, and one wishes the film focused on her character a little more (see the bouncing around of the plot). Jame Wong Howe provides a few nice shots with his cinematography and the lighting helps show the innocence of the main characters.
19. **Petulia:** One of the harder films to rank from the year. The experimental non-linear plot (flashbacks and flashforwards) is initially hard to follow. And by time the viewer pieces it (mostly) together, there is a good chance they've lost complete interest. It is a battle of staying attached for long enough. Another potential drawback is that the film is extremely 1960s, with some sequences attempting to be futuristic (again, throwing things off for the viewer). But perhaps, even with these experimental attempts at a unique film, the issue boils down to weak characters. George C Scott and Julie Christie (*Far From the Madding Crowd*) do put in a good effort, and Joseph Cotten makes a lovely appearance and nearly steals the show for a minute. Yet, it never quite comes together how it should, and I'd venture that some of the glowing reviews are from people who on a second watch feel impressed with themselves for now putting it all together.
18. **Django, Prepare a Coffin (Preparati la bara!):** An unofficial sequel to *Django* (unlike the other films that added either Django to the English title or named the lead Django), this was co-written by a *Django* co-writer. The opening theme is good (but inferior to the original song). Terence Hill (*God Forgives... I Don't*) is good (but inferior to the original actor). It lacks the social commentary of the original, nor does it have the (graphic) violence of the original. Yet, the plot is solid enough (one wishes the Governor(?) villain was more flushed out) and the ending is rather good. In fact the ending alone moved the film up a few spots as it is everything you'd want from a Spaghetti Western, despite not being in the same class as *Django*.

17. **The Scalphunters:** A socially-conscious Western that can't put it all together. The film does make good comments on race-relations, partially due to the performance of Ossie Davis (should have gotten more nominations, and if the movie wasn't made in 1968, he would have been the clear lead; Burt Lancaster is 'technically' the lead). Telly Savalas (*Buona Sera, Mrs. Campbell*) is rather good as the (semi) villain. Shelly Winters (*Buona Sera, Mrs. Campbell*) is also rather good. The cast works off each other rather well. Except, for all its social commentary the film ends up faltering at the end and reverting back to wanting to be action-packed Western. A better ending would have improved the film.
16. **The Birthday Party:** The film is based on a Harold Pinter play, and has the hallmarks of a Pinter play; character's constantly contradict each other and themselves. Also most of the plot points are opaque at best; who are these 'guests'?, what do they want with Stan? what did Stan 'do' to 'deserve' this? That these points are never clarified either add or detract from the film. I think here too much ambiguity is a bad thing. Although the film/play can have multiple interpretations none of them come thru as well as one would hope because of too much ambiguity. All of that said, the cast is rather good. And there is an argument they were all perfectly cast. William Friedkin adds lots of directorial flourishes that help the film overcome its stage setting. The black-and-white shots when the lights are out, a few shots looking down at the living room from the ceiling, the use of the flashlight when the lights are off. One can see his directorial talent.
15. **Funny Girl:** The film should not rank here. The songs are inferior to *Oliver!*. The sets are also inferior. The costumes are good, but not great. The plot becomes overly melodramatic and predictable. It also drags in the second act. Yet, all of that is forgiven because Barbra Streisand is that good. This was an all-time performance. One that could be argued is the greatest performance (by a woman) in film history. That is how good she is in the movie. She delivers lines with such cadence and inflection that the jokes all land, and come across as if the character thought of the quip there in the moment. Yet, the film had a script, this was not all improvisation; and along with the wit the facial expressions. The klutzy and head-strong Jewish woman is now a classic character and Streisand introduced (a non-racist) version with a tour de force. All of this praise on her performance is deserved and has still not gotten to her singing. Throw in the vocals and the case for this being one of the greatest performances of all-time is easy to make and elevates the film far above where it would have ranked with anyone else in the lead.
14. **Hang 'Em High:** A Western that would have been better off as a Spaghetti Western. It does a great job of focusing in on 'legal' killings after a day on in court results in the hangman's noose for the convicted (along with the necessary bringing criminals in alive). The difference between wanting vengeance and/or justice is rather well done. Yet, as the film moves its criticism from vigilantism to courts and authoritarianism, the film never quite gets the critique of the criminal justice system; why they film would have been better off as a Spaghetti Western—it would have ravaged crooked and nice-seeming judges far more. It also helps that the cast elevates the film. Eastwood is great as always as the gritty and reluctant Marshall. Inger Stevens is give far more room to shine than she had in *Firecreek*. Ed Begley is given a little more room to shine than he had in *Firecreek*. Bruce Dern has a supporting role. Dennis Hopper even makes a small appearance in a bit role. One did wish Pat Hingle was better as the judge.

Tier 5: Very Good Mainstream Films and Zombies

13. **Rachel, Rachel:** Adapted from the novel *A Jest of God*, and I wonder how much of what made the film nice (and bad) were all from the novel. There are voice overs (which are hit and miss), some sudden flashbacks (which usually work), and a few imagination sequences (generally work). Yet with all they feel newer for 1968 to show the main character's thoughts, but a few seem dated

(more seamless, or even more opaque editing would help). There also feels like a chapter or two were dropped for runtime purposes but mentioned then at the end of the film. The film excels as a coming-of-age film for a lonely and shy 30-something schoolmarm. It touches on a few important social issues, but it could have gone into more depth on a few of them. Joanne Woodward carries the film as Rachel, and she helps give the character such emotional depth and then growth. Paul Newman directed the film (his first as a director), and did a decent job, but as previously mentioned could have tightened up some of the editing.

12. **Bullitt:** Starting with the obvious: the nearly-ten-minute car chase is a masterpiece of directing and editing. It puts the chases in *Bond* films to shame, and makes the chase in *Coogan's Bluff* look comical. The on-location shooting gives the film a gritty feel, especially the cheap hotel at the start of the film. The gunshots wounds are realistic (and bloody), and even beyond the 'gore' present in the best Spaghetti Westerns. Steve McQueen is solid as always, but Robert Vaughn is the real gem as he gives one of the best ladder-climbing smarmy politicians performances of all-time. The score by Lalo Schiffrin (*Cool Hand Luke* and *Coogan's Bluff*) is rather good. The opening credits are probably the second-best of the year. The film is one of the better action/crime films of all time, and it is easy to see the debts modern films owe to it.
11. **The Producers:** Admittedly ranking the film is a tad difficult as I saw the 2005 musical-version of the film as a kid. Part of the the film's greatness is the sheer audacity (especially in 1968): *Springtime for Hitler* is one of the greatest, and funniest, songs in film history. The number is truly shocking—the first time you see it. Same goes with the sexual escapades of Max with little old ladies. Also, a fair bit of the jokes do not land. There are a few places the film could have been tightened up, but it was Mel Brooks' directorial debut. Dick Shawn nearly steals the show as L.S.D.
10. **Secret Ceremony:** Joseph Losey and Liz Taylor finally make a good movie together in 1968 (*Boom!*). The film feels like a Losey production with some initial mystery and ambiguity. His direction is great with multiple signature mirror shots; for practical purposes there is no dialogue for the first ten-ish minutes. Mia Farrow steals the show as Cenci and is able to go toe-to-toe with Liz Taylor. One does wish Robert Mitchum brought more to his role. What comes out is an excellent (and twisted) psychological drama about identity, loneliness, wealth, and sex. Losey maybe a forgotten director today, but he made some wonderful films and should be more appreciated today.
9. **The Odd Couple:** Jack Lemmon is amazing. His character of Felix Unger is a type we see everywhere in media, but not many films had it in a leading role. Walter Matthau is rather good. The script is rather solid; multiple great jokes, great characters, a modern approach to divorce, and supportive male friends. Though sadly there are a few gaps where jokes do not land, and it frequently suffers from being obviously adapted from a stage play. Carole Shelley is rather good in a smaller supporting role, and it is sad she preferred working on the stage than on film. The film's minor flaws means it can not be elevated to classic status. Yet its influence on culture and future films/tv is unmistakable because the bones of the film are rather good.
8. **The Night of the Living Dead:** A film that is difficult to rank as it essentially created the zombie genre (Hammer's 1966 *The Plague of the Zombies* does not fit the modern mold and instead is more of the historical idea of a zombie). And the issue isn't that the film is filled with tropes, it is that none of these are that shocking to modern audiences as we've seen them. Yet it created all of them (and probably should be moved up a tier because of it). Some of the scares are genuinely good and shine during the era; eating of flesh, limbs, and intestines and a *Psycho*-inspired stabbing with a garden tool; compared to say *Halloween* which still feels innovative despite hundreds of slasher films. The subtle racial commentary is amazing. Yet almost all of it is flushed down the drain without how poor the female characters are written. Only the mother is potentially not-useless, yet the other two are completely useless and annoying. It is a major knock and could easily move the film down a tier.

Yet when it comes to the script, it feels like it merely combined the best *Twilight Zone* episodes and their themes on Cold War society.

Tier 4: Under-appreciated Classics

7. **The Great Silence (Il grande silenzio):** A Spaghetti Western that instantly lets you know it means business; from both the gorgeously photographed snowscapes to the realistic-looking red blood of the opening gun fight. The film has an excellent and silent anti-hero at its core; a man who waits to be drawn on first so as to only kill in legal 'self-defense'. Ennio Morricone adds a delightful score. Klaus Kinski plays the role of the villain to perfection. Vonetta McGee is amazing and it is a shame racism derailed her career; also having the white anti-hero start to fall in love with a black woman is far beyond what most Westerns of the era were doing. It is a classic of the genre. Sergio Corbucci has directed multiple great Spaghetti Westerns: *Django*, *Navajo Joe*, *The Hellbenders*, and *The Mercenary*, but this is his masterpiece.
6. **Yellow Submarine:** The film is an animated abstract delight. The film leans into and fully embraces its psychedelic and absurdest nature. The animation, initially looks cheap, but when it used with mixed media and other styles of animation it really exceeds and no longer looks cheap. The film is a masterclass on how to stretch a budget as the multiple animation styles and stock images blend together perfectly (one can also see the stylistic influences on future animated films, with *Cryptozoo* being the first that came to mind). The absurdity of the film is possible best seen with the 'Nowhere Man' sequence, but in reality almost all of the musical numbers are tied in perfectly (the counting off the seconds for a full minute is another masterclass). The film does bog down a little towards the end, but that is the only real knock. It does help that The Beatles had an amazing song catalog to draw from and it certainly helps elevate the film given that every few minutes one of the greatest songs of all time is played. The restoration with 5.1 sound, is mixed amazingly. This review is long enough, and I haven't even mentioned the quality of the jokes. It is extremely fitting that the best film about The Beatles is by The Beatles, even though they do not provide the voices to their own characters.

Tier 3: Must-watch Classics

5. **Planet of the Apes:** The film is far more than its well-known ending (from the mind of Rod Sterling). The initial shots in the Arizona and Utah deserts look great, and the ship sinking (in a pre-drought Lake Powell) is well-done. But what follows is not an action film, rather a wide-ranging social commentary. The commentary on evolution and religious totalitarianism are front and center, yet the film also hits on animal rights (the ethics of experimenting on lower-intelligence beings), and there is Civil Rights Era commentary bubbling through, plus some potential ideas on the near-eradication of Natives and Buffalo (the Apes posing with captured Humans look similar to photos taken of people with their Buffalo kills). The film does have a few holes; the technology of the Apes is a bit all over the place is perhaps the biggest one. The makeup and costumes still look good (not great, but good for being over 50). The direction and editing are also crisp. Now admittedly, my ranking could be a function of my such low expectations; 'oh a pointless action movie that is only popular because of a famous ending' but this is a good film.
4. **Once Upon a Time in the West:** Let's get the technicality out of the way first, the film debuted in Italy in 1968, so it is on this list, rather than 1969; as the European release date has been used for Spaghetti Westerns. Sergio Leone's masterpiece is *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly*. Ennio Morricone's masterpiece is *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly*. And, in many ways it makes ranking this film difficult, because it has an easy comparison to one of the all-time greats. The opening (credit) sequence is possibly the best in film history. Few films have organically incorporated the

credits and setting up the action so seamlessly. The film excels with the slow burn, both in the plot (it takes at til at least halfway for the plot to come together), and the individual action sequences. Leone is less interested in the shootout, but the long, slow, suspenseful buildup; using his infamous framing and close-up to let the scenery/set pieces, sound/score, and actors organically provide the suspense. The actors here are all great. Henry Fonda (*Firecreek*) plays an actual villain and does so convincingly. Charles Bronson (*The Dirty Dozen*) brings a certain rugged charm to the classic drifter character. Jason Robards (*The Night They Raided Minsky's*) plays the villain-turned-softy perfectly. Claudia Cardinale (*The Professionals*) plays her part rather well, whose background is slowly revealed. Yet, the film attempts to touch on too many themes about the American West. In aiming so lofty, not all of them are put together properly; even accounting for wanting to have some ambiguous plot points. The film is great, but given the similarities to *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly* it becomes hard to truly appreciate the unique achievement that is Leone's well-funded epic. Even if the achievement is the second-greatest Spaghetti Western.

3. **Targets:** Written, directed, and starring Peter Bogdanovich, in his first real film (if he didn't put his name as the director of *Voyage to the Planet of Prehistoric Women* neither will we. The film was shot on a shoe-string budget of roughly 125k. Remembering the budget matters as it forgives most of the issues (the gun violence could look better, there should have been more car crashes on the freeway). The film ends up being an excellent call for gun control and the dangers of gun violence, all of which holds up perfectly. The fact the killer is a plain-looking-yet-silent white man is perfect, the character could be lifted from 1968 into today. The film also excels with its meta-commentary on horror; Boris Karloff essentially plays himself (and does a wonderful job; his uninterrupted telling of a spooky tale is amazing). The film is also an excellent critique of LA's growing suburbia and car culture (again the detachment from society that afflicts current people is mapped nicely back to the themes laid out in 1968), also cars are just plain bad. Lastly, and although this theme is a little too on-the-nose is the comparison of 'traditional' horror films to what is scary to modern society; that mass shooters are the real fright. All of the mass shooting films that are coming out in the 2020s owe a debt of gratitude to *Targets*, and most will not approach its lofty standards.

Tier 2: Not Even Polanski's Masterpiece

2. **Rosemary's Baby:** Written and directed by Roman Polanski (*Cul-de-sac* and *The Fearless Vampire Killers*) single-handedly revolutionized the psychological horror genre. Mia Farrow is absolutely amazing as Rosemary and helps guide the film through any potential lulls. A lesser actress could not have kept the audience engaged. This was my second-watch and it becomes a lot easier to appreciate the performance of John Cassavetes. The costume design is secretly very good. The writing is extremely crisp; during a date-night they play Scrabble. Later on Rosemary uses the Scrabble letters to decipher an anagram. The conversations around pregnancy and periods are far beyond what was being done at the time. The lighting of the apartment is great. The opening shot of the New York skyline is gorgeous. The film isn't perfect, but rightfully deserves its status as a classic.

Tier 1: Kubrick's (and Perhaps Cinema's) Masterpiece

1. **2001: A Space Odyssey:** The first time with my reviews that there is contender for my greatest film of all time. I think I have *2001* third behind *Citizen Kane* and *Casablanca*. The 4K UHD disc has me even reconsidering its lowly ranking of third of all time. The details present in the 4K presentation are astonishing: the details of the spaceships, the fine details/words such as 'Mag Hold', the numbers on HAL's memory, and HAL 900 written above HAL's red eye. Where the 4K shines the most is the Star Gate sequence. As the effects were practical, they look amazing and still look amazing til this day. Then even look better than space effects in Nolan films, that is how amazing

they look. The details that went into production are also also exquisite, beyond the spaceship details; the crater excavation and the Dawn of Man sequence feature such detail on the sets. The editing is known for being historic and the film took the lessons of both the Soviets and the French New Wave in crafting a masterclass in editing. One worth mentioning, is that the film uses lots of cuts to black, which is usually a sign of lazy film making. Yet the entrance music is set to a black screen. Kubrick subtly conditioned the audience to expect darkness. Speaking of conditioning the audience, much of future plot points are hinted at, one example being the close up of ‘Explosive Bolts’ on the pod. Kubrick’s use of windows is amazing; we often see outside the spaceships, or we inside ships or rooms. There is action all over the screen with these shots. The rotating set produces some of the best best composed shots you’ll see; after a few you’ll even shout, ‘now you’re just showing off!’. I haven’t even mentioned the plot and its meanings. Or that Dawn of Man, on its own, could be considered the greatest short film ever made. The film is near perfect, perhaps the only ‘flaw’ is some lens flare during the crater excavation. It is a shame it did not clean up at the Oscars: Art Direction, Cinematography, Screenplay, and Director all should have won beyond its singular Oscar for Visual Effects. It also should have been nominated and won for Editing, Cinematography, and Picture. *2001* is easily the best film of 1968, and quite possible the greatest film of all time.