

# Films of 1967



Rules: Oscar nominees in major categories were watched. BAFTA and Golden Globes nominees were usually watched as well. A 1967 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 1967, the Hays Production Code was starting to be challenged more and more, 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: Bad All Around

59. **Hells Angels on Wheels:** Another outlaw biker film. This genre is...not good. Last year was *The Wild Angels* ranking near the bottom. This film follows a similar pattern: little resemblance of a plot; shots of the bikers riding along the highway, lengthy parties/orgies, rumbles with rival gangs or squares. Although the genre was meant to appeal to rebellious youths who wanted something different, it simply does not work. Jack Nicholson is this one, which is why I added it to the list, but he can't save the film.
58. **Prehistoric Women:** A forced attempt to cash in on the success of *One Million Years BC*, if Rachel Welch in a cloth bikini brought people to the theaters, surely putting more women in cloth bikinis would make money. The plot is beyond absurd. A man stumbles upon a jungle civilization where...the brunettes have enslaved the blondes (luckily regardless of hair color the women are in cloth bikinis). This is a low budget B-movie whose only purpose is to give horny teens something to watch and make out during.
57. **Frankenstein Created Woman:** A Hammer horror film that has little in the way of scares. Any gore (some severed heads) pale in comparison to the truly boundary-pushing films on the list. There is an attempt at character development and motivation for the killing spree. Yet all of that takes up far too much of the runtime. There is also an attempt at deeper meaning, which also get lost along the way. Sadly this film is simply boring. If it had been written better it could have been campy fun (and even could have become a non-binary/trans cult classic).
56. **Poor Cow:** One benefit of going back in time, is seeing the early work of current directors. This is Ken Loach's (*I, Daniel Blake* and *Sorry We Missed You*) first film. While I enjoyed *Blake*, I was extremely critical of *Sorry*, 'Yet, it is an overly-slow poorly-acted disaster-spiral...What follows is an hour and forty minutes of the situation getting progressively worse for the family.' The irony being my review of *Sorry* could be recycled for *Poor Cow*. The bad acting, the the poor script, the faux-documentary feel do not produce a realistic portrait of poverty. It produces a bad movie. Loach has had these issues from the beginning and continues to have them forty years later.

55. **The Comedians:** An overly long slog of a political drama. Although the assembled cast reads off as who's-who; Richard Burton, Alec Guinness, Elizabeth Taylor, Paul Ford, Lillian Gish, and even a young James Earl Jones(!) the film is a dud at two-and-a-half hours. The film is a series of needless conversations that do little to develop the characters but pad the already bloated run time (and somehow they rarely give Burton a chance to shine). And yet Graham Greene wrote the screenplay for *The Third Man*. Such a collection should have produced a great and it did not even produce a tolerable one.
54. **Doctor Dolittle:** The film is not the worst of all-time. But it might be the worst film to be nominated for Best Picture (Fox allegedly provided free screenings for Academy members. Complete with dinner and champagne.). This is clearly an *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* situation. The songs are not that good ("Talk With the Animals" is decent and somehow won Best Song! "The Vegetarian" was also decent). The plot is beyond absurd; a two-headed llama is given to the circus (obviously the circus never mistreated a single animal), a whale pushes part of a floating island, a prison escape cuts to being on an old-time sailing ship, etc. There is an extremely forced love interest (which seemingly changes which character the lady is suppose to end up with during the movie). Samantha Egger (*Walk, Don't Run*) plays said love interest and is given a character who has no character traits. Her talent was wasted. The entire film was two-and-a-half hours of not-good.

### Tier 10: Still Bad, But Some Redeeming Qualities

53. **Valley of the Dolls:** A classic so-bad-its-good film, and the only reason it ranks here. The dialogue is awful, but hilariously awful, "Mother I know I haven't got any talent! And all I have is a body! Yes I've been doing my exercises." The plot jumps around for character-to-character, from location-to-location without rhyme or reason. We are suppose to believe the three main girls are all close friends, yet few scenes establish their friendship, and what scenes do are extremely short. It seems in adapting the novel to the screen hey tried to fit in everything while keeping the runtime down. The movie honestly believes it is a look at addiction and the pressure of showbiz, while hitting on all sorts of topics. It can be viewed as campy fun. Get drunk and try to enjoy the absurdity.
52. **Hot Rods to Hell:** The film is simply not good. The actors are there for a paycheck, despite their talent (Dana Andrews and Jeanne Crain). The dialogue is rather bad and often delivered as flat as humanly possible. A scene allegedly set in Massachusetts in late-February is sunny, with green plants and no snow to be found. The reason it is in this tier is the film's message; cars are bad. People speed. People drive dangerously. These actions can kill people. #BanCars gets you moved up a tier.
51. **Reflections in a Golden Eye:** Directed by John Huston, he has created two duds in two years (*The Bible: In the Beginning*). The cast is led by Elizabeth Taylor and Marlon Brando. The film suffers – like many dramas near the bottom of the list – by believing simply pushing Code boundaries is enough for a good film. There is an affair, voyeurism, implications of homosexuality! But these alone do not make for a good picture. The characters themselves are not developed, their motivations are simply there. It then creates an extremely slow film. Note: the original version of the film is tinted a golden color, but I saw the 'normal' version that was re-released after audiences complained. Sadly I am not willing to watch the film again.
50. **The Trip:** Another so-bad-its-good classic. Peter Fonda, Bruce Dern, and Dennis Hopper completely threw in the towel in terms of acting. Jack Nicholson's script has bad dialogue and is mildly bonkers (yes, that Jack Nicholson wrote it). The effects are not that good. However, get drunk, or high, or both and enjoy the crazy; it bad, but it good.
49. **The Mummy's Shroud:** A fairly standard mummy film by Hammer; expeditionists find a tomb they've been searching for. Upon entry they are warned that opening the tomb will mean their death.

A mummy then kills a number of them. Some of the kills are neat (for the time, even if some are retreads from earlier Hammer films) which helps it rank here. Elizabeth Sellars is rather good as the wife of the patron; she did not enter the tomb as has nothing to worry, especially as her husband is an asshole. Between a few of the kills and some attempt at developing some of the characters the film ranks here, instead of down with Hammer's other horror film.

48. **In Like Flint:** The sequel to the *Our Man Flint*, a Bond parody. The first film had a few laughs. This one did not. James Cogburn and Lee J Cobb seem to be going through the motions of a bad script. Even as a Bond parody, *Flint* seems more interested in having a large number of attractive women in bikinis (the plot is about a feminist group trying to take over the world). It makes sense that the series ended with this film.
47. **You Only Live Twice:** The fifth of the Connery *Bond* films. The plot is standard, though at least time the implied rapes have been toned down. The film does respect Japanese culture—except for the turning of Bond into a Japanese man in a yellow-face sequence. The strength of the film is the on-location filming. The aerial shots are rather good. The volcano base set is great. The shot of the rooftop fight is rather good. Except, at the end of the day it follows the familiar (and lazy) (and corny) Bond script, full up with pointless gadgets and bad sex jokes.

### Tier 9: Simply Not-Very-Good

46. **The Honey Pot:** Written and directed by Joseph Mankiewicz (*All About Eve*), the film is a bit of a mess. A modernized re-imagining of *Volpone*. Rex Harrison (*Doctor Dolittle*) is decent, though the real story is a young Maggie Smith. Cliff Robertson (who would go on to play Uncle Ben in the Tobey Maguire *Spider-Man* films) is good enough as well. There are not enough laughs as it does not work well enough as a satire on greed as was hoped. There are a few twists and turns to keep the ending fun, but at slightly over two hours it feels long.
45. **Camelot:** A musical based on the stage production (which starred Richard Burton and Julie Andrews). The first half of the film is pure campy fun. Vanessa Redgrave (*Blow Up*, *Morgan – A Suitable Case for Treatment*) plays Guinevere as constantly horny. She does it with such charm and wit—setting up the characters inevitable ‘betrayal’ of King Arthur. Richard Harris plays Arthur as aloof (and can even interpret the performance as portraying a gay character). Because of those two, the first half works. Yet post-Intermission the film attempts to take a serious turn by showing Arthur's downfall. Sadly, the tonal shift does not work and the viewer quickly loses interest.
44. **The Born Losers:** Finally a good outlaw biker film. Except the reason this film is good, is that is clearly made the outlaw bikers the bad guys who commit multiple rapes and harass victims from testifying. Meanwhile the police are still incompetent, refusing to arrest the bikers, be unwilling to go into the bikers hangout for fear of their own lives. It is able to keep the anti-establishment tone of the genre, with the violence and (forced) sex. There are a few plot holes. It also adds in some more social commentary as the lead character, Billy Jack, is half Native American (though played by a white man) and a former Vietnam Vet.
43. **The Jungle Book:** The film is not the worst Disney (animated) film, but it certainly shows the beginning of the studios decline in the 70s and early 80s (the other bad periods are World War II, and the early 00s). Faithful Disney watchers will recognize a fair bit of recycled animation. The plot is mainly a collection of vignettes (frequently scenes end with a fade to black as there is no transition to the next scene. Because they are not related). “Bare Necessities” and “Just Like You” are good (even if they are big band song; seemingly out of place for the 60s). Without those two songs, the film would rank much lower. The voice cast is solid. Most everything good is trying to overcome the poor plot.

42. **Casino Royale:** The second *Bond* film on the list, as it is technically an approved *Bond* film. However this is a wacky parody film. The plot is basically non-existent; the issues with various writers and directors becomes obvious as sequences are unconnected and there are plot holes. Yet, it is an outlandish comedy. When the jokes land they land. It parrots the *Bond* series rather well (the walk-through with Q, Bond's sexual prowess, car chases, etc). If the plot was tighter this could have easily been better than *Austin Powers*. The cast is a set of knock-outs, including George Raft in a cameo... as himself; again it is zany fun. I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the Berlin sequence. The sets are a tribute to German Expressionism and offered more to say about the Cold War than any of the actual *Bond* films. Also the score is sneaky good; it received a Grammy nomination for Burt Bacharach.
41. **Woman Times Seven:** An anthology film directed by Vittorio De Sica (*Bicycle Thieves*). Shirley MacLaine plays the woman in each of the seven vignettes, and is not up to the task in most of them; either overacting or not delivering the required comedy. The vignettes are poorly written, even if most are structured around a decent concept. There is not enough substance to them nor enough laughs. A who's-who of males appear (Michael Caine, Peter Sellers, Alan Arkin, etc) appear yet none of them are given enough to work with.

### Tier 8: Acceptable, But You Need To Love Film

40. **A Countess from Hong Kong:** Written and Directed by Charlie Chaplin (*The Kid*, *City Lights*) in his final film. The film itself has some decent writing, but is unable to use its stars properly. The film comes across as a 1930s Screwball Comedy at times, yet neither Marlon Brando or Sophia Loren can truly pull off the required comedy. There still are funny moments and there are enough of them that the film is not a drag.
39. **Tobruk:** A standard war movie led by Rock Hudson (*Seconds*). There are some decent landscape shots of the desert; yet they are not really impressive. It has the requisite (and predictable) plot twists and clear morality lessons. Some of the battle scenes do look cool (the seaside guns and oil reserves are the best). However, there simply isn't much of anything to this film to make it stand out.
38. **The Taming of the Shrew:** There are three reasons to watch this film: i) Elizabeth Taylor (*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*), ii) Richard Burton (*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*), and iii) you like Shakespeare. My relatively lower ranking of faithful Shakespeare adaptations continues (though this is not a word-for-word version). It also does not help that *Shrew* is one of his weaker plays. Some of the costumes are good, while some are simply outlandish.
37. **Far from the Madding Crowd:** I was not a huge fan of the 2015 version, and I am not a huge fan of this version. At a little under three hours the film is simply long. It is not exactly a slog, but for three hours all that happens is Ms Everdene thinking about who she loves and does not love. The on-location shows of the English countryside are great, and the underlying source material contains a good story. Julie Christie (*Fahrenheit 451*) was rather good. But it was not worth the nearly three hour run time.
36. **Day of Anger:** The first of two 'tutorship' Spaghetti Westerns starring Lee Van Cleef. This one is easily worse; partially because the cast is extremely split between their native languages (and the dubbing for the Italian speakers is not very good). Giuliano Gemma (*Arizona Colt*) is good, but his dub is particularly unimpressive. The first flaw of the film is that there is a lull in the middle with the second half having a wildly different plot; Lee Van Cleef gets his revenge in the first half. Then he runs the town in the second half. Except the character motivations for Cleef aren't made that clear, hurting the second. Gemma's character has a nice character arc, but the second half is

once again poorly done in justifying the arc. Yet, any Spaghetti Western with Lee Van Cleef is a good-enough time.

35. **The War Wagon:** The first of two John Wayne Westerns on the list, both of which are fairly standard. This film doesn't bring much new, except perhaps that Wayne plays a 'bad' guy (even then the script makes it clear he is stealing back his own stuff that he was cheated out of and wrongly set to prison over). Kirk Douglas is good, although a tad flamboyant at times. An over-the-top bar fight is a tad annoying, along with some of the depictions of Native Americans.
34. **El Dorado:** The second of the two John Wayne Westerns. The strength of the film here is the cast: Robert Mitchum and James Caan. Plus Ed Asner in a supporting role (and a role that should have been slightly larger; a time or two the script forgets he should be in the background of a scene). The film is directed by Howard Hawks and therefore comes across as a *Rio Bravo* remake at times. There is little new, but appreciate the cast they assembled.
33. **To Sir, with Love:** A semi-standard reluctant-teacher-motivates-a-ragtag-group-of-poor-performing-students film. The benefit is Sydney Poitier in the lead, and the multi-racial 'cast' (well, the main character, besides Poitier, are white. However, the class does contain a few minority characters). The film could (and should) have leaned more into the interracial relationship. Instead it was simply implied (also, a white student also had a crush on Poitier). Although it attempts to address social issues, it never really gets at their core.
32. **Hurry Sundown:** Directed by Otto Preminger, the film is a standard fall from 'grace' (in quotes as Michael Caine's (*Alfie*) character was always a schemer. Caine is decent, so is Jane Fonda. It is Faye Dunaway's film debut but Preminger did not unleash her full potential (they famously did not get along during shooting). The portrayal of sex was rather boundary pushing for the time; Caine's affair and Cain's implied rape of his wife are the best examples. The film does a decent job of giving the black characters agency. They need the help of white characters to get ahead not because they lack skill (one even confirms the deed to the disputed land was recorded in the town archives, but the page ends up being ripped out before the records are shown in court as evidence). But the frequent clichés make it difficult to rank higher.
31. **Divorce American Style:** A comedy-of-remarriage for the 60s, written by Norman Lear (his only Oscar nomination). The film very much is a satire of marriage and divorce *in the sixties*; that women need alimony and child support since they do not work. The plot quickly becomes about finding new husbands for divorced women so their former husbands no longer need to pay alimony and can therefore afford to marry a new wife. Dick Van Dyke plays the lead, and sadly is not skilled enough to bring the necessary heft to the role. He exceeds in the comedic situations, as expected. Yet, does not get the dramatic parts down. Replacing him with a better *all-around* actor would have improved the film.
30. **Django Kill... If you Live, Shoot!:** This film has nothing to do with *Django* (1966), but rather was an attempt to free-ride on its success. The film is in Italian and Spanish, you'll need subtitles for this Spaghetti Western. The plot of the film is besides the point (a stronger plot would help rank the film higher), nor did it need to be almost two hours. What makes this film fun is the (mild) psychedelic editing and the violence/gore (most of which tops anything the Hammer Horror films were doing). A few sequences that were particularly remarkable: removing the gold bullets from a body, the horses with dynamite, and of course the final golden kill.
29. **The Hellbenders:** Also known as *The Cruel Ones*. A solid Spaghetti Western led by an in-need-of-money Joseph Cotton (*Citizen Kane*), or at least that is what it seems like as he is a shell of his former acting self. The plot is rather basic, ex-confederate soldiers rob a convoy of soldiers carrier a large sum of money west; all in an attempt to regroup in Arizona and reestablish the Confederacy.

The strength of the film is the relationship between one of Cotton's sons and the woman that is paid/forced to pretend to be the widow of a dead confederate soldier (the money can be stored in the coffin and therefore be transported with minimal suspicion). Otherwise it has the standards of the genre and is decent enough.

28. **The Whisperers:** A beautifully shot black-and-white British kitchen sink drama that falls short of achieving its goals. Part of the ranking here is due too my idiosyncratic preferences. The film is about an elderly and impoverished lady (played by Edith Evans) who hears things in her lonely apartment. The film a decent character study (Evans is amazing), yet the character being studied is someone who belongs in a home. The character is already on public assistance and at one point spends time at a mental hospital. As much as the film attempts to show how the elderly are mistreated and not cared for enough by the government, the solution is simple...lock her up! The character is mildly crazy and can't take care of herself. The film offers a reason for why the state doesn't want to pay for her to be in the mental hospital; she has a family member who can supposedly take care of her (the state leans on the family member to take responsibility). Because of my own willingness to (forcibly) home/institutionalize some members of society, I can't fully get behind the message of the film.
27. **The Flim-Flam Man:** Written by William Rose (*Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*) and directed by Irvin Kershner (*The Empire Strikes Back*). The primary strength of the film is the on-location filming in rural Kentucky (even if a few times the dialogue was added in post). George C. Scott is good, but not great, as the titular Flim-Flam Man, Mordecai Jones. Harry Morgan is hilarious in a pre-*MASH* role as the local sheriff. Slim Pickins (*Dr. Strangelove*) is great in a bit role. The cast is great. Sadly the film has a love story involving Michael Sarrazin and Sue Lyon (*Lolita*) that is unnecessary and detracts from the Scott-Sarrazin relationship development. There is a funny car-chase sequence.
26. **Thoroughly Modern Millie:** A fun, albeit long, musical satire of the 1920s. As the film is partially parodying the silent film era, I might be a little more partial than most. The first half of the film is the best; after the intermission it starts to get a little too out there. Julie Andrews plays the lead and is rather good. Mary Tyler Moore is okay, but the film does not do enough with her. Carol Channing is an absolute delight and deserving of her Best Supporting Actress Nomination. The film becomes rather predictable, but it isn't meant to be serious, it is meant to be fun.
25. **The Deadly Affair:** A solid spy thriller that can not rank any higher because it is a little too predictable. James Mason is rather good in the lead. Lynn Redgrave is good in her single scene. The cast is rounded out with multiple former Oscar winners (Simone Signoret and Maximilian Schell). Yet, although the plot works for a while, once the viewer pieces it together, the film is simply going through the motions til the end. Also, the soundtrack is a bit odd at times.

#### Tier 7: Some Good Films, But Not Must-Watch

24. **The Fearless Vampire Killers:** A horror-comedy directed by Roman Polanski (*Cul-de-sac*). Polanski's direction is the reason the film ranks here. There are a few well-composed shots, as well as a few shots of foreshadowing (ski's falling down the mountain, and fighting off dogs while on the sled into town). The comedy is there, but it isn't good enough. Partially because the two leads (one of which is Polanski) are not good enough comedic actors. Sharon Tate is in this, but their character doesn't have much room for growth. However, you can see the influence on future horror-comedies; a gay vampire, a campy vampire ball, etc. A double feature with this film and *What We Do in the Shadows* would make for a fun night.
23. **Fitzwilly:** The second film on the list with Dick Van Dyke as the lead, this time he is playing a character more in line with his talents; the charming, intelligent, and rather comedic titular Fitzwilly.

Van Dyke is part of the reason this film ranks here, few actors have the talent to pull this Robin Hood-esque role off. Fitzwilly is the head butler for an unbeknownst-to-her broke aristocratic Philadelphian, who steals from the other members of the local aristocracy with the help of the various servants. Hijinks ensue. There is also a love interest played by Barbara Feldon, in a role that gives off Velma Dinkley vibes (*Scooby-Doo* hadn't been created yet) does a good job complementing Van Dyke.

22. **Hour of the Gun:** A historically (sorta) accurate re-telling of the Gunfight at the OK Corral (well, the aftermath). Parts of the film are this-happened-then-that-happened. There are arguments to made that the (American) westerns in the lower tier are better (more charismatic performances, more fun to watch, etc). Yet, this film was interested in lawman Wyatt Earp's willingness to operate in the grey areas of the law. By depicting the 'good' guys as morally dubious, the film was better than the standard (for the era) good-guys-vs-bad-guys John Wayne was in this year.
21. **Barefoot in the Park:** Robert Redford (*This Property Is Condemned*) and Jane Fonda (*The Chase*) are both rather good. Though Redford had not yet perfected his charismatic charm in this film. The script is solid, but could have been a tad funnier. The film is a 'modernizing' of the screwball comedies (of remarriage) from the 30s. The pace is not fast enough, though the film often achieves the required level of zany. It is fully predictable, but that is not the point. The point is to enjoy two great actors have some fun.
20. **Bedazzled:** The original film on which the 2000 remake with Elizabeth Hurley and Brendan Fraser was based on. This makes it a little difficult to rank; the remake was not that good, but both Hurley and Fraser were amazing in it. Hurley was easily the better Devil. Yet, the original has more introspection and satire, and pretty much everything else is better.
19. **Up the Down Staircase:** Extremely similar to the film *To Sir, With Love*, in fact you can go back and read the write up for it. Yet, this one is better. The minorities characters in the classroom get speaking lines, are developed as characters. Also most of the students are played by non-actors from local schools. Sandy Dennis (*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*) is rather good (and better than Poitier) as she carries over some of the mouse-iness from her role in *Woolf*. You believe she is over-matched, much more than Poitier's character. The film still has its flaws (characters simply disappear for long stretches of time, nor does the film do a good job of subtly letting the view know how far we are into the school year).
18. **Hombre:** A western starring Paul Newman. The main benefit of the film is the (relatively) positive portrayal of Native Americans. Portrayal is a strong word; Newman plays a white man who raised by Natives on a reservation. Newman provides the sympathetic view, but for 1967 it was a step in the right direction. The social statement; that perhaps it is the white man keeping the Indians down helps elevate the film. Although no sex is depicted, the film implies a young couple is not having sex and a middle-aged inn keeper has had lot of sex. However, the last half hour the film starts to come apart; last minute speeches change characters. It isn't exactly a facepalm moment, but there is a little too much stupidity by character near the end.
17. **Who's That Knocking at My Door?:** One of the films I've bent the rules for. It premiered at the Chicago Film Festival in 1967, but did not get a US wide release until 1968 (and after the addition of a sex scene). Given that the film is well-known for being Scorsese's first feature, it is often listed as 1967. Scorsese shows flashes of his technical brilliance; long takes, a moving camera, incorporating French New Wave styles (all of which are on display in the ferry ride scene). The entire plot involving the boys is near pointless (though at times it is edited in nicely to the story with the girl). The relationship is the interesting portion of the film, but even there some of Scorsese's dialogue is weak. The catholic guilt is laid on a tad too heavy at times. It a first feature, with some flaws, but it shows the potential.

16. **Ulysses:** Two items to get out of the way: i) I have not read the novel, and ii) the copy I watched had poor sound and picture quality. Now onto the write up. The novel was known to be hard at filming; stream of consciousness novels (Faulkner, Woolf, etc) work best as a written medium. Also when novels take stylistic liberties they are difficult to film (David Foster Wallace). Different art forms are different (this is also your reminder that when it comes to film only editing is unique). What we have is a solidly acted film, with excellent dialogue (or voice overs). Except these are lifted directly from the source material. Where the film fails is lifting too much from the source material. The sequence in the Red Light district is put together rather well, and is the best part of the film. Yet, the film concludes by lifting the final stream-of-consciousness paragraph into a twenty-plus minute voice over. That simply does not work *on film*. The editing needed to be much stronger to make it work. This was an admirable attempt to film an unfilmable novel, it succeeds primarily on the strength of the source material, but also its failures are a result of the source.
15. **Death Rides a Horse:** A solid Spaghetti Western about two men seeking revenge. Lee Van Cleef (*The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly*) is rather good as the older man out to get money from those who betrayed him and put him in prison. John Phillip Law (*Hurry Sundown* and *The Russians are Coming*) is okay as the younger man who is out to avenge the deaths of his family. The score is good, as you'd expect from Ennio Morricone. What makes the film succeed is the interaction and (semi-adversarial) father-son relationship. These are two unwitting partners that happen to be after the same men, yet each wish to work alone. The final battle scene is well done, especially the sandstorm. Any Spaghetti Western with Lee Van Cleef is worth watching.

#### Tier 6: Not Quite Must Watch, Rather Good but with a Flaw or Two

14. **The Fox:** This film could easily ranked a few tiers higher if the second half delivered on the set up. Though, the lack of delivery is due to it being 1967 (by 1967 standards the film is extremely progressive). Going deeper into my specific criticism risks some spoilers. All I can say is that a scene or two is needed to motivate the final choices characters make. Both Sandy Dennis and Anne Heywood are rather good. Kier Dullea (*2001: A Space Odyssey*) doesn't provide much on the acting front, but provides the needed sexuality and attractive male to advance the plot. If only this film could have landed the plane. The first half is sexually charged and suggestive; builds these great characters. Yet the semi-rushed ending is a disappointment.
13. **Accident:** Directed by Joseph Losey (who was blacklisted by Hollywood), and written by Nobel Prize winner Harold Pinter, the film is a visual and minimalist delight. Most of the shots are beautifully composed. The long opening shot (including the credits) of the English countryside manor, with utter silence until a car crash is heard, a light turns on in the manor and a man eventually leaves to check on the wreckage. The lack of dialogue is rather good (though at times makes the film feel slow). One instance is a dinner shot in silence, but overdubbed with dialogue is excellent. Another example of the imagery is a sensual gondola ride, the young lover push the boat forward with his wooden rod. The film a solid character study or marriage and sexual desire. Though besides the slow parts, other characters are rarely given agency and not developed meaning it can not rank any higher.
12. **The Dirty Dozen:** It is a classic of the rag-tag-crew-goes-on-a-mission genre for a reason. *Inglorious Bastards* is essentially a modernized *Dozen*. The cast simply a collection of knock-outs: Lee Marvin, Ernest Borgnine, George Kennedy (*Cool Hand Luke*), Robert Ryan (*Hour of the Gun*), and Ralph Meeker (*Paths of Glory*). None of those are even apart of *Dozen*! The Dozen include: Charles Bronson (*This Property Is Condemned*), Jim Brown (the Cleveland Browns), Donald Sutherland (*MASH*), and John Cassavetes! and they are the main four! Telly Savalas (*On Her Majesty's Secret Service*) is also part of the Dozen. The film is well-made with an amazing collection of acting talent. The script contains more than enough character development and social commentary.



11. **Beach Red:** Staring, directed by, co-written by Cornel Wilde (*The Naked Prey*) the film applies some of the best items from *Prey* and applies them to an anti-war movie set during the invasion of an Japanese-held island. The opening sequence is the original beach landing scene (*Saving Private Ryan* owes a debt of gratitude). The film humanizes both the American and Japanese troops, while showing the horrors of war. Outside of *Bonnie and Clyde* this is the most gruesome film of the year (by 1967 that is saying something). The spoken internal monologues and the flashbacks to pre-war memories are nice. Though sadly the film does suffer from mediocre writing at times, and mediocre acting. Taken together they both slow the film down to the point it can not rank higher. Yet what remains is one of the better anti-war films; and one of the few made during the Vietnam War.

#### Tier 5: Must-Watch, Good Films, Near Classics

10. **Wait Until Dark:** The film does have enough plot holes to drive a semi truck through. Yet, most are forgiven simply because of Audrey Hepburn's talent. Hepburn's portrayal as the blind Susy Hendrix is excellent (she was rightly nominated for Best Actress, but rightly lost to the other famous Hepburn). Alan Arkin play an off-the-walls criminal. Though the film starts off slow, the final sequence is an all-time great. It is the climax that elevates this film a tier (or two), it is that good and innovative. You can trace the influence to modern horrors (and perhaps if this was made in the late 70s, it would have been re-imagined as a horror than a thriller).
9. **How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying:** A delight of a musical. The stage production cleaned up at the Tonys, yet the film adaptation did not get much in the way of nominations. One benefit of the film adaptation is that multiple musical numbers are dropped. Although it is still a musical it is unlike a stage musical that is constant numbers. Said surviving musical numbers are rather good; *Been A Long Day* (and the reprise) might be the best. Maureen Arthur is great as Hedy LaRue, and deserved some award recognition for it; her awkward pronunciation and syllabus emphasis were spot on. What makes the musical work the most is its lasting impact; toxic (white) male workplace culture, the brown-noser who gets a head, nepotism, and others ring true today.
8. **Point Blank:** A revenge thriller that could easily have been made today; you trace the origins of the *John Wick* franchise to this film. The script is minimalist. In many sequences Lee Marvin who plays the wronged Walker (no first known first name), simply stares at the wall while other characters ask him questions. Marvin's (*The Dirty Dozen*) stone face is amazing and brings the needed mystery to the character and to advance the plot. The plot is semi non-linear and glosses over many plot points, but gives the viewer just enough to piece together the missing material. It is also often in doubt how much time has passed between sequences. The film is beautiful shot and composed (the LA River sequence is a stand out), only adding to the quality of the film.
7. **In Cold Blood:** Based on real events (written up by Truman Capote in the book of the same name), the film succeeds by both humanizing cold-blooded killers and its cinematography. Scott Wilson (*The Walking Dead*) is great as the more charming of the murderous pair. Robert Blake (*possibly murdering his wife*) is great as the more troubled of the pair. Blake's portrayal of Perry (and the script) show his troubled past. The film balances the fact both people were humans, with their own troubles and childhood trauma, with the fact that they were responsible for murdering a family of four. Perry's confessional before his hanging belongs in the discussion for the best scene of all time; the acting, the script, and the happy-accident cinematography (it is raining outside the jail cell, and the reflection of water flowing down the window looks like tears) create an emotional juggernaut; all for a cold-blooded killer. The film does slightly drag in the final twenty minutes; probably the reason for ranking here and not the next tier (even if part of the dragging is to make an explicit argument against the death penalty; rightly so as the death penalty is awful and should be abolished and anyone supporting it needs to acknowledge they are perfectly okay with killing innocent people *In Cold Blood*).

#### Tier 4: Classics, but not All-Time Greats

6. **Two for the Road:** The second film with Audrey Hepburn on the list, and although she helps carry the film, it is the writing and editing that shine. The script is near perfect (nominated for Best Original Screenplay). The film is practically the entirety of Richard Linklater's *Before* trilogy cut into a single film. At first the script does seem slow, but almost every scene will come back in a subtle manner; revisiting the same hotels, driving the same stretch of road, does this car only go 110 or zero?. Even the scenes with the annoying Americans end up being needed (though in the moment the viewer will find them grating). The ending seamlessly allows the film to cut across time; at the start of the relationship, through the initial struggles, and the present day. So many of the cuts are perfect; the couple that owns the bakery being one of the favorites. This is easily one of the best films about marriage ever made.
5. **Cool Hand Luke:** The film is considered a classic for a reason. Yet, it can't keep up with some of the other upcoming classics on the list. Part of what makes this film so great is that it was one of the first in which the protagonist is anti-establishment. However, the other classics often deal with this same theme, but better or more in depth. The character of Luke is always fighting against the man...because he is always fighting against the man. Luke even prays to god asking why he was made that way. Luke's character is not really developed, and the film relies heavily on christian imagery. But it does rank highly as the on-location shooting is rather good. Paul Newman is great. The rest of the cast puts in solid performances. The framing of some of the shots is rather good. When the film came out it could have easily been viewed as an anti-Vietnam film (Luke is a decorated veteran), but that interpretation does not come across as well today.

#### Tier 3: The Start of All-Time Greats

4. **Bonnie and Clyde:** The film is considered a classic of American cinema, and in many ways it is. However, it is one that I can't fully get behind. Most of the films all-time status is a function of how much it did new: making the main characters *likable and relatable* bad guys (Faye Dunaway's Bonnie simply wants out of her boring small town life. Warren Beatty's Clyde is charming but at the start of the film is more talk than action; the early bank robberies do not go so well), ii) depicting actual violence (the ending sequence is a classic for a reason), iii) the treatment of sex (Bonnie's seductive drinking out of a coke bottle is great and the addition of Clyde's impotence and in a modern interpretation even asexual; all while making it obvious the two love each other), iv) the editing (the ending is again the most known sequence, but even the start of the film with the cutting between pictures of the real title characters between the sound of shudder clicks/gun shots is great), among others. All of the films newness can be traced to the action films of today; yet at it's core the film is a character study. However the issue is how much of the character study lands vs having some issues. The answer to that question leads to your own ranking of this classic.
3. **Guess Who's Coming to Dinner:** During the Obama administration this film was seen as dated, and had outlived its purposed; interracial marriage is common and gay marriage was also legal. Yet, in a post-Trump world, the film has regained some of its prestige, "You and your whole lousy generation believes the way it was for you is the way it's got to be. And not until your whole generation has lain down and died will the dead weight of you be off our backs!" Let's get some of the bad out of the way (and why this film can't be in the top tier): i) the obvious sound stages. Although there is some on-location filming, lots of scenes are on sound stages and it simply looks not-good. ii) the heavy-handedness of the white fighting liberal. We quickly get it, these are suppose to be the people who should be supportive of interracial marriage. iii) the forced sequences 'appealing' to youths; ice cream shop and the meat delivery boy jamming out to current music, iv) that the black father does not get a chance to change to also give a speech; these characters are very much not used to their

full advantage. and v) the implication that women are simply overly sentimental (but at least here it can easily be reinterpreted as simply being more knowledgeable and supportive). Now back to the good. The emotional points hit and they hit hard. In part because Poitier and Tracy are good in the film. And then especially because Katherine Hepburn is superb. Hepburn does a lot of heavy lifting in the film. Her telling off of her business partner is a masterclass. There are multiple other great moments, especially some of her reactions. The film is a classic for a reason, even if it isn't one of the best ever.

## Tier 2: An All-Time Great

2. **In the Heat of the Night:** A classic for good reason. Take what *Dinner* wanted to say and ramp it up even more. The film rarely has a single moment when the viewer knows that they are watching an all-time classic. Rather it is the constant collection of great scenes: i) the wife of the murdered man slowly accepting the hug from Poitier's Tibbs (were the initial brushings-off due to racism or shock/grief?), ii) the greenhouse scene (probably the best in the entire film; and the original, 'I would have voted for Obama a third time'), and iii) the discussion of a needed abortion. There are more excellent scenes, but at that point I'd be telling you the entire plot. The film does portray the south as full of backwoods, dumb, and racist farmers. Yet it never gets into caricature; the police chief, played by Rod Steiger (*On the Waterfront*) fully encapsulates the town. He never fully embraces the black Tibbs, but for most of the film is using him out of convenience; Tibbs solves the murder and he looks good. It doesn't (initially) matter if the police have the wrong man, the chief is primarily interested in a satisfactory resolution to the murder; satisfactory meaning acceptable to the townsfolk, not the truth. Mr. Tibbs is often superior to the backwoods southerners, yet the film ensures that Tibbs too has a few flaws. Tibbs is not perfect; flawed but better (after all, he came into town on a train, not a high horse). The contrast between the educated and industrial North is frequently on display, but again never in-your-face. Poitier gives his best performance of the year; the restraint he portrays throughout the film after each verbal jab is great. All the while conveying a (growing) tinge of anger. There are few amazing shots, but most of the film is well done; same with the editing. The strength of the film is in the plot, the character development, and acting.

## Tier 1: A Masterpiece

1. **The Graduate:** For the second straight year a Mike Nichols-directed film takes first place. The film is near perfect. The cinematography is amazing: the hectic party, the scuba suit scene, meets Mrs Robinson for the first time in the hotel (their reflections are seen in a table, then the camera moves to show them sitting down, all without cutting), the attempt at pre-sex conversation with the lights going on and off, the montages, Mr Robinson's conversation with Ben, and the ending sequence. Neither of the shots under Mrs Robinson's legs have been mentioned. The film is a visual treat; the takes are often long. The editing is also top notch; cutting from Ben's home life to his time at the hotel. It is an amazing coming-of-age film; cutting from Ben's first sexual encounter to him leaving the pool (womb; where a few minutes earlier he had been submerged with his scuba suit). Hoffman's portrayal as the lost soul is great; he imparts such aimlessness; an aimlessness that he essentially keeps throughout the film. It is a coming-of-age film without much coming-of-age—besides sexual experience. Anne Bancroft's imparts Mrs Robinson with such depth. Although Ben is the main character (and the film showed how the first boomers were lost in changing world) it is Mrs Robinson's show. She encompasses the issues of the older generation, and their lack of opportunity. Mrs Robinson couldn't explore her love of art and was required to marry and raise a child (that she potentially resents depending on one's interpretation). Said conversation about art makes for probably the best scene in the film. There are multiple jokes hidden in the film ('Do Not Tease' sign at the zoo being one of my favorites). The film is a classic and timeless; the struggle of youth to find their own path against overbearing parents with different life experiences.