

Deliverance

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Deliverance is a 1972 American thriller film produced and directed by John Boorman, and starring Jon Voight, Burt Reynolds, Ned Beatty and Ronny Cox, with the latter two making their feature film debuts. The film is based on the 1970 novel of the same name by American author James Dickey, who has a small role in the film as the Sheriff. The screenplay was written by Dickey and an uncredited Boorman. It was a critical success, earning three Academy Award nominations and five Golden Globe nominations.

Widely acclaimed as a landmark picture, the film is noted both for the music scene near the beginning, with one of the city men playing "Dueling Banjos" on guitar with a banjo-playing country boy that sets the tone for what lies ahead—a trip into unknown and potentially dangerous wilderness—and for its visceral and notorious male rape scene. In 2008, *Deliverance* was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant."

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Plot

Four Atlanta men, Lewis Medlock, Ed Gentry, Bobby Trippe, and Drew Ballinger, decide to canoe down a river in the remote northern Georgia wilderness, expecting to have fun and witness the area's unspoiled nature before the fictional Cahulawassee River valley is flooded by construction of a dam. Lewis and Ed

Deliverance



Theatrical release poster by Bill Gold

Directed by	John Boorman
Produced by	John Boorman
Screenplay by	James Dickey
Based on	<i>Deliverance</i> by James Dickey
Starring	Jon Voight Burt Reynolds Ned Beatty Ronny Cox
Music by	Eric Weissberg
Cinematography	Vilmos Zsigmond
Edited by	Tom Priestley
Production company	Elmer Productions
Distributed by	Warner Bros.
Release date	July 30, 1972
Running time	110 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$2 million
Box office	\$46.1 million ^[1]

are experienced outdoorsmen, while Bobby and Drew are novices. While traveling to their launch site, the men (Bobby in particular) are condescending towards the locals, who are unimpressed by the "city boys."

Traveling in pairs, the group's two canoes are briefly separated, with Ed and Bobby getting stranded on the riverbank. They encounter a pair of local men with a shotgun, who force them into the woods at gunpoint. Ed is tied to a tree, while Bobby is forced to strip and raped by one of the men while being forced to "squeal like a pig". As the men prepare to sexually assault Ed, Lewis sneaks up and kills the rapist with an arrow from his recurve bow while the other escapes. After a brief but hotheaded debate between Lewis and Drew about whether to inform the authorities, the men vote to side with Lewis' recommendation to bury the dead man's body and continue on as if nothing had happened.

The four continue downriver but encounter a dangerous stretch of rapids, during which Drew suddenly falls into the water and disappears. The other three crash their canoes into rocks, which results in Lewis breaking his leg. Encouraged by Lewis, who believes Drew was shot by the rapist's partner and they are now being stalked, Ed climbs a nearby rock face with the bow while Bobby stays behind to look after Lewis. Ed hides out until the next morning when the stalker appears on the top of the cliff with a rifle; Ed clumsily shoots and kills the man, while accidentally stabbing himself with one of the spare arrows. Ed and Bobby weigh down the body in the river to ensure it will never be found, and repeat the same with Drew's body which they encounter downriver.

Upon finally reaching the small town of Ainty, they take Lewis to the hospital. The men carefully concoct a cover story for the authorities about Drew's death and disappearance being an accident, lying about their ordeal to Sheriff Bullard in order to escape a possible double murder charge. The sheriff clearly doesn't believe them, but has no evidence to arrest them and simply tells the men never to come back, to which they agree. The trio vow to keep their story of death and survival a secret for the rest of their lives. Later on, Ed awakens, startled by a nightmare in which a bloated human hand rises from the lake.

Cast

- Jon Voight as Ed Gentry
- Burt Reynolds as Lewis Medlock
- Ned Beatty as Bobby Trippe
- Ronny Cox as Drew Ballinger
- Ed Ramey as the Old Man
- Billy Redden as Lonnie, AKA the Banjo Boy
- Bill McKinney as Mountain Man
- Herbert 'Cowboy' Coward as Toothless Man
- James Dickey as Sheriff Bullard
- Macon McCalman as Deputy Sheriff Arthur Queen
- Belinda Beatty as Mrs. Martha Gentry
- Charley Boorman as Charlie Gentry, Ed and Martha's son

Production

Deliverance was shot primarily in Rabun County in northeastern Georgia. The canoe scenes were filmed in the Tallulah Gorge southeast of Clayton and on the Chattooga River. This river divides the northeastern corner of Georgia from the northwestern corner of South Carolina. Additional scenes were shot in Salem, South Carolina.

A scene was also shot at the Mount Carmel Baptist Church cemetery. This site has since been flooded and lies 130 feet under the surface of Lake Jocassee, on the border between Oconee and Pickens counties in South Carolina.^{[2][3]} The dam shown under construction is Jocassee Dam.

During the filming of the canoe scene, author James Dickey showed up inebriated and got into a bitter argument with producer-director John Boorman, who had rewritten Dickey's script. They had a brief fistfight in which Boorman's nose was broken and four of his teeth shattered. Dickey was thrown off the set, but no charges were filed against him. The two reconciled and became good friends, and Boorman gave Dickey a cameo role as the sheriff at the end of the film.

The inspiration for the Cahulawassee River was the Coosawattee River, which was dammed in the 1970s and contained several dangerous whitewater rapids before being flooded by Carters Lake.^[4]

Stunts

The film is infamous for cutting costs by not insuring the production and having the actors do their own stunts (most notably, Jon Voight climbed the cliff himself). In one scene, the stunt coordinator decided that a scene showing a canoe with a dummy of Burt Reynolds in it looked phony; he said it looked "like a canoe with a dummy in it". Reynolds requested to have the scene re-shot with himself in the canoe rather than the dummy. After shooting the scene, Reynolds, coughing up river water and nursing a broken coccyx, asked how the scene looked. The director responded, "like a canoe with a dummy in it."

Regarding the courage of the four main actors in the movie doing their own stunts without insurance protection, Dickey was quoted as saying all of them "had more guts than a burglar". In a nod to their stunt-performing audacity, early in the movie Lewis says, "Insurance? I've never been insured in my life. I don't believe in insurance. There's no risk."

Notorious line

Several people have been credited with the now-famous line including the phrase "squeal like a pig". Ned Beatty said he thought of it while he and actor McKinney were improvising the scene.^[5]

James Dickey's son, Christopher Dickey, in his memoir about the film production, *Summer of Deliverance*, said that one of the crewmen suggested that Beatty's character, Bobby, "squeal like a pig," to add some backwoods horror to the scene and make it more shocking. According to Boorman's running commentary on the home media releases, the studio wanted the scene shot two ways, one of which would be acceptable for TV. Boorman did not want to do this. He decided that the phrase "squeal like a pig," suggested by Frank Rickman, a Clayton native, was a good replacement for the dialogue in the script. It would work for both the theatrical and TV versions.

Soundtrack and copyright dispute

The film's soundtrack brought new attention to the musical work "Dueling Banjos", which had been recorded numerous times since 1955. Only Eric Weissberg and Steve Mandel were originally credited for the piece. The songwriter and producer Arthur "Guitar Boogie" Smith, who wrote the original piece, "Feudin' Banjos" (1955), and recorded it with five-string banjo player Don Reno, filed a lawsuit for songwriting credit and a percentage of royalties. He was awarded both in a landmark copyright infringement case.^[6] Smith asked Warner Bros. to include his name on the official soundtrack listing, but reportedly asked to be omitted from the movie credits because he found the film offensive.^[7]

No credit was given for the film score. The film has a number of sparse, brooding passages of music scattered throughout, including several played on a synthesizer. Some prints of the movie omit much of this extra music.

Boorman was given a gold record for the "Dueling Banjos" hit single; this was later stolen from his house by the Dublin gangster Martin Cahill. Boorman recreated this scene in *The General* (1998), his biographical film about Cahill.^[8]

Reception

Deliverance was a box office success in the United States, becoming the fifth-highest grossing film of 1972 after grossing a domestic total of over \$46 million.^[1] The film's financial success continued the following year, when it went on to earn \$18 million in North American "distributor rentals" (receipts).^[9]

Critical reception

Deliverance was well received by critics and is widely regarded as one of the best films of 1972.^{[10][11][12][13]} The film is in the top tier of films on the critical review aggregate website Rotten Tomatoes, with a 93% "fresh" rating,^[14] despite scoring only 50% based on the six "top critic" reviews.

Not all reviews were positive. Roger Ebert of the *Chicago Sun-Times* said:

Dickey, who wrote the original novel and the screenplay, lards this plot with a lot of significance -- universal, local, whatever happens to be on the market. He is clearly under the impression that he is telling us something about the nature of man, and particularly civilized man's ability to survive primitive challenges[...] But I don't think it works that way.[...] What the movie totally fails at, however, is its attempt to make some kind of significant statement about its action.[...] [W]hat James Dickey has given us here is a fantasy about violence, not a realistic consideration of it.[...] It's possible to consider civilized men in a confrontation with the wilderness without throwing in rapes, cowboy-and-Indian stunts and pure exploitative sensationalism.^[15]

The instrumental piece, "Dueling Banjos," won the 1974 Grammy Award for Best Country Instrumental Performance. The film was selected by *The New York Times* as one of *The Best 1,000 Movies Ever Made*, while the viewers of Channel 4 in the United Kingdom voted it #45 in a list of *The 100 Greatest Films*.

Reynolds later called it "the best film I've ever been in."^[16]

Awards and nominations

Nominated

- Academy Award for Best Picture
- Academy Award for Best Director — John Boorman
- Academy Award for Best Film Editing — Tom Priestley
- New York Film Critics Circle for Best Film and Best Director
- Golden Globe Award for Best Motion Picture – Drama
- Golden Globe Award for Best Director – Motion Picture — John Boorman
- Golden Globe Award for Best Actor – Motion Picture Drama — Jon Voight
- Golden Globe Award for Best Original Song — Arthur "Guitar Boogie" Smith, Eric Weissberg, and Steve Mandel
- Golden Globe Award for Best Screenplay — James Dickey

American Film Institute lists

- AFI's 100 Years...100 Movies—Nominated^[17]
- AFI's 100 Years...100 Thrills—#15
- AFI's 100 Years...100 Movie Quotes:
 - "I bet you can squeal like a pig."—Nominated^[18]
- AFI's 100 Years...100 Movies (10th Anniversary Edition)—Nominated^[19]

Influence of the film

- Governor Jimmy Carter established a state film commission to encourage production companies to film in Georgia. The state has "become one of the top five production destinations in the U.S."^[20]
- The canoes used in the film were displayed at the former Burt Reynolds Museum, located at 100 North U.S. Highway 1, in Jupiter, Florida. One of the canoes used (and signed by Ronny Cox) is on display in the Tallulah Falls Railroad Museum, Dillard, Georgia.
- Following the film, tourism increased to Rabun County by the tens of thousands. By 2012, tourism was the largest source of revenue in the county.^[20] Jon Voight's stunt double for this film, Claude Terry, later purchased equipment used in the movie from Warner Brothers. He founded what is now the oldest whitewater rafting adventure company on the Chattooga River, Southeastern Expeditions.^[21] By 2012 rafting had developed as a \$20 million industry in the region.^[20]
- People have built vacation and second homes around the area's lakes.^[20]
- In June 2012, Rabun County held a Chattooga River Festival to encourage preservation of the river and its environment. It noted the 40th anniversary of the filming of *Deliverance* in the area, which aroused controversy.^[20]
- In 2012, producer Cory Welles and director Kevin Walker decided to make the documentary, *The Deliverance of Rabun County*, to explore the effects of the landmark film on people in the county. They heard a wide range of opinions, particularly resentment at how the country people were portrayed. Others are pragmatic and look at the benefits of increased tourism and related businesses.^[20]

See also

- List of American films of 1972
- Survival film, about the film genre, with a list of related films

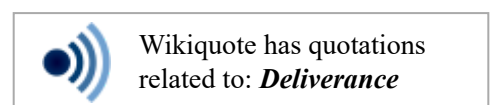
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4. Roper, Daniel M. "The Story of the Coosawattee River Gorge" (<http://www.brownsguides.com/blog/coosawattee-river-gorge>). *North Georgia Journal* (Summer 1995). Retrieved 7 June 2015.

5. Burger, Mark. (2006, March 19). "BEATTY GIVEN MASTER OF CINEMA AWARD; CHARACTER ACTOR IS A VETERAN OF MORE THAN 200 FILM AND TELEVISION PRODUCTIONS (<https://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/journalnow/access/1005939731.html?dids=1005939731:1005939731&FMT=ABS&FMTS=ABS:FT&type=current&date=Mar+19%2C+2006&author=Mark+Burger+JOURNAL+ARTS+REPORTER&pub=Winston+-+Salem+Journal&edition=&startpage=1&desc=BEATTY+GIVEN+MASTER+OF+CINEMA+AWARD+%3B+CHARACTER+ACTOR+IS+A+VETERAN+OF+MORE+THAN+200+FILM+AND+TELEVISION+PRODUCTIONS>)", *Winston-Salem Journal*, Page B1 "Regarding his debut film, *Deliverance* (1972), in which his character undergoes an unforgettably vivid sexual assault, Beatty said: 'The whole "squeal like a pig" thing ... came from guess who.' As the audience laughed, he theatrically put his head in his hands and silently pointed to himself, before elaborating how director Boorman encouraged him to improvise the scene with his onscreen tormentor, Bill McKinney."
6. "Country guitarist Arthur Smith dies" (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-26885910>). *BBC News*. Retrieved 15 April 2015.
7. Terence McArdle (6 April 2014). "Arthur Smith, guitarist who wrote 'Guitar Boogie' and 'Duelin' Banjos,' dies at 93" (<http://wapo.st/1ihceud>). *The Washington Post*. Retrieved 15 April 2015.
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19. AFI's 100 Years...100 Movies (10th Anniversary Edition) Ballot (http://www.afi.com/Docs/100years/Movies_ballot_06.pdf)
20. Cory Welles, "40 years later, 'Deliverance' causes mixed feelings in Georgia" (<http://www.marketplace.org/topics/life/40-years-later-deliverance-causes-mixed-feelings-georgia>), *Marketplace*, 22 August 2012, accessed 27 August 2014
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External links

- *Deliverance* (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0068473/>) on IMDb
- *Deliverance* (<http://tcmbd.com/title/title.jsp?stid=22066>) at the TCM Movie Database
- *Deliverance* (<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=deliverance.htm>) at Box Office Mojo
- *Deliverance* (<https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/deliverance/>) at Rotten Tomatoes
- Weekend in Ainty! James Dickey and The Making of *Deliverance* (http://www.alternativereel.com/cult_movies/display_article.php?id=0000000053)
- Pictures of some deleted scenes (<http://dutch-burt.spaces.live.com/blog/cns!92C06ABCF6BD1502!395.entry>)



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