

WELCOME TO FILM NOIR/NEO-NOIR





HEIST

a robbery or holdup; to take unlawfully, especially in a robbery or holdup; steal



There are two kinds
of people in his
up-tight world:
his victims
and his women.
And sometimes
you can't tell
them apart.

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer presents
A Judd Bernard-Irwin Winkler Production

LEE MARVIN "POINT BLANK"

co-starring
ANGIE DICKINSON KEENAN WYNN · CARROLL O'CONNOR · LLOYD BOCHNER · MICHAEL STRONG

Screenplay by Alexander Jacobs and David Newhouse & Rafe Newhouse · Based on the Novel 'The Hunter' by Richard Stark · Directed by John Boorman · Produced by Judd Bernard and Robert Chartoff



In Panavision®
and Metrocolor®



From *The Philosophy of Neo-Noir*

In essence, *Point Blank* is an archetypical revenge thriller, but turned inside out.

From *1001 Movies You Must See Before You Die*

- ...John Boorman's thriller is as arrestingly and unselfconsciously stylish as the day it was released,
- **The perfect thriller in both form and vision, Boorman's use of widescreen to full effect --- urban horizons appear bleak and wide; characters are thrown from one long end of the frame to another...**

Roger Ebert:

- ...as suspense thrillers go *Point Blank* is pretty good. It gets back into the groove of Hollywood thrillers, after the recent glut of spies, counterspies, funny spies, anti-hero spies and spy-spie spies. **Marvin is just a plain, simple tough guy who wants to have the same justice done for him as was done for Humphrey Bogart.**

From *FILM NOIR OF THE WEEK*:

- Based very loosely on [Donald Westlake](#)'s crime novel 'The Hunter', [John Boorman](#)'s dazzling '*Point Blank*' is a fusion of 1960's New Wave aesthetics on a traditional Noir revenge plot - with decidedly fascinating results... at once an exiting and brutal revenge Noir, and an elliptical fragmented, art film influenced by New Wave filmmakers like Resnais and Antonioni.

- Along with displaying a **mesmerizing, rigorous color scheme (suits matching decor, dresses matching cars)**, and a consistently **chilly use of widescreen isolation (characters divided by columns, doorways, or space)**, *Point Blank* is easily **the sexiest of early neo-noirs**. It is replete with stimulating images, and a strong homo-erotic undercurrent is present.

- Despite the Technicolor, '*Point Blank*' is Noir at its pitch-blackest –

From *More Than Night* by James Naremore

- Director John Boorman gives us color, wide-screen views of...numerous...exterior and interior spaces, all of them chosen to create an Antonioni-like **sense of emptiness and alienation**. “I wanted my settings to be hard, cold and in a sense futuristic. I wanted an empty, sterile world for which Los Angeles was absolutely right.”
- According to writer and filmmaker Thom Anderson, “**People who hate Los Angeles love *Point Blank***.”

From Detours and Lost Highways: A Map of Neo-Noir

by Foster Hirsch

- ***Point Blank* was the first neo-noir film in America to use color and the wide screen to conjure an environment of enclosure and displacement.** Glass is everywhere, yet all the characters are hiding out...Boorman's thriller reupholstered a narrative form presumed to be as dead as Walker (title character). A foundational postclassic noir film, neo before the fact, ***Point Blank* proved decisively that the genre need not be segregated automatically to the retro bin.** And the film's narrative "problem," that the quest itself may be a dream, remains one of the most intriguing puzzles in the canon.

From the website: *LITTLE WHITE LIES*

- Fifty years on, **there's still nothing quite like *Point Blank***
- Bleak in outlook, feverish in tone, **John Boorman's brilliant crime noir remains an enigmatic outlier.**
- **What distinguishes *Point Blank* from other revenge thrillers is its dreamlike, otherworldly tone.** Cinematographer Philip H Lathrop cut his teeth working with Orson Welles, another denizen of weird Hollywood, and here he conjures **dramatic widescreen compositions that at times veer into the avant-garde.**

- ...the film boasts **an unusual treatment of time, including flashbacks** with a poetic rather than narrative motivation and **an innovative use of slow-motion** that precedes Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* by two years. It's an intensely subjective style, and one that has produced **the theory that the revenge story is in fact Walker's fantasy as he lays dying**. These are bold ideas that critics were unsure of at the film's release, but *Point Blank's* **influence on cinema is hard to understate**.

- Since its release, a host of prominent directors who spin movie poetry from pulp fiction – Steven Soderbergh, Nicolas Winding Refn and Michael Mann chief among them – have consistently drawn from *Point Blank* for its effortless blend of cool, smart and weird.

From *Crime Wave: The Filmgoers' Guide To The Great Crime Movies* by Howard Hughes

- ***Point Blank*** marked a major innovation in crime movies in Hollywood. During the early sixties, the French New Wave had adopted and adapted the plots and trappings of American gangster movies and reinvigorated them. Narratives were slim; it was the way the characters looked, talked and acted and reacted that was paramount.

These movies were marked by:

- Stylised cinematography (i.e., non-naturalistic, non conventional) and
- Jump-cut, non-linear editing
- leaving the audience to fill in the blank **points** of their puzzling, elliptical stories.

- **White-haired Marvin delivers his best performance in a career filled with memorable performances.** John Borman (the director) recalls theirs was “an intense and inspiring collaboration...and scary,” Marvin was “always pressing for the truth...the essence of a scene...**always searching for a gesture that would replace a line of dialogue,** the perfect move to express an emotion.”
- Marvin was **a tough actor to work with;** during rehearsals at Marvin’s house, **he hit John Vernon (Mal Reese) so hard Vernon burst into tears.**

- Walker's (Lee Marvin) revenge told as linear narrative would have been very similar to any standard mob flick...it is **Boorman's assured style and his disorienting editing strategy that makes the film so groundbreaking**, balanced precariously between flashback, reality and dream.

BEFORE THE MOVIE STARTS



TOMMARYBETH@VERIZON.NET

- **I WILL PLACE
THE SLIDES OF
EACH CLASS ON
OSHER'S
WEBSITE AFTER
EACH CLASS.**



HOW TO ACCESS THE CLASS NOTES

- Click on the Osher Website (not the Registration site):
- <https://www.wm.edu/offices/auxiliary/osher/index.php>
- On the left side of the page, click “Class Information,” and then click on “Class Notes and Presentation.”
- When the next page comes up, click on my name next to the class notes you want.

HERE ARE THE MOVIES:

- *Point Blank* (1967) – 92 minutes
- *The Silent Partner* (1978) – 106 minutes
- *Thief* (1981) – 123 minutes

WHAT IS FILM NOIR?

- **Films characterized by** an oppressive atmosphere of menace, pessimism, anxiety, suspicion that anything can go wrong, dingy realism, futility, fatalism, defeat and entrapment were stylized characteristics of film noir. The protagonists in film noir were normally driven by their past or by human weakness to repeat former mistakes.
- **Classic Period:** *The Maltese Falcon* ('41) to *Touch of Evil* ('58)

WHAT IS NEO-NOIR?

- **Neo-noir is a revival of the genre of film noir.** ... The film noir genre includes stylish Hollywood crime dramas, often with a twisted dark wit. **Neo-noir** has a **similar style but with updated themes, content, style, visual elements and media.**
- **Time Period for Neo-Noir Films:** Noir films made after *Touch of Evil* right up to the present day, almost all made in color, some still made in black and white.

From *Somewhere in the Night: Film Noir and the American City*

- **What about film noir in the 1960s? The films...are propelled by higher-octane materials than their forties counterparts. And their vision has darkened considerably --- and been densely involuted.**

- ***Point Blank*** (a) notable example, populated by characters so cold-blooded, existentially blank and alienated --- sundered, actually, from the disintegrating society around them --- that the metallic, splashily lilt nightmare cities of steel and glass they wander seem most chilling for their matter of factness. They are presented, not as a heightened reality, but as the norm. Hyper, hallucinatory, ever unstable.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR IN THIS MOVIE:

- In the most notorious and stylized scene in the film, Walker strides down a seemingly endless corridor.
- **Notice what Boorman does with this one scene,** all the surrounding scenes that spill out from this one scene.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR IN THIS MOVIE:

- **Some of the editing and imagery** hint at Walker's psychological state and imply that **he may be suffering from mental illness.**
- **See if you agree** as you watch the movie.

- **Some critics feel** that the movie is suggesting that all of what you'll see is **a dream**, a figment of Walker's imagination.
- Again, **see if you agree** once you've watched the movie.

SOUND

- Boorman's sound design is equally innovative, with
- Overlapping dialogue
- Disembodied monologues
- Sudden amplified sound effects

- **The score was also experimental, more tonal than melodic** --- very unusual at this point --- which also creates a distancing effect...
- (From *The Philosophy of Neo-Noir*)

- **Marvin uses silence and stillness to great effect;** Walker is one of the great underplayed roles of modern cinema.
- **...many scenes with long dialogue pauses...** characters stare off-screen...lost in their own thoughts

SUMMARY from *Crime Wave*:

- ***Point Blank*** is one of the most strikingly shot and remarkable films of the sixties. Its visuals were highly influential and its style can be seen emulated in even the worst TV cop shows. The most successful aspects were intelligent plotting melded with violent action, presented in an innovative manor. It was a new existentialist approach to narrative, as the plot unraveled in slow motion half-memory. American cinema came of age with *Point Blank*, though not to massive commercial success. It would take another visionary director to take European style into the US mainstream, with a couple of little known hoods named Parker and Barrow.

POINT BLANK: The Only Neo-Noir that Matters by Peter Foy

- ...I believe John Boorman's 1967 film *Point Blank* ranks as the best neo-noir ever made... *Point Blank* remains his (director John Boorman) most satisfying and all-encompassing film overall. Boorman brought a layer of **complexity and vision** to his crime film that made it transcend its base in genre. It featured a **non-linear plot**, calculated use of **mise-en-scène** (i.e, the look of the film) and a sense for lighting and color that often verged on **psychedelic**.

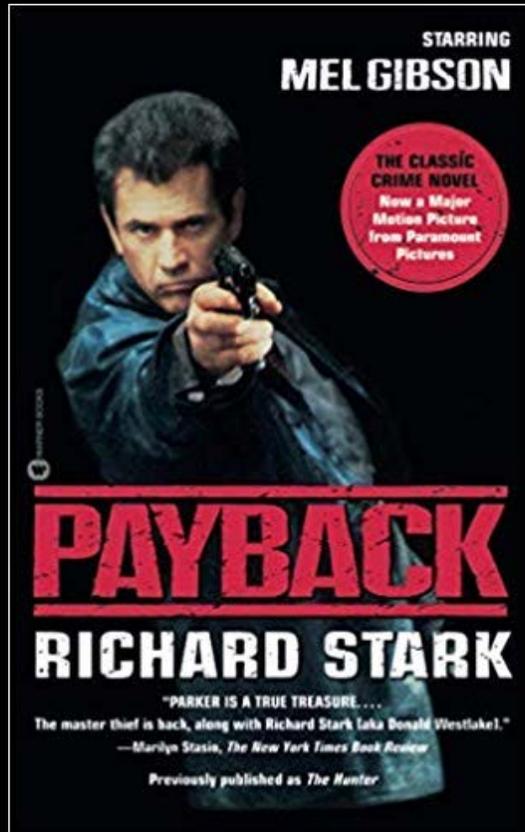
- ...*Point Blank* is one of the most unheralded classics of the 60s,...

AFTER THE MOVIE

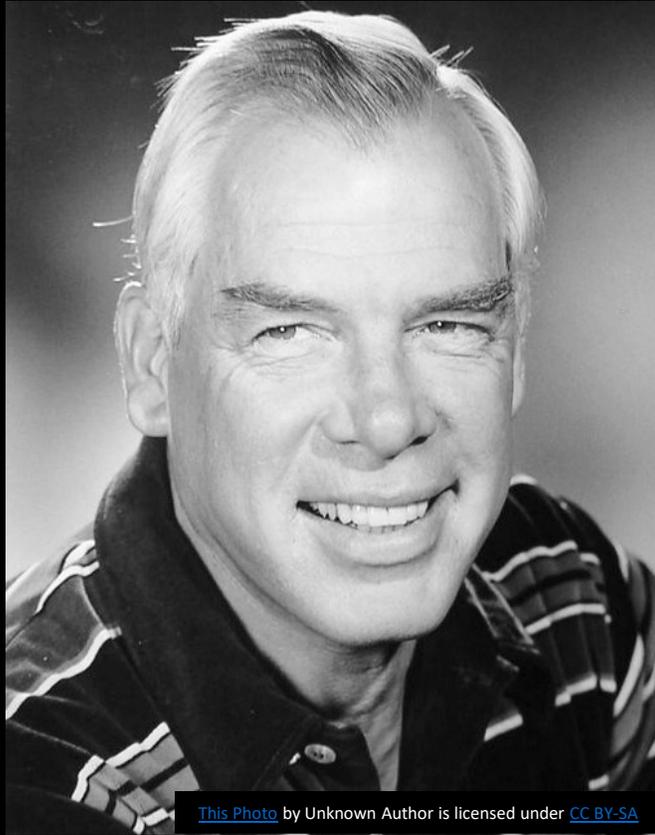


**•Q: IS THE FILM ALL A DREAM,
WALKER'S DEATH FANTASY?**

From novel to movie



Lee Marvin (1924-1987) and John Boorman (1933 -)



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Yes, it's all a dream! Arguments in support...

- A: Peter Foy: Perhaps **the most popular theory about the film is the belief that Walker really did die at the film's opening and the rest of the movie is a death fantasy for the character.** People stand by this theory since the film has a lot of **flashback sequences, an abstract path, and an ending that's particularly ambiguous.** We never even see how Walker recovers from his bullet wounds, and the film even ends with a shot of the Island of Alcatraz, which some people have inferred means that the character never left there in the first place.

From *The Philosophy of Neo-Noir*

- Boorman deliberately makes it unclear whether Walker survived the shooting and, thus, whether we witness are actually happening or whether they are Walker's compensatory hallucination just before he dies, captured in his mutterings as he collapses:
"Did it happen? A dream, a dream."
- Boorman: "Seeing the film, one should be able to imagine that this whole story of vengeance is taking place inside his head at the moment of his death."

- **Walker's actions are not bound by ordinary logic.** He seems able to appear and reappear in different locations, able to obliterate time and space, and is, thus, subject to the dream logic of desire, not of reality: **"The film is Walker's dream."**

No, it is not a dream: Arguments in support...

- **Boorman**, who developed a deep relationship with Marvin, felt that *Point Blank* was also about **the actor's existential estrangement from American society and, indeed, humanity, consequent of his having been brutalized as a seventeen-year old boy sent to war in 1943.** Boorman argued that all of Marvin's performances were underscored by **his struggle to recapture the humanity he felt he had lost.** Thus, *Point Blank* can be read as part of a **representative biography of a man who comes back from the dead and tries to find his humanity, thus reinforcing the figure's mythic status.**

- Boorman, however, has shrugged at these theories, saying that “what you see is what you get” with *Point Blank*. Regardless of this dismissal, others have continued to have philosophical interpretations of the film, including filmmaker Steven Soderbergh (who regularly calls the film a great influence for him), who sees it as an examination on memory. The most Boorman has said about the movie’s subtext, however, is that *Point Blank* is inspired by the monstrosities that Lee Marvin experienced in World War II and his subsequent gestation to regain his humanity afterwards.