

Tonight,  
his  
take-home  
pay is  
\$410,000...  
tax free.

JAMES CAAN

# Thief

JAMES CAAN  
TUESDAY WELD  
"THIEF"

ROBERT PROSKY  
AND  
WILLIE NELSON  
SCREEN STORY  
AND SCREENPLAY BY  
MICHAEL MANN

BASED ON  
"THE HOME INVADERS" BY  
FRANK HOHIMER

PRODUCED BY  
JERRY BRUCKHEIMER AND CAAN  
RONNIE

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER  
MICHAEL MANN

DIRECTED BY  
MICHAEL MANN

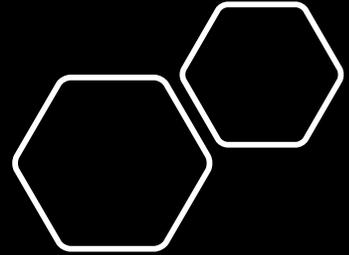
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PANAVISION®

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DOLBY DIGITAL

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adult guardian

United Artists  
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## From Wikipedia:

- ***Thief*** is a 1981 [American neo-noir](#)<sup>[4]</sup> [crime film](#) written, produced and directed by [Michael Mann](#) in his feature film debut. It is based on the 1975 novel *The Home Invaders: Confessions of a Cat Burglar* by "Frank Hohimer" (the pen name of real-life jewel thief [John Seybold](#)). ***Thief*** marked the feature film debut of [Michael Mann](#) as director, screenwriter and executive producer, after five years in television drama.

- Mann made his directorial debut with the TV movie [The Jericho Mile](#). This was partly shot in [Folsom Prison](#). Mann says that influenced the writing of *Thief*:
- It probably informed my ability to imagine what Frank's life was like, where he was from, and what those 12 or 13 years in prison were like for him. **The idea of creating his character was to have somebody who has been outside of society.**

- **An outsider who has been removed from the evolution of everything from** technology to the music that people listen to, to how you talk to a girl, to what do you want with your life and how do you go about getting it. Everything that's normal development, that we experience, he was excluded from, by design. In the design of the character and the engineering of the character, that was the idea. [\[](#)

- **Mann made James Caan do research as a thief for his role.**
- **“So one of the most obvious things is it’d be pretty good if [James Caan] was as good at doing what Frank does as is Frank.”**

# JAMES CAAN

- James Caan's emotional several-minute monologue with Weld in a coffee shop is often cited as the film's high point, and Caan has long considered the scene his favorite of his career.<sup>[6]</sup> The actor liked the movie although he found the part challenging to play. "I like to be emotionally available but this guy is available to nothing."<sup>[7]</sup>

# MICHAEL MAAN, DIRECTOR

- Being Michael Mann's feature film directorial debut, *Thief* showcases many of the cinematic techniques that would be his trademarks in the years to come. Chief among these is the cinematography, utilizing light and shadow to give the proceedings, especially those taking place in the darkness of night, a sense of danger. The film also earns plaudits for its **meticulous attention to detail**: the tools and techniques of the trade, right down to the oxy lance used to penetrate a safe, are authentic, the result of Mann's decision to hire **real-life thieves to serve as technical advisers**.

# THE FILM'S RECEPTION

- Originally titled *Violent Streets*, the film debuted at the [34th Cannes Film Festival](#).<sup>[8]</sup> It went on to open in theaters in the United States on March 27, 1981, earning a modest \$4.3 million. **While not a financial success in its initial release, the film has become a reference point in Mann's career, especially with the release of his crime epic, *Heat*, with which this movie has many similarities.**
- (However) The movie received widespread critical acclaim. It holds a 93% rating on review site [Rotten Tomatoes](#), based on 30 reviews...

# ROGER EBERT

- Michael Mann's **"Thief"** is a film of style, substance, and violently felt emotion, all wrapped up in one of the most intelligent thrillers I've seen. It's one of those films where you feel the authority right away: This movie knows its characters, knows its story, and knows exactly how it wants to tell us about them. At a time when thrillers have been devalued by the routine repetition of the same dumb chases, sex scenes, and gunfights, **"Thief"** is completely out of the ordinary.

- This movie works so well for several reasons. One is that **"Thief"** is able to convince us that it knows its subject, knows about the methods and criminal personalities of its characters. Another is that it's well cast: Every important performance in this movie successfully creates a plausible person, instead of the stock-company supporting characters we might have expected. And the film moves at a taut pace, creating tension and anxiety through very effective photography and a wound-up, pulsing score by [Tangerine Dream](#).

- I suppose it is a good thing when a movie creates characters we feel that strongly about, and "Thief" is populated with them. **It's a thriller with plausible people in it. How rare.**

AV Club: Pop culture obsessives writing for the pop culture obsessed.

- Michael Mann's *Thief* is one of the most confident directorial debuts of its era, the product of an unprecedented amount of research and preparation. Mann was 37 when he made it, a veteran of the movie and TV industries who had been photographing the film's industrial Chicago locations since his teens. Real thieves—some with outstanding warrants—were brought on as technical advisors and cast in bit roles.

- **John Santucci, who Mann had cast, somewhat perversely, as a corrupt cop. Santucci had even once been arrested by another member of the cast, Dennis Farina, then a Chicago police officer moonlighting in local theater. (Both pursued acting careers, though Santucci continued getting arrested for burglary into the mid-1990s.)**

- **As in Mann's later films, the production's authenticity formed the basis for an extremely stylized approach to form, as though the "reality" of the on-screen action were an excuse to make it seem as expressively unreal as possible.**
- **Style-wise, the movie remains as inventive and thoroughly original as ever, and its depiction of Chicago—as a half-wasteland of bridges and glass, where the nights are pitch black and the days are gray—is still one of the most striking evocations of an urban environment in film history.**

- With *Thief*, Mann arrived fully formed, establishing himself with a single feature, as **one of the greatest filmmakers of his generation.**

# MEMORABLE LINES

- **"I DON'T CARE ABOUT NOTHING."** Frank (James Caan)
- **"YOU'RE SCARY BECAUSE YOU DON'T GIVE A ..."**  
Leo (Robert Prosky) to Frank
- **"I OWN YOU."** Leo to Frank

- **“I AM THE LAST PERSON IN THE  
WORLD YOU WANT TO....  
WITH!”**

- **Frank to Attaglia (Tom Signorelli)**

# BEFORE THE MOVIE STARTS



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

# ADDITIONAL INFO

- 1) Filmed in **Chicago and Los Angeles**
- 2) **First movie for:** Jim Belushi, Robert Prosky, Dennis Farina and a number of career criminals and Chicago police officers.
- 3) **“Everything is accurate.”** Michael Mann
  - All the tools were real - Caan with guns & burglar
  - tools
  -

- 4) **Caan's speaking style** in the movie: **almost no contractions. Why** did he choose this? (Answer after the movie)
- 5) **The diner scene with James Caan and Tuesday Weld is Caan's favorite scene** in his long career.
- Note: **Prosby** delivers his dialogue in the same style as Caan.

# PARENTAL ADVISORY

- **LANGUAGE:** A MAJOR CHARACTER DELIVERS A SPEECH IN THE FILTHIEST LANGUAGE NEAR THE END OF THE MOVIE
- **Question to consider:** What is the importance of this speech? Is it necessary?

# SOME OF MICHAEL MANN'S MOVIES & TV

## • MOVIES

- **Manhunter (1986)**
- **The Last of the Mohicans (1992)**
- **Heat (1995)**
- **The Insider (1999)**
- **Ali (2001)**
- **Collateral (2004)**
- **Miami Vice (2006)**

## TV

- **Miami Vice (1984-90)**
- **Crime Story (1986-88)**

# AFTER THE MOVIE



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From *Detours and Lost Highways: A map of Neo-Noir* by Foster Hirsch

- **(Thief) is morally more problematic than the straightforward 1970s thrillers.** The virtuosic opening presents the thief on the job. **The film's language** – quick editing, roving athletic camera movements, a pounding rock score by Tangerine Dream that pumps up the tension, a blue alley with fire escapes that looks like a dream of the neo-noir city --- **in effect enshrines the thief's job as a work of art.**

- And despite its superficial obeisance to the fact that the protagonist suffers because of his crimes, **the film sends a not-so-subliminal message that being a criminal is really a cool occupation,, a trade for a real man.**

John Santucci  
(1940-2004);  
Dennis Farina  
(1944-2013);  
Anthony  
Denison (1949-)



John Santucci:

- 
- **“Some guys like broads.”**