

Welcome to



.

FILM NOIR



Today's Movie...

JULES DASSIN's

RIEFER



What does *“Rififi”* mean?

- **Some definitions:**
- *“Rififi”* is a slang word deriving from *rif*, the French military term for **“combat zone”** during the First World War...
- *“Rififi”* is an oldish word that means that there is **a lot of noise, confusion and rumble about something.**
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- **The French title** of the movie is: *“Du Rififi chez les hommes”* which means **“Some Trouble Among Men”**
- *When the movie was released in the U.S. in the 1950s, the advertising campaign simply said, “Rififi means Trouble.”*

The New York Times

- **“It makes the hair on the back of your neck stand on end.”**

TIME MAGAZINE

- “*Rififi* contains a 30-minute sequence of wordless moviemaking that is one of the most engrossing sequences since the invention of the motion picture.”

Roger Ebert on "Rififi":

- The modern heist movie was invented in Paris in 1954 by Jules Dassin, with "Rififi," and Jean-Pierre Melville, with "Bob le Flambeur." Dassin built his film around a **28-minute safe-cracking sequence** that is the **father of all later movies** in which thieves carry out complicated robberies.

- ...echoes of the Dassin can be found from Kubrick's "*The Killing*" to Tarantino's "*Reservoir Dogs*." They both owe something to John Huston's "*The Asphalt Jungle*" (1950), which has the general idea but not the attention to detail.

- "Rififi" was called by Francois Truffaut **the best film noir he'd ever seen** (it was based, he added, on the worst noir novel he'd ever read). **Dassin's inspiration was to expand the safe-cracking job,** which is negligible in the book, into a breathless sequence that occupies a fourth of the running time ...
- So meticulous is the construction and so specific the detail of this scene that it's said **the Paris police briefly banned the movie because they feared it was an instructional guide.**

- **There is something else unique about the heist scene: It is the centerpiece of the film, not the climax. "Rififi" is more interested in the human element, and plays as a parabola, with the heist at the top before the characters descend to collect their wages of sin.**

- The film was shot on **a modest \$200,000 budget** on **Paris locations** that Dassin scouted while wandering unemployed around the town; he was on the Hollywood blacklist and hadn't worked in four years.
- Streets are usually wet in movies because they photograph better that way, but **Paris is especially damp in "Rififi," shot in wintertime** and showing a criminal milieu...

- **The film's violence has a crude awkwardness that makes it seem more real.**
- **Much of the violence takes place just off screen;** that may be because of the production codes of the day, but it's effective because **the focus falls on the face of the person committing the violence,** and not on the violence itself.

- **Dassin was a particular master of shooting on city locations.** *"The Naked City"* (1948) is famous for its semi-documentary use of New York. His great London noir *"Night and the City"* (1950), with Richard Widmark as a desperate fugitive hunted by mobsters, makes such good use of darkness and the rubble of bomb sites that it deserves comparison with *"The Third Man."* **In "Rififi," Dassin finds everyday locales: Nightclubs, bistros, a construction site, investing them with a grey reality.**

Movies of the 50s by Jurgen Muller

- The film's presentation of violence was a sensation at the time...
- Yet tough as it is, the film has the balance and integrity of a work of art. This is due in no small part to the fantastic camerawork of Philippe Agostini. The interiors are skillfully lit, so that the hard world of the criminals is filled with niches of soft darkness. The exteriors have a raw documentary beauty that points towards movies like "*The French Connection*" (1971), partly because Dassin would only shoot when the sky was overcast.

- **Rififi's frank treatment of sex and violence didn't stop the Cannes jury from presenting Dassin with the prize for Best Director. In other countries, the film was banned immediately...**
- **...*Rififi* is rightly seen as a prototype of the ice-cold thriller. The film is a real shocker. It uses the means of the European cinema to drive the American film noir to its stylistic limits...In particular, it leaves the two-dimensional quality of earlier noir films far behind it.**

- Movie maestros such as Kubrick and Tarantino were inspired by the sheer technical perfection of “*Rififi*,” but its particular blend of hardness and grace still remains unmatched.