

Six Memorable Films

Haywards Heath & District Probus Club



Introduction

This compilation introduces my selection of memorable films. Whilst I am sure you have your own favourites, I hope you enjoy what I have put together. Although the title is 'Six Memorable Films', I have included a seventh film, a bonus: *White Christmas*, as I watch it every year.

I was introduced to the cinema at an early age, probably at four or five years of age. The matinees at my local cinema showed films about Cowboys and Indians nearly every week. Often, they were billed as *a Western with a Difference*. Assuming you are still with me, let me tell you something about my local cinema, in Hassocks, Sussex, where I grew up. The cinema was built in 1938 and, at first, was called *The Studio*, but after World War II, it changed to *The Orion*. It was a splendid and iconic art-deco building and was extremely popular with local residents. How then it was demolished to make way for a supermarket is something I'll never know or understand.

Anyway, here is my selection of memorable films.

It's a Wonderful Life

Few films define Christmas quite like Frank Capra's tear-jerker starring James Stewart as George Bailey, who, on the verge of committing suicide, is visited by an angel who shows him the true importance of his life. *It's a Wonderful Life* is a 1946 American Christmas fantasy drama film based on the short story and booklet *The Greatest Gift*, which Philip Van Doren Stern self-published in 1943 and is in turn loosely based on the 1843 Charles Dickens novella *A Christmas Carol*.



The film stars James Stewart as George Bailey, whose suicide attempt on Christmas Eve brings about the intervention of his guardian angel, Clarence Odbody (Henry Travers).

George Bailey is a building and loan banker who sacrifices his dreams to help his community of Bedford Falls to the point where he feels life has passed him by.

Picture Credit: "It's A Wonderful Life" by LORAC! Carol is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

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Clarence shows George how he has touched the lives of others and how different life would be for his wife **Mary** and his community of **Bedford Falls** if he had not been born.

Although *It's a Wonderful Life* initially received mixed reviews and was unsuccessful at the box office, it became a classic Christmas film after being put into the public domain, allowing it to be broadcast without licensing or royalty fees. Theatrically, the film's break-even point was \$6.3 million, about twice the production cost, a figure it did not come close to achieving on its initial release.

Because of the film's disappointing sales, some studios saw Capra as having lost his ability to produce popular, financially successful films. Now, *It's a Wonderful Life* is considered **one of the greatest films of all time**. It was nominated for five **Academy Awards**, including **Best Picture**, and is recognised by the **American Film Institute** as one of the **100 best American films ever made**. It was number 11 on the **American Film Institute's 1998 greatest movie list**, number 20 on its **2007 greatest movie list**, and number one on **its list** of the most inspirational American films of all time.

Capra revealed that it was his favourite among the films he directed. He screened it for his family every Christmas season. It was one of Stewart's favourite films. In 1990, the film was designated as "culturally, historically or aesthetically significant" and added to the **National Film Registry** of the **Library of Congress**.

The Plot

On Christmas Eve 1945, in Bedford Falls, **New York**, **George Bailey** contemplates suicide. The prayers of his family and friends reach Heaven, where Angel 2nd class **Clarence Odbody** is assigned to save George to earn his wings. Clarence is shown flashbacks of George's life. He watches 12-year-old George save his younger brother, Harry, from drowning but lose hearing in his left ear. George later prevents the distraught town druggist, Mr Gower, from accidentally poisoning a child's prescription.

George plans a world tour before college and is reintroduced to **Mary Hatch**, who has a crush on him. The attraction is now mutual. When his father dies from a stroke, George postpones his travel to settle the family business, Bailey Brothers **Building and Loan**, which avaricious board member **Henry Potter**, who controls most of the town, seeks to dissolve. The board members vote to keep the Building and Loan open if George runs it. George acquiesces and works alongside his uncle, Billy, giving his tuition to Harry with the understanding that Harry will run the business when he graduates.

But Harry returns from college married and with a job offer from his father-in-law. George resigns himself to running the Building and Loan. Following their wedding, George and Mary witness a **run on the bank** and use their honeymoon savings to keep the Building and Loan solvent.

Under George's leadership, the company establishes Bailey Park, a modern housing development rivalling Potter's overpriced slums. Potter offers George \$20,000 a year to be his assistant, but, realising that Potter's true intent is to close the Building and Loan, George rebuffs him.

During **World War II**, George is **ineligible** for service because of his deaf ear. Harry becomes a Navy pilot and wins the **Medal of Honor** for shooting down a **kamikaze** plane headed for a troop transport. On Christmas Eve 1945, as the town prepares a hero's welcome for Harry, Billy goes to the bank to deposit \$8,000 of the Building and Loan's cash.

Billy taunts Potter with a newspaper headline about Harry but unintentionally wraps the envelope of cash in Potter's newspaper. Potter finds the money but says nothing, while Billy cannot recall how he misplaced it. With a bank examiner reviewing the company's records, George realises scandal and criminal charges will follow. Fruitlessly retracing Billy's steps, George berates him and takes out his frustration on his family.

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George appeals to Potter for a loan, offering his life insurance policy as collateral. Potter says George is worth more dead than alive and phones the police to arrest him. George flees, gets drunk at a bar, and prays for help. Suicidal, he goes to a nearby bridge, but Clarence dives into the river before he can jump. George rescues him.



When George wishes he had never been born, Clarence shows him a timeline in which George never existed. Bedford Falls is now Pottersville, an unsavoury town occupied by sleazy entertainment venues, crime, and amoral people. The druggist, Mr Gower, was imprisoned for manslaughter since George did not prevent him from poisoning the pills. George's mother reveals that Billy was **institutionalised** after the Building and Loan failed. Bailey Park is a cemetery where George discovers Harry's grave. Since George did not save Harry, Harry did not save the soldiers on the transport. George finds that Mary is a **spinster** librarian. When he claims to be her husband, she screams for the police, and George runs away.

Picture: Guardian angel **Clarence Odbody** (Henry Travers) is about to show what life would be like if George had never been born.¹

Convinced that Clarence is really his guardian angel, George begs for his life back. The original reality is restored, and a grateful George rushes home to await his arrest. Mary and Billy have rallied the townspeople, who donate enough to cover the missing \$8,000. Harry arrives and toasts George as "the richest man in town." George receives a copy of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* as a gift from Clarence, with a note reminding George that no man is a failure who has friends and thanking him for his wings. When a bell on the Christmas tree rings, George's youngest daughter, Zuzu, explains that it means that an angel has earned his wings. George, his family and friends sing "**Auld Lang Syne**" to celebrate Christmas Eve.²

Watch a trailer/Excerpt: Paramount Movies, [HERE](#).

¹ Copyright status: The picture is in the **public domain** because it was published in the United States between 1926 and 1963, and although there may or may not have been a copyright notice, the **copyright was not renewed**.

² Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/It%27s_a_Wonderful_Life

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Empire of the Sun



Empire of the Sun is a 1987 American epic coming-of-age war film based on J. G. Ballard's semi-autobiographical 1984 novel of the same name. A British boy is separated from his family at the start of World War II. Amidst the shortage of food and no means of survival, he is eventually interned in a Japanese POW camp.

The film was directed by **Steven Spielberg** and stars **Christian Bale**, **John Malkovich**, **Miranda Richardson** and **Nigel Havers**. The film tells the story of Jamie "Jim" Graham, a young boy who goes from living in a wealthy British family in **Shanghai** to becoming a **prisoner of war** in a Japanese **internment camp** during **World War II**.

Harold Becker and **David Lean** were originally to direct before Spielberg came on board, initially as a producer for Lean. Spielberg was attracted to directing the film because of a personal connection to Lean's films and World War II topics. He considers it to be his most profound work on "the loss of innocence".^[1] The film received positive reviews but was not at first a box office success, earning only \$22,238,696 at the US Box Office, but it eventually more than recouped its budget through revenues in other markets.

The Plot

Amid **Japan's invasion of China** during **World War II**, Jamie Graham, an **upper-class** British schoolboy, enjoys a privileged life in the **Shanghai International Settlement**. After the **attack on Pearl Harbor**, Japan begins occupying the settlement. As the Graham family evacuate the city, Jamie is separated from his parents in the ensuing chaos. Jamie makes his way back to their house, assuming they will return. A sign posted outside states that the house is now the property of the Japanese government, though no soldiers are present. The rooms have been vandalised, and most of the food eaten. He sees the family's Chinese housekeeper looting furniture with an accomplice and questions her. She walks slowly toward him and slaps him in the face, presumably because of his spoilt and domineering behaviour towards his household servants. After a length of time alone and having eaten the little remaining food, Jamie ventures back into the city.

Hungry, Jamie tries surrendering to Japanese soldiers who ignore him. After being chased by a street urchin, he is taken in by two American expatriates and hustlers, Basie and Frank. Unable to sell Jamie for money, Basie and Frank intend to abandon him in the streets, but Jamie offers to lead them to his neighbourhood to loot the empty houses there. Jamie is surprised to see lights on in his family home lit and thinks his parents have returned, only to discover the property is now occupied by Japanese troops. The trio is taken prisoner, transported to the **Lunghua Civilian Assembly Centre** in Shanghai for processing, and ultimately sent to an internment camp in **Suzhou**.

It is now 1945, nearing the end of the **Pacific War**. Despite the terror and poor living conditions of the camp, Jim survives by establishing a successful trading network—which even involves the camp's commander, Sergeant Nagata. Dr Rawlins, the camp's British doctor, becomes a father figure and teacher to Jim. Jim also visits Basie in the American POW barracks, where Jim idolises the Americans and their culture. One night after a bombing raid, Nagata orders the destruction of the prisoners' infirmary as reprisal. He only stops when Jim begs forgiveness. Through the barbed wire fencing, Jim befriends a Japanese teenager who is a trainee pilot.

One morning at dawn, the base is suddenly attacked by a group of American **P-51 Mustang** fighter aircraft. Jim is overjoyed and climbs the ruins of a nearby pagoda to see the airstrike better. Dr Rawlins chases Jim up the pagoda to save him, where the boy breaks down in tears—he cannot remember what his parents look like. As a result of the attack, the Japanese decide to evacuate the camp. Basie escapes during the confusion. As they leave, Jim's trainee pilot friend goes through the ritual kamikaze preparation and attempts to take off in a Japanese attack plane. The trainee is devastated when the engine sputters and dies.

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The camp prisoners march through the wilderness, where many die from fatigue, starvation, and disease. Arriving at a football stadium near Nantao, where many of the Shanghai inhabitants' possessions have been stored by the Japanese, Jim recognises his parents' **Packard**. He spends the night there with Mrs Victor, a fellow prisoner who dies shortly afterwards and later witnesses flashes from the **atomic bombing of Nagasaki** hundreds of miles away.

Jim wanders back to the Suzhou camp. Along the way, he hears news of **Japan's surrender** and the war's end. He reunites with the now-disillusioned Japanese teenager, who remembers Jim and offers him a mango, drawing his **guntō** to cut it. Basie re-appears with a group of armed Americans to loot the **Red Cross** containers being airdropped over the area. One of the Americans, thinking Jim is in danger, shoots and kills the Japanese youth. Basie offers to help Jim find his parents, but Jim—infuriated over his friend's death—chooses to stay behind.

Jim is eventually found by American soldiers and placed in an orphanage, where he is reunited with his mother and father.³



Picture Source: Clip from Video at <https://youtu.be/5453yKy-MBg>

Watch a trailer/Excerpt: Empire of the Sun (1987) Official Trailer - Christian Bale, Steven Spielberg Movie HD, [HERE](#).

³ Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Empire_of_the_Sun_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Empire_of_the_Sun_(film))

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Scent of a Woman

Scent of a Woman is a 1992 American **drama film** produced and directed by **Martin Brest** that tells the story of a **preparatory school** student who takes a job as an assistant to an irritable, blind, medically retired Army **lieutenant colonel**. The film is a remake of **Dino Risi's** 1974 Italian film *Profumo di donna*, adapted by **Bo Goldman** from the novel *Il buio e il miele* (**Italian: Darkness and Honey**) by **Giovanni Arpino**. The film stars **Al Pacino** and **Chris O'Donnell**, with **James Rebhorn**, **Philip Seymour Hoffman** and **Gabrielle Anwar**.

Al Pacino won the **Academy Award for Best Actor** for his performance, and the film was nominated for **Best Director**, **Best Picture** and **Best Screenplay Based on Material Previously Produced or Published**. The film won three major awards at the **Golden Globe Awards: Best Screenplay, Best Actor and Best Motion Picture – Drama**.

The film was shot primarily around **New York state** and on location at **Princeton University**, at the **Emma Willard School**, an all-girls school in **Troy, New York**, and at the **Ethical Culture Fieldston School** in **New York City**.

The Plot

Charlie Simms is a **scholarship** student at **Baird**, an exclusive **New England preparatory school**. He accepts a temporary job over **Thanksgiving** weekend so he can buy a plane ticket home to **Oregon** for **Christmas**. The woman who hires him asks Charlie to watch over her uncle, retired Army **Lieutenant Colonel** **Frank Slade**, a blind, highly decorated **Vietnam War** veteran whom Charlie discovers to be a cantankerous alcoholic.

Charlie and another student, **George Willis Jr.**, witness three students setting up a prank to publicly humiliate the headmaster, **Mr Trask**. After falling victim to the prank, **Trask** quickly learns of the witnesses and unsuccessfully presses them to name the perpetrators. **Trask** privately offers Charlie a bribe: a letter of recommendation to attend **Harvard University**.

Frank unexpectedly takes Charlie on a trip to **New York City**, where they stay at the **Waldorf-Astoria** hotel. During dinner at the **Oak Room**, **Frank** glibly states his intention to commit suicide. They pay an uninvited visit to **Frank's** brother's home in **White Plains** for Thanksgiving dinner, where the cause of **Frank's** blindness is revealed: while drunk, he juggled live **grenades** to show off for a group of younger officers, and one exploded. **Frank** deliberately provokes everyone at dinner, which ends after a heated confrontation with his brother.

As they return to **New York City**, Charlie tells **Frank** about his problem at school. **Frank** advises Charlie to turn informant and go to **Harvard**, warning him that **George** will probably submit to **Trask's** pressure, so he should act before **George** does. While at a restaurant, **Frank** notices **Donna**, a young woman waiting for her date. He leads her to the dance floor, where they perform a spectacular **tango** ("**Por una Cabeza**"). Deeply despondent the next morning, **Frank** is initially uninterested in Charlie's suggestions for that day's activities until he brings up test driving a new **Ferrari**. **Frank** talks the reluctant salesman into letting them take the car. Once on the road, **Frank** is unenthusiastic until Charlie allows him to drive, which results in a traffic stop, but **Frank** talks the police officer into letting them go without revealing that he is blind.

After returning the car and waiting to cross the street, **Frank** grows impatient and walks into the middle of **Park Avenue**, where he narrowly avoids being struck by multiple cars. When they return to the hotel, **Frank** sends Charlie to run several errands. Charlie initially leaves but quickly becomes suspicious. He returns to find **Frank** in his dress uniform and preparing to commit suicide with his service pistol. Charlie intervenes, and they fight over the gun, but **Frank** backs down after Charlie convinces him he has more to live for.

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At school, Charlie and George are subjected to a formal inquiry by the student/faculty disciplinary committee, with the rest of the student body on hand to observe. As Trask opens the proceedings, Frank unexpectedly appears and sits with Charlie. George has enlisted the help of his wealthy father, and they name the three perpetrators. When pressed for details, the Willises claim George Jr.'s poor vision prevented him from seeing more and defer to Charlie. Charlie refuses to inform, so Trask recommends his expulsion. Frank launches into a passionate speech defending Charlie and reminds the audience to value qualities like loyalty and integrity. You can listen to Al Pacino's speech [HERE](#).



Picture Source: Clip from Video at <https://youtu.be/EiBVj2Nn-EQ>

The disciplinary committee places the students named by George on probation. Charlie is not punished and is excused from further participation in the proceedings. As Charlie escorts Frank to his limousine, Frank flirts with a young political science professor. Charlie returns Frank to his home, where he happily greets his niece's young children.⁴

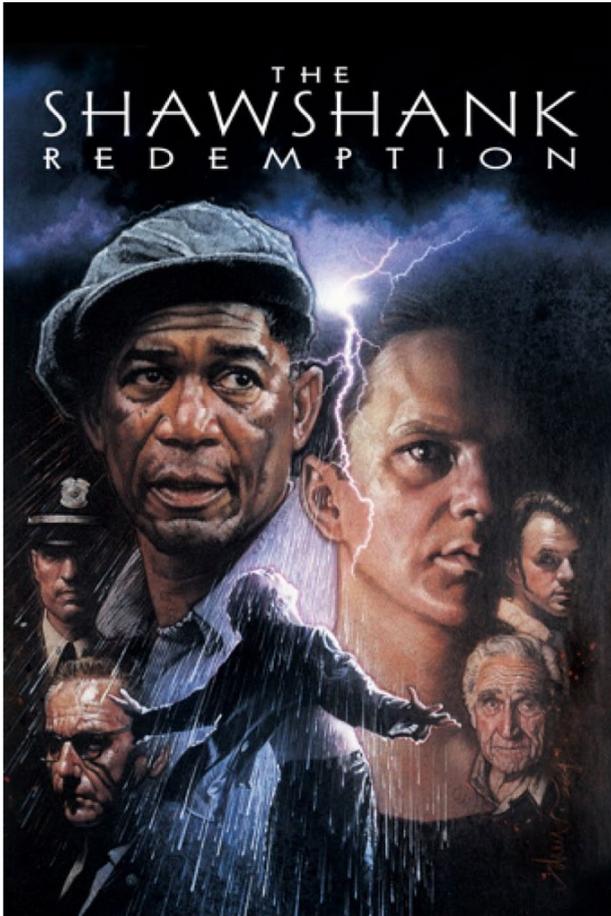
Watch a trailer/Excerpt: Scent of a Woman/Best scene/Al Pacino/Chris O'Donnell/James Rebhorn/Philip Seymour Hoffman, [HERE](#).

⁴ Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scent_of_a_Woman_\(1992_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scent_of_a_Woman_(1992_film))

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The Shawshank Redemption



The Shawshank Redemption is a 1994 American **drama film** written and directed by **Frank Darabont**, based on the 1982 **Stephen King** novella *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption*. It tells the story of banker Andy Dufresne (**Tim Robbins**), who is sentenced to life in Shawshank State Penitentiary for the murders of his wife and her lover, despite his claims of innocence. Over the following two decades, he befriends a fellow prisoner (contraband smuggler Ellis "Red" Redding (**Morgan Freeman**)) and becomes instrumental in a money-laundering operation led by the **prison warden** Samuel Norton (**Bob Gunton**). **William Sadler**, **Clancy Brown**, **Gil Bellows**, and **James Whitmore** appear in supporting roles.

Darabont purchased the film rights to King's story in 1987, but development did not begin until five years later when he wrote the script over an eight-week period. Two weeks after submitting his script to **Castle Rock Entertainment**, Darabont secured a \$25 million budget to produce *The Shawshank Redemption*, which started pre-production in January 1993. While the film is set in Maine, **principal photography** took place from June to August 1993 almost entirely in **Mansfield, Ohio**, with the **Ohio State Reformatory** serving as the eponymous penitentiary. The project attracted many stars of the time for the role of Andy, including **Tom Hanks**, **Tom Cruise**, and **Kevin Costner**. **Thomas Newman** provided the film's score.

Picture Credit: "The Shawshank Redemption, 50% off, \$9.99!" by mdmdeals is licensed under **CC BY-NC-ND 2.0**

While *The Shawshank Redemption* received critical acclaim on its release, particularly for its story and the performances of Robbins and Freeman, it was a box-office disappointment, earning only \$16 million during its initial theatrical run. Many reasons were cited for its failure at the time, including competition from films such as *Pulp Fiction* and *Forrest Gump*, the general unpopularity of prison films, its lack of female characters, and even the title, which was considered to be confusing for audiences. It went on to receive multiple award nominations, including seven **Academy Award** nominations and a theatrical re-release that, combined with international takings, increased the film's box-office gross to \$58.3 million.

Over 320,000 **VHS** rental copies were shipped throughout the United States, and on the strength of its award nominations and word of mouth, it became one of the top **video rentals** of 1995. The broadcast rights were acquired following the purchase of Castle Rock by **Turner Broadcasting System**, and it was shown regularly on the **TNT** network starting in 1997, further increasing its popularity. Decades after its release, the film was still broadcast regularly and is popular in several countries, with audience members and celebrities citing it as a source of inspiration and naming the film as a favourite in various surveys. In 2015, the United States **Library of Congress** selected the film for preservation in the **National Film Registry**, finding it "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant".

The Plot

In 1947 **Portland, Maine**, banker Andy Dufresne is convicted of murdering his wife and her lover and was sentenced to two **consecutive life sentences** at the **Shawshank State Prison**. He is befriended by Ellis "Red" Redding, an inmate and prison **contraband** smuggler serving a life sentence.

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Red procures a **rock hammer** and a large poster of **Rita Hayworth** for Andy. Assigned to work in the prison laundry, Andy is frequently **sexually assaulted** by "the Sisters" and their leader, Bogs.

In 1949, Andy overhears the captain of the guards, Byron Hadley, complaining about being **taxed on an inheritance** and offers to help him shelter the money legally. After an assault by the Sisters nearly kills Andy, Hadley beats and cripples Bogs, who is subsequently transferred to another prison. Andy is not attacked again. Warden Samuel Norton meets Andy and reassigns him to the prison library to assist elderly inmate Brooks Hatlen, a **front** to allow Andy to manage financial matters for other prison staff, guards from other prisons, and the warden himself. Andy begins writing weekly letters to the state legislature requesting funds to improve the prison's decaying library.

Brooks is **paroled** in 1954 after serving 50 years, but he cannot adjust to the outside world and eventually hangs himself. The legislature sends a library donation that includes a recording of *The Marriage of Figaro*; Andy plays an **excerpt** over the public address system and is punished with **solitary confinement**. After his release from solitary, Andy explains that hope is what gets him through his time, a concept that Red dismisses. In 1963, Norton begins exploiting prison labour for public works, profiting by undercutting skilled labour costs and receiving **bribes**. Andy **launders** the money using the alias "Randall Stephens".

Tommy Williams is incarcerated for burglary in 1965. Andy and Red befriend him, and Andy helps him pass his **General Educational Development** (GED) exam. A year later, Tommy reveals to Red and Andy that his cellmate at another prison had claimed responsibility for the murders for which Andy was convicted. Andy approaches Norton with this information, but Norton refuses to listen, and when Andy mentions the money laundering, Norton sends him back to solitary confinement. Norton has Hadley murder Tommy under the guise of an escape attempt. Andy attempts to discontinue the laundering but relents after Norton threatens to destroy the library, remove Andy's protection from the guards, and move him to worse conditions. After two months, Andy is released from solitary confinement, and he tells a sceptical Red that he dreams of living in **Zihuatanejo**, a Mexican coastal town. Andy also tells him of a specific hayfield near **Buxton**, asking Red—once he is released—to retrieve a package that Andy buried there. Red worries about Andy's well-being, especially when he learns Andy asked a fellow inmate for 6 ft (1.8 m) of rope. At the next day's **roll call**, the guards find Andy's cell empty. An irate Norton throws a rock at a poster of **Raquel Welch** hanging on the cell wall, revealing a tunnel that Andy dug with his rock hammer over the past 19 years. The previous night, Andy used the rope to escape through the tunnel and prison sewage pipe, taking Norton's suit, shoes, and **ledger**, containing proof of the money laundering. While guards search for him, Andy poses as Randall Stephens, withdraws over \$370,000 (equivalent to \$2.95 million in 2020) of the laundered money from several banks, and mails the ledger and other evidence of the corruption and murders at Shawshank to a local newspaper. State police arrive at Shawshank and take Hadley into custody, while Norton commits suicide to avoid arrest.

The following year, Red is finally paroled after serving 40 years. He struggles to adapt to life outside prison and fears that he never will. Remembering his promise to Andy, he visits Buxton and finds a cache containing money and a letter asking him to come to Zihuatanejo. Red violates his parole by travelling to **Fort Hancock, Texas**, and crossing the border into Mexico, admitting that he finally feels hope. He finds Andy on a beach in Zihuatanejo⁵, and the two reunited friends happily embrace.⁶

Watch a trailer/Excerpt: A Warner Brothers Release, [HERE](#).

⁵ *Zihuatanejo, Mexico* is a small fishing village. Originally, the town was very tiny and unnoticed, but after being mentioned as a quiet paradise in *The Shawshank Redemption*, curious tourists flocked to see if the town was that great. Now the town is a booming resort community, in no small part to *The Shawshank Redemption*. The scene in the film was actually shot at **Sandy Point**, in St. Croix, US Virgin Islands.

⁶ Source: Wikipedia - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Shawshank_Redemption

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The Sting

The Sting is a 1973 American caper film set in September 1936, involving a complicated plot by two professional grifters (Paul Newman and Robert Redford) to con a mob boss (Robert Shaw).^[2] The film was directed by George Roy Hill,^[3] who had directed Newman and Redford in the western *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. Created by screenwriter David S. Ward, the story was inspired by real-life cons perpetrated by brothers Fred and Charley Gondorff and documented by David Maurer in his 1940 book *The Big Con: The Story of the Confidence Man*.

The title refers to the moment when a con artist finishes their "play" and takes the "mark's" money. If a con is successful, the mark does not realise he has been cheated until the con men are long gone, if at all. The film is played out in distinct sections with old-fashioned title cards drawn by artist Jaroslav "Jerry" Gebr, the lettering and illustrations rendered in a style reminiscent of the *Saturday Evening Post*. The film is noted for its anachronistic use of ragtime, particularly the melody "The Entertainer" by Scott Joplin, which was adapted (along with others by Joplin) for the film by Marvin Hamlisch (and a top-ten chart single for Hamlisch when released as a single from the film's soundtrack). The film's success created a resurgence of interest in Joplin's work.

Released on Christmas Day of 1973, *The Sting* was a massive critical and commercial success and was hugely successful at the 46th Academy Awards, being nominated for ten Oscars and winning seven, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Film Editing and Best Writing (Original Screenplay); Redford was also nominated for Best Actor. The film also reignited Newman's career after a series of big-screen flops. Regarded as having one of the best screenplays ever written, in 2005, *The Sting* was selected for preservation in the US National Film Registry of the Library of Congress as being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant."

The Plot

In 1936, during the Great Depression, Johnny Hooker, a grifter in Joliet, Illinois, cons \$11,000 in cash in a pigeon drop from an unsuspecting victim helped by his partners Luther Coleman and Joe Erie. Buoyed by the windfall, Luther announces his retirement and advises Hooker to seek out an old friend, Henry Gondorff, in Chicago to learn "the big con". Unfortunately, the reason their victim had so much cash was that he was a numbers racket courier for vicious crime boss Doyle Lonnegan. Corrupt Joliet police Lieutenant William Snyder confronts Hooker, revealing Lonnegan's involvement and demanding part of Hooker's cut. Having already blown his share on a single roulette spin, Hooker pays Snyder in counterfeit bills. Lonnegan's men murder both the courier and Luther, and Hooker flees for his life to Chicago.

Hooker finds Henry Gondorff, a once-great con-man now hiding from the FBI, and asks for his help in taking on the dangerous Lonnegan. Gondorff is initially reluctant, but he relents and recruits a core team of experienced con men to dupe Lonnegan. They decide to resurrect an elaborate obsolete scam known as "the wire", using a larger crew of con artists to create a phoney off-track betting parlour. Aboard the opulent 20th Century Limited, Gondorff, posing as boorish Chicago bookie Shaw, buys into Lonnegan's private, high-stakes poker game. He infuriates Lonnegan with obnoxious behaviour, then outcheats him to win \$15,000. Hooker, posing as Shaw's disgruntled employee Kelly, is sent to collect the winnings and instead convinces Lonnegan that he wants to take over Shaw's operation. Kelly reveals that he has a partner named Les Harmon (actually con man Kid Twist) in the Chicago Western Union office, who will allow them to win bets on horse races by past-posting.

Meanwhile, Snyder has tracked Hooker to Chicago, but his pursuit is thwarted when he is summoned by undercover FBI agents led by Agent Polk, who orders him to assist in their plan to arrest Gondorff using Hooker. At the same time, Lonnegan has grown frustrated with the inability of his men to find and kill Hooker for the Joliet con. Unaware that Kelly is Hooker, he demands that Salino, his best assassin, be given the job. A mysterious figure with black leather gloves is then seen following and observing Hooker.

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Kelly's connection appears effective, as Harmon provides Lonnegan with the winner of the one-horse race and the **trifecta** of another. Lonnegan agrees to finance a \$500,000 bet at Shaw's parlour to break Shaw and gain revenge. Shortly afterwards, Snyder captures Hooker and brings him before FBI Agent Polk. Polk forces Hooker to betray Gondorff by threatening to incarcerate Luther Coleman's widow.

The night before the sting, Hooker sleeps with a waitress named Loretta. The next morning, he sees Loretta walking toward him. The black-gloved man appears behind Hooker and shoots her dead. The man reveals that he was hired by Gondorff to protect Hooker; Loretta was Lonnegan's hired killer, Loretta Salino, and had not yet killed Hooker because they were seen together.

Armed with Harmon's tip to "place it on Lucky Dan", Lonnegan makes the \$500,000 bet at Shaw's parlour on Lucky Dan to win. As the race begins, Harmon arrives and expresses shock at Lonnegan's bet: when he said "place it", he meant, literally, that Lucky Dan would "place" (i.e., to **finish second**). In a panic, Lonnegan rushes to the teller window and demands his money back. Polk, Lt. Snyder, and a half dozen FBI agents storm the parlour a moment later. Polk confronts Gondorff, then tells Hooker he is free to go. Gondorff, reacting to the betrayal, shoots Hooker in the back. Polk then hits Gondorff and orders Snyder to get the ostensibly respectable Lonnegan away from the crime scene. With Lonnegan and Snyder safely away, Hooker and Gondorff rise amid cheers and laughter. The gunshots were faked; Agent Polk is actually Hickey, a con man, running a con on top of Gondorff's con to divert Snyder and ensure Lonnegan abandons the money. As the con men strip the room of its contents, Hooker refuses his share of the money, saying "I'd only blow it", and walks away with Gondorff.⁷

Watch a trailer/Excerpt: The Sting Official Trailer #1 - Paul Newman, Robert Redford Movie (1973) HD, [HERE](#).

⁷ Source: Wikipedia - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Sting

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The Game

The last of the six films is *The Game* - a 1997 American thriller film directed by David Fincher, starring Michael Douglas and Sean Penn, and produced by Propaganda Films and PolyGram Filmed Entertainment. It tells the story of a wealthy investment banker given a mysterious gift by his brother—participation in a game that integrates in strange ways with his everyday life. As the lines between the banker's real life and the game become more uncertain, hints of a large conspiracy become apparent.

The Game was well received by critics like Roger Ebert and major periodicals like *The New York Times* but had middling box-office returns compared to the success of Fincher's previous film *Se7en* (1995).

The Plot

Wealthy investment banker Nicholas Van Orton, estranged from his ex-wife and his younger brother Conrad, is haunted by seeing his father commit suicide on his father's 48th birthday. For Nicholas's own 48th birthday, Conrad presents him with an unusual gift—a voucher for a game offered by a company called Consumer Recreation Services (CRS), promising that it will change his life.



Clip from video, [HERE](#), showing Nicholas Van Orton (Michael Douglas) entering the CRS facility to undergo an examination to test his suitability to participate in the Game.

Though doubtful about CRS, Nicholas meets fellow bankers who enjoyed the Game. He goes to the CRS offices to apply, but the lengthy and time-consuming series of psychological and physical examinations required irritates him, and he is later informed that his application has been rejected. Soon Nicholas starts believing that his business, reputation, finances, and safety are endangered. He encounters a waitress, Christine, who appears to have been endangered by the Game. Nicholas contacts the police, but they find the CRS offices abandoned.

Eventually, Conrad appears at Nicholas's house and apologises, claiming CRS has attacked him. With no one else to turn to, Nicholas finds Christine's home, discovering she is a CRS employee, and her apartment is fake. When Christine says they are being watched, Nicholas attacks a nearby camera, and armed CRS personnel swarm the house and fire upon the pair, who flee. Christine tells him CRS has drained his bank accounts using the psychological tests to guess his passwords. Panicking, Nicholas calls his bank, gives a verification code and is told his balance is zero. He begins to feel dizzy and realises that she has drugged him.

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As he loses consciousness, she admits she is part of the scam and that he made a fatal mistake in giving his verification code over the phone.

Nicholas wakes entombed alive in a cemetery in Mexico. He sells his gold watch to return to the US, where he finds his mansion foreclosed and most of his possessions removed. He has told Conrad that he has been committed to a mental institution due to a nervous breakdown. He retrieves a hidden gun and seeks his ex-wife for help. While apologising to her for his neglect, he discovers Jim Feingold, the CRS employee who conducted his tests, is an actor working in television advertisements. He locates Feingold and forces him to find the real CRS office. He takes Christine hostage and demands to be taken to the head of CRS. Attacked by CRS guards, Nicholas takes Christine to the roof and bars the door. As the guards begin cutting through the door, Christine, realising Nicholas's gun is not a prop, frantically tells him it is a part of the Game, his finances are intact, and his family and friends are waiting on the other side of the door. He refuses to believe her.

The door bursts open, and Nicholas shoots the first person to emerge—Conrad, bearing an open bottle of champagne. Devastated over accidentally killing Conrad, Nicholas leaps off the roof but lands on a giant air cushion. He is greeted by Conrad, who is alive, and the rest of the people from the Game; everything had been staged. Conrad tells him this is his birthday present and that he arranged it to help Nicholas become a better person and embrace life. After a birthday party with friends, Christine declines Nicholas's offer for a date as she has another job in Australia. She offers instead to have coffee with him at the airport.⁸

Watch a trailer/Excerpt: The Game Official Trailer (1997) Michael Douglas, David Fincher Movie 1080p HD, [HERE](#).

⁸ Source: Wikipedia - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Game_\(1997_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Game_(1997_film))

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White Christmas

The bonus film is *White Christmas*, a 1954 American musical film directed by Michael Curtiz and starring Bing Crosby, Danny Kaye, Rosemary Clooney, and Vera-Ellen. Filmed in Technicolor, it features the songs of Irving Berlin, including a new version of the title song, "White Christmas", introduced by Crosby in the 1942 film *Holiday Inn*.

Produced and distributed by Paramount Pictures, the film is notable for being the first to be released in VistaVision, a widescreen process developed by Paramount that entailed using twice the surface area of standard 35mm film; this large-area negative was also used to yield finer-grained standard-sized 35mm prints.

The Plot

On Christmas Eve in Europe in 1944, at the height of World War II, former Broadway star Captain Bob Wallace and aspiring performer Private Phil Davis entertain the 151st division with a soldier's show. The men have just received word their beloved Major General Thomas G. Waverly has been relieved of his command. Waverly arrives and delivers an emotional farewell. The men send him off with a rousing chorus of "The Old Man." After Waverly departs, enemy bombers attack the area, and everyone takes cover. Davis shields Wallace from a collapsing wall and is wounded by debris. Wallace asks how he can pay back Davis for saving his life, and Davis suggests they become a duo act. Bob doesn't like this but feels obliged to agree.

After the war, the two make it big, first as performers, then as producers, launching a hit musical, *Playing Around*. They receive a letter supposedly from their old Mess Sergeant, Ben "Freckle Face" Haynes, asking them to view his sisters' act. They watch Betty and Judy sing at a nightclub. Phil, who likes to play matchmaker, notices Bob is interested in Betty. After the performance, the four meet, and Phil and Judy immediately hit it off. Betty and Bob, however, argue about Bob's cynicism, and the fact it was really Judy who wrote the letter instead of Ben.



Finding out from Judy that the girls' landlord is falsely suing them for a damaged rug and has even gone so far as to call the police to get his money, Phil gives them tickets he and Bob had purchased to spend Christmas in New York City. Bob and Phil improvise a performance to buy the girls time, then flee to the train, where they now have to sit up in the Club Car, much to Bob's chagrin.

Bing Crosby as Bob Wallace and Danny Kaye as Phil Davis. Trailer Screenshot, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons. This work is in the public domain in the United States because it was published in the United States between 1926 and 1977, inclusive, without a copyright notice. File URL: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/04/Bing_Crosby_and_Danny_Kaye_in_White_Christmas_trailer_3.jpg

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The girls convince Phil and Bob to forego New York and spend Christmas with them in Pine Tree, **Vermont**, where they are booked as performers. Upon arriving in Vermont, they find all the tourists have left due to no snow and unseasonably warm weather. They arrive at the empty Columbia Inn and are aghast to discover that General Waverly is the landlord of the hotel, has sunk his life savings into it, and is in danger of bankruptcy. Phil and Bob decide to invite some of the cast of *Playing Around* to Pine Tree to stage a show to draw in the guests and include Betty and Judy in the show. Betty and Bob's romance starts to bloom.

Bob later finds out that Waverly received a humiliating rejection letter to his request to rejoin the army and determines to prove to the General he is not forgotten. Bob decides to call up Ed Harrison, another old Army buddy who now has his own **variety show**, for help. Ed suggests they put the General on the show and make a big scene of his misfortune and Bob's kindness, which would be free advertising for Bob and Phil. Bob strongly rejects the idea. Unfortunately, the housekeeper Emma overheard only the first half of the conversation, which she relays to Betty, who becomes suddenly cold towards a baffled Bob.

Phil and Judy stage a phoney engagement, thinking Betty is trying to avoid romance because she doesn't want to leave Judy unprotected. However, this backfires when Betty accepts a gig in New York and leaves. Phil and Judy admit the truth to Bob, who becomes enraged and hurries to New York to tell Betty. They partially reconcile, but he meets up with Harrison before he has a chance to find out what really was bothering her. Betty sees Bob go on Harrison's show and invite the entire 151st division to secretly join him at Pine Tree to surprise General Waverly at Bob and Phil's expense. Realising she was mistaken, Betty returns to Vermont just in time to be in the show.

Once again, on Christmas Eve, the soldiers surprise General Waverly with another rousing chorus when he arrives at the show, bringing him to tears. During the performance, Betty and Bob become engaged, and Judy and Phil decide to go through with their own engagement. As everyone sings "White Christmas", a thick snowfall at last blankets Vermont.⁹

Watch a trailer/Excerpt: White Christmas - Trailer ©1954, **HERE**.

⁹ Source: Wikipedia - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Christmas_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Christmas_(film))