



A PRYOR ENGAGEMENT

Blazing Saddles

Richard Pryor co-wrote this Mel Brooks classic and was originally meant to star in it, but unfortunately he was uninsurable at the time of shooting. One of Brooks' bawdiest spoofs sees a corrupt Old West politician hire the urbane Black Bart to be the first Black sheriff of Rock Ridge in an attempt to sow chaos and make way for the town's destruction.

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One of the all-time great comedies and the signature work of serial lampooner Mel Brooks, *Blazing Saddles* gleefully takes a torch to the Hollywood traditions of the Wild West. Gene Wilder stars as the washed-up Waco Kid who befriends the besieged sheriff of Rock Ridge, a black convict (Cleavon Little) conspiratorially installed to enrage the local townfolk.

The unhindered anarchism of Brooks' assault on movie conventions and decorum (including the infamous campfire farting scene) is as fresh and pointed today as it was on first release. And amid the perpetual hilarity *Blazing Saddles* is also a fearless and outrageous denunciation of racism and a fourth-wall-breaking deconstruction of Hollywood mythmaking.

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This was Brooks's big breakout success and a film that became legendary among a whole generation of people who would never look at a plate of beans in the same way again. With immense affection, if not self-discipline, Brooks parodies the clichés of 70 years of westerns while throwing in as many sight gags and one-liners as he can possibly fit into 90 minutes. Eventually, the action spills over into the studio lot itself which allows him to include some Nazis and a self-referential happy ending. Some critics dislike this finale but I just couldn't do without the scenes with choreographer Buddy Bizarre rehearsing a dance number called 'The French Mistake'.

In the midst of such craziness, Cleavon Little and Gene Wilder deserve medals for playing it straight as the black sheriff and his gunfighter pal and they add a touch of sincerity which makes their friendship genuinely touching. Meanwhile, a genuine western star, Slim Pickens, joins in the fun by sending himself up something rotten.

Watch it for... the one-liners you missed when you watched it last time – 'They lose me after the bunker scene' and 'I'm parked by the commissary' will do for a start.

What the critics say

'God darned if the whole fool enterprise is not worth the attention of any moviegoer with a penchant for what one actor, commenting on another's Gabby Hayes imitation, calls "authentic western gibberish".' Richard Schickel, *Time Magazine*

Mike Sutton, bfi.org.uk, 22 October 2018

BLAZING SADDLES

Director: Mel Brooks
Production Companies: Crossbow Productions, Warner Bros.
Producer: Michael Hertzberg
Production Manager: William P. Owens
Assistant Director: John C. Chulay
Screenplay: Mel Brooks, Norman Steinberg, Andrew Bergman, Richard Pryor, Alan Uger
Original Story: Andrew Bergman
Director of Photography: Joseph Biroc
Special Effects: Douglas Pettibone
Editors: John C. Howard, Danford B. Greene
Production Designer: Peter Wooley
Set Decorator: Morris Hoffman
Costume Designer: Nino Novarese
Title Design: Anthony Goldschmidt
Music Composed and Conducted by: John Morris
Orchestrations: Jonathan Tunick, John Morris
Choreography: Alan Johnson
Sound Recording: Gene Cantamessa
Sound Re-recording: Arthur Piantadosi, Dick Tyler, Les Fresholtz

Cast

Cleavon Little (*Bart*)
Gene Wilder (*Jim, 'The Waco Kid'*)
Slim Pickens (*Taggart*)
Harvey Korman (*Hedley Lamarr*)
Madeline Kahn (*Lili von Shtupp*)

Mel Brooks (*Governor William J. Lepetomane/Indian chief*)
Burton Gilliam (*Lyle*)
Alex Karras (*Mongo*)
David Huddleston (*Olson Johnson*)
Liam Dunn (*Reverend Johnson*)
John Hillerman (*Howard Johnson*)
George Furth (*Van Johnson*)
Claude Ennis Starrett Jr (*Gabby Johnson*)
Carol Arthur (*Harriett Johnson*)
Richard Collier (*Dr Sam Johnson*)
Charles McGregor (*Charlie*)
Robyn Hilton (*Miss Stein*)
Don Megowan (*gum chewer*)
Dom DeLuise (*Buddy Bizarre*)
Count Basie (*himself*)
Karl Lucas (*cutthroat 1*)
Anne Bancroft (*woman in church congregation*)*
Robert Ridgely (*Boris, executioner*)*
Peter Dunn *
John Collins *

USA 1974

93 mins

* Uncredited

Please note: racist language and attitudes pervade the film.

A PRYOR ENGAGEMENT

Richard Pryor: Live in Concert

Wed 1 Sep 20:50; Fri 1 Oct 18:00

Some Call It Loving

Thu 2 Sep 20:40; Mon 20 Sep 18:00

(+ pre-recorded intro)

Lady Sings the Blues

Sat 4 Sep 11:30; Wed 15 Sep 13:50; Mon 27 Sep 20:20

The Bingo Long Traveling All-Stars & Motor Kings

Sat 4 Sep 20:30; Sat 25 Sep 14:45

Blue Collar

Mon 6 Sep 14:30; Fri 17 Sep 20:40 (+ pre-recorded intro);

Tue 5 Oct 17:35

Jo Jo Dancer, Your Life Is Calling

Tue 7 Sep 18:10 (+ pre-recorded intro); Mon 4 Oct 20:45

African Odysseys Presents: The Black History of Comedy

Fri 10 Sep 18:15

Wattstax

Fri 10 Sep 21:00; Tue 14 Sep 18:00; Sat 18 Sep 20:10

Car Wash

Sat 11 Sep 17:50; Tue 28 Sep 20:50

Blazing Saddles

Sat 11 Sep 20:45; Wed 22 Sep 18:15

Silver Streak

Sun 12 Sep 15:15; Wed 29 Sep 20:45

Which Way Is Up?

Wed 15 Sep 21:00; Sun 26 Sep 18:10

Richard Pryor: A Comedy Genius

Thu 16 Sep 18:15

Stir Crazy

Sun 19 Sep 18:10; Fri 1 Oct 20:30

Bustin' Loose

Mon 20 Sep 21:00; Sun 3 Oct 18:10

Richard Pryor: Live on the Sunset Strip

Tue 21 Sep 18:00 (+ discussion); Mon 4 Oct 18:20

Richard Pryor... Here and Now

Wed 22 Sep 20:45; Sat 2 Oct 18:00

Brewster's Millions

Thu 23 Sep 20:45; Sun 3 Oct 15:15

A Pryor Engagement was originally programmed by Nellie Killian for BAMcinématek in 2013

This season is presented in partnership with We Are Parable

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Programme notes and credits compiled by the BFI Documentation Unit

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