



BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Out of Sight

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Directed by: Steven Soderbergh
Production Companies: Universal Pictures, Jersey Films
Executive Producers: Barry Sonnenfeld, John Hardy
Produced by: Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg, Stacey Sher
Unit Production Manager: Fred Brost
Production Supervisor (Florida Crew): Mary Morgan
Production Supervisor (Michigan Crew): Pat Chapman
Production Office Co-ordinator: Lisa Becker
Production Accountant: Karen Eisenstadt
Location Managers: Gregory H. Alpert, Kenneth D. Lavet
Post-production Supervisor: Caitlin Maloney
1st Assistant Director: Gregory Jacobs
2nd Assistant Director: Trey Batchelor
Script Supervisor: Wilma Garscadden-Gahret
Casting by: Francine Maisler, Kathleen Driscoll-Mohler
Screenplay by: Scott Frank
Based on the novel by: Elmore Leonard
Camera: Elliot Davis
Camera Operators: Gary Jay, Stephen Collins
Additional Camera Operators (Louisiana Crew): Francis James, Troy Dick
Steadicam Operator: Stephen Collins
Gaffer: Dwight D. Campbell
Rigging Gaffers: Charlie McIntyre, Dennis Lootens
Key Grip: Richard Mall
Still Photographer: Merrick Morton
Digital Visual Effects by: Cinesite Inc
Visual Effects Supervisor: Brad Kuehn
Special Effects by: Lynn-Wenger Productions Inc
Key Special Effects: Eric Roberts
Motion Effects: Don Gray
Edited by: Anne V. Coates
1st Assistant Editor: Robb Sullivan
2nd Assistant Editor: John Axelrad
Production Designed by: Gary Frutkoff
Art Director: Phil Messina
Set Director: Maggie Martin
Art Department Co-ordinator: Blair Huizingh
Set Designers: Lauren Cory, Keith P. Cunningham, Mary Finn
Property Master: Emily Ferry
Construction Co-ordinator: Chris Snyder
Costumes Designed by: Betsy Heimann
Costume Supervisor: Nick Scarano
Key Costumer: Joyce Kogut
Key Make-up Artist: Kathrine James
Key Hair Stylist: Bonnie Clevering
Titles/Opticals: Howard Anderson Company
Colour Timer: Mike Milliken
Music by: David Holmes
Music: Cliff Martinez *
Programming: Tim Goldsworthy
Music Supervisor: Anita Camarata
Production Sound Mixer: Paul Ledford
Boom Operator: Keenan Wyatt
Re-recording Mixers: Larry Blake, Gerry Lentz
Supervising Sound Editor: Larry Blake
Special Thanks to: Jan Kiesser
Cast:
George Clooney (*Jack Foley*)
Jennifer Lopez (*Karen Sisco*)
Ving Rhames (*Buddy Bragg*)
Don Cheadle (*Maurice 'Snoopy' Miller*)
Dennis Farina (*Marshall Sisco*)
Albert Brooks (*Richard Ripley*)
Nancy Allen (*Midge*)

Like *Get Shorty*, *Out of Sight* is adapted from an Elmore Leonard novel by Scott Frank and produced by Danny DeVito's Jersey Films (and also features Dennis Farina in a bit part). But while *Get Shorty*'s director Barry Sonnenfeld played Leonard's material as farce, Steven Soderbergh, in this infinitely more sophisticated follow-up, plays it as romantic comedy.

From Jack and Karen's tantalising first encounter in a car boot, washed in the red of the brake lights, the film is fuelled by the sexual tension between the two leads, as opposed to any great suspense about who is going to end up with Ripley's diamonds. Seizing their chance after too many bad films (the nadirs being *Batman and Robin* for him, *Anaconda* for her), George Clooney and Jennifer Lopez are both much more interesting and real here than they have been allowed to be in the past. With his slicked-back greying hair and bullish walk, Clooney's Jack is all the cooler for being slightly seedy (in the book, Jack is in his late forties). But he's also quite a poignant figure, aware of his shortcomings ('Do you know anyone who's done one last score and gone on to lead the good life?' he wonders), while at the same time unable to resist overreaching himself. Meanwhile, despite her fabulous Bond-girl accoutrements (tight leather coat, shiny weapons), Lopez succeeds in humanising Karen. Her handgun, for instance, is a gift from her doting father (Farina), and her verve as a law-enforcement officer is offset by her dawning realisation that she'd rather have an affair with Jack than send him to prison. The supporting characters, a feature of any Leonard adaptation, are equally engaging, notably Ving Rhames as Jack's born-again Christian accomplice Buddy, who insists on confessing every job in advance to his sister; Steve Zahn as the feckless dopehead Glenn, in way over his head; and an uncredited Michael Keaton as Ray Nicolette, the same FBI agent he played in *Jackie Brown*.

The real star of *Out of Sight*, however, is director Steven Soderbergh. Previously feted for the intellectual rather than visual qualities of his films, he rises to the challenge of his most mainstream assignment to date with a dazzling display of hip cinematic style. His battery of freeze frames, jump cuts and zooms might seem irritating in less confident hands, but they flow perfectly in tandem with the wonderful, 70s-style score. The flashback-dependent plot structure might not seem radical in the wake of *Pulp Fiction* or *Jackie Brown*, but, as he did with *The Underneath*, Soderbergh experiments with more short-term flashes back and forwards, to events only minutes in the past or future. Aided by veteran British editor Anne V. Coates, Soderbergh uses this intriguing technique to best effect during the tantalising sequence in a hotel bar where Karen and Jack finally come face to face. Their flirtation is intercut with what would conventionally be the next scene – making love in the hotel room – in a sly and strangely poignant reversal of the famous sex scene in *Don't Look Now* (1973). Another 30 years from now, Soderbergh's sleight of hand may well seem as dated as *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968), but for the time being, it looks very good indeed.

John Wrathall, *Sight and Sound*, December 1998

Catherine Keener (*Adele*)
Isaiah Washington (*Kenneth*)
Steve Zahn (*Glenn Michaels*)
Paul Calderon (*Raymond Cruz*)
Luis Guzmán (*Chino*)
Viola Davis (*Moselle*)
Jim Robinson (*bank employee*)
Elgin Marlowe (*bank customer*)
Donna Frenzel (*Loretta Randall, bank teller*)
Manny Suarez, Keith Hudson (*bank cops*)
Paul Soileau (*Lulu*)
Scott Allen (*Pup*)
Susan Hatfield (*parking lot woman*)
Brad Martin (*white boxer*)
James Black (*Himey*)
Wendell B. Harris Jr (*Daniel Burdon*)
Chuck Castleberry (*library guard*)
Charles Daniel (*FBI man, shock lock*)
Connie Sawyer (*old elevator lady*)
Phil Perlman (*old elevator gent*)
Keith Loneker (*white boy Bob*)
Gregory H. Alpert (*Officer Grant*)
Mark Brown (*Ripley personnel*)
Sandra Ives (*Ripley receptionist*)
Joe Hess (*Ripley guard*)
Betsy Monroe (*Celeste, the waitress*)
Wayne Péré (*Philip*)
Joe Chrest (*Andy*)
Joe Coyle (*3rd ad guy*)
Stephen M. Horn (*federal marshal*)
Michael Keaton (*Ray Nicolette*) *
Samuel L. Jackson (*Jerry Hejira*) *
Mike Malone (*man in bank*) *
USA 1998
123 mins

* Uncredited

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Screenwriter Scott Frank on 'Out of Sight'

What does adapting [Elmore] Leonard involve?

What I like about his books is that there's a freedom to his writing, a real fluidity and sense of fun. I tend to overthink – I agonise over every word, and the punctuation. What I have to do is give structure to happenstance – he sits down and he doesn't know where it's headed, he just lets it unfold. He doesn't think in terms of theme, so I find a theme, then anything that doesn't play to that theme can fall away.

What theme were you trying to bring out in Out of Sight?

It's about the road not taken, which is the saddest thing. When I first wrote the screenplay the character was in his 50s – I thought of Robert De Niro or even Jack Nicholson. What's so great about George Clooney's performance is that he conveys that sadness: 'If I hadn't robbed all those banks, I could have been with this girl.'

Do you usually have a cast in mind when you're writing?

The truth is I write everything for Steve McQueen, male and female. He's the guy you wish you were.

What did the two directors bring to your Leonard adaptations?

I was on the set of *Wild, Wild West* looking at video playback – uncut, unedited, just one camera take – and everything about it screamed Barry Sonnenfeld. On *Get Shorty* I found Barry to be very funny and dark, he gets character nuance very well and he loves texture and detail. Steven Soderbergh has a dry sense of humour but he's a much more romantic filmmaker, much more adult. Barry sees things in the material other people can't – he has a unique way of visualising the world. Steven works from the inside out: he doesn't start with the visualisation, he starts with the characters.

Did he work closely with you when you were writing?

Yes, because he's a writer as well. He would come into the office, and if we had problems with a scene we'd discuss them, act it out, riff on dialogue. And we were always talking about *The Last Detail*, *The French Connection*. Those were our favourite sorts of films.

How does the screenplay differ from the novel?

The screenplay is more romantic, then when you realise the movie with George Clooney and Jennifer Lopez it gets more romantic still. There are bits that work better on screen than on the page, too, for instance in the dream – which is not in the novel – she walks into the bathroom, and when she grabs his hand she gives a little half-smile. All the emotion is contained in that tiny movement of her lips – it's wonderful. And George Clooney has a great moment where he does a long monologue after they sleep together, and she says, 'You're not dumb,' and he has this laugh when he says, 'I don't know about that.' It's a great moment of self-deprecation.

Interview by Leslie Felperin, *Sight and Sound*, October 1998