



## SCALA: SEX, DRUGS AND ROCK AND ROLL CINEMA

# Looking for Mr. Goodbar

### Dick

Director: Jo Menell  
Music: John Cale  
USA 1989  
13 mins  
Digital

### Looking for Mr. Goodbar

Director: Richard Brooks  
Production Company:  
Paramount Pictures Corporation  
Producer: Freddie Fields  
Unit Production Manager: David Silver  
Assistant Directors: David Silver, Alan Brimfield  
Screenplay: Richard Brooks  
Based on the novel by: Judith Rossner  
Director of Photography: William A. Fraker  
Title Montage Photography: Kathy Fields  
Editor: George Grenville  
Art Director: Edward C. Carfagno  
Set Decorator: Ruby Levitt  
Costumes: Jodie Lynn Tillen  
Make-up: Charles Schram  
Opticals: The Westheimer Company  
Music: Artie Kane  
Sound Recording: Al Overton  
Sound Re-recording: Richard Portman,  
Curly Thirwell, Robert Glass  
Sound Editors: Kay Rose, Vickie Sampson  
Cast:

Diane Keaton (*Theresa Dunn*)  
Tuesday Weld (*Katherine*)  
William Atherton (*James*)  
Richard Kiley (*Mr Dunn*)  
Richard Gere (*Tony Lapato*)  
Alan Feinstein (*Professor Martin Engle*)  
Tom Berenger (*Gary*)  
Priscilla Pointer (*Mrs Dunn*)  
Laurie Prange (*Brigid Dunn*)  
Joel Fabiani (*Barney, Katherine's husband*)  
Julius Harris (*Black Cat, dope dealer*)  
Richard Bright (*George*)  
LeVar Burton (*Captain Jackson*)  
Marilyn Coleman (*Mrs Jackson*)  
Carole Mallory (*Marvella*)  
Mary Ann Mallis (*principal*)  
Jolene Dellenbach, Louie Fant (*teachers*)  
Eddie Garrett (*bartender*)  
Alexander Courtney (*Arthur*)  
Brian Dennehy (*surgeon*)  
Richard Venture (*doctor*)  
Robert Burke (*Patrick*)  
Robert Fields (*Rafe*)  
Richard O'Brien (*Father Timothy*)  
Tony Hawkins (*Chuck*)  
Caren Kaye (*Rhoda*)  
Richard Spangler (*TV announcer*)  
Elizabeth Cheshire (*Theresa, as a child*)  
Marilyn Roberts (*woman in bar*)  
USA 1977  
136 mins  
35mm

35mm print courtesy The Cinema Museum London

The screening on Sat 13 Jan will be introduced by  
season curator Jane Giles

*Looking for Mr. Goodbar* is a film about women's lib that owes as much to Erica Jong as it does to received wisdom from the male establishment. It exists in a curious margin of late-1970s American cinema, a potent concoction of New Hollywood aesthetics and more dubiously old-fashioned attitudes. And while it maintains that women's sexual freedom may lead to dire consequences, it is also oddly open to female desire and subjectivity, suggesting a certain conflict at its centre.

*Goodbar* was adapted from the bestselling Judith Rossner novel of the same name, and both were based on real-life events – the death of Roseann Quinn, a New York teacher found brutally murdered by a casual lover in 1973. Stalwart studio director Richard Brooks (of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* fame) cast Diane Keaton in the leading role, as well as soon-to-be stars Richard Gere and Tom Berenger in smaller parts.

Theresa Dunn (Keaton), aka Terry, is a kindly schoolteacher of deaf children by day, hailing from a bourgeois Irish-Catholic family. But Terry is also a shiftless, nocturnal creature, and after dark she prowls disco clubs and dive bars to meet men. She becomes thrill-seeking and sexually assertive, with a propensity for 'dangerous' types and a taste for Class A drugs. It's enjoyably frank, but you can sense that Brooks is going to spoil the fun.

The film charts Terry's sexual conquests, from highly strung, knife-wielding stud Tony (Gere) to seemingly courteous social worker James (William Atherton). Terry has a prickly inability to go for an 'appropriate' man, driven by a stilted, antagonistic relationship with her rigid father. The patriarch is *Goodbar's* apparent 'voice of reason', with a strident view on the 'bra-burning brigade' he watches on television.

It's fair to say that Keaton made a dramatic transformation in 1977.

*Annie Hall's* April release solidified her star image as a wide-eyed, gawky Midwesterner, bookish and precocious. By the autumn of the same year, the low-key *Goodbar* saw a limited release. Here, she plays a born-and-bred New Yorker – a cynical man-eater, drug-taker and nightclubber. Annie Hall cries at a spider in the bathtub; Terry Dunn shrieks and laughs when she finds roaches crawling on her things.

Some felt Keaton was miscast, and it's true that there are few comparable roles in her career. But even as Brooks beats us over the head with slapdash psychoanalysis, trying to 'explain' Terry's promiscuity, she comes to life in Keaton's able hands. She's impulsive, quick-witted and bold – a fully fledged woman in spite of the director's one-note moralising. Terry's mattress-on-the-floor bohemian sensibility feels modern; her solo trips into busy Manhattan bars, armed with a book and a glass of wine, still make her seem more breezily confident than most. In fact, Terry is so swaggeringly likeable that the narrative seems to adopt her laissez-faire attitude towards life.

There are times when it feels as though *Goodbar* is offering a compelling revision of gender roles, only to later renege on its promises. Terry is completely autonomous, and has no desire to burden herself with serious romantic entanglements. She openly pursues men, then cuts them off when she's satisfied.

## SCALA: SEX, DRUGS AND ROCK AND ROLL CINEMA

### Looking for Mr Goodbar + Dick

Sat 13 Jan 17:45 (+ intro by season curator Jane Giles); Mon 22 Jan 20:10

### The Thing

Sat 13 Jan 20:40; Mon 29 Jan 20:45

### The Warriors

Sun 14 Jan 12:00; Wed 17 Jan 20:55 (+ intro by SCALA!!! co-director Ali Catterall)

### Thundercrack!

Sun 14 Jan 14:10

### The Beast La Bête

Tue 16 Jan 20:45; Tue 23 Jan 20:50

### Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!

Thu 18 Jan 21:00 (+ intro by film scholar and writer Virginie Selavy)

### Pink Flamingos

Fri 19 Jan 18:20; Fri 26 Jan 20:50 (+ intro by Mark Moore and Tasty Tim)

### Surprise Film + intro by season curator

Jane Giles

Sat 20 Jan 17:10

### Shivers

Sun 21 Jan 15:20

### A Clockwork Orange

Sun 21 Jan 18:00; Wed 31 Jan 20:25

### Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom

Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma

Tue 23 Jan 18:10

### Pink Narcissus + Un chant d'amour

Thu 25 Jan 18:20

### Basket Case

Thu 25 Jan 20:40

### Shock, Horror! The Scala All-nighter:

An American Werewolf in London; The Creature from the Black Lagoon – 3D; Videodrome; The Incredible Shrinking Man; A Nightmare on Elm Street

Sat 27 Jan 22:30 BFI IMAX

### The Evil Dead

Tue 30 Jan 18:10

### Pee-wee's Big Adventure

Wed 31 Jan 18:20

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Perhaps even more pressingly, the film expends an unusual amount of energy focusing on male attributes. In its many softly lit bedroom scenes, the visual emphasis is on its attractive male actors – fit torsos, bare backsides and supple lips. Three years later, Gere would have a similar pin-up role in *American Gigolo* – another film that foregrounds the female gaze.

Brooks employs a roaming, freewheeling camera, hallucinogenic strobe-light effects and, strikingly, a disco-heavy soundtrack, which instantly offers a louche, hedonistic feel – and *Goodbar* is sure to include the joyous, sex-positive femininity of Donna Summer and Thelma Houston. Perhaps all of these choices are carefully calculated to flatter a young audience circa '77, but the narrative really seems to take unbridled delight in Terry's own pleasure; it feels as if it's on her side. This unravels in the brutal finale, when Terry's fate finally mirrors Roseann Quinn's. The 'cautionary' aspects of the story suddenly seem harrowingly evident – and deeply regressive.

Subject matter notwithstanding, it's uncertain why *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* has become one of the rare birds of 1970s American cinema. The film's unavailability on DVD in both Britain and America has led to whispering. Rumours about its absence vary from the plausible (music rights) to the outlandish (Hershey didn't like the naming of its chocolate bar in the title). Poor-quality VHS seems to be the next-best option.

It'd be wrong to suggest that *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* is an easy watch, but it's nonetheless worthwhile. In spite of its excesses, there seems to be a pitched internal battle for the film's soul throughout. The no man's land between unruly female defiance and reactionary backlash is a peculiar place for *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* to land – but it's a revealing one.

Christina Newland, *Sight and Sound*, April 2016

## Dick

One of the Scala's favourite shorts, in which women comment on the male sexual organ.