



BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Gloria

Gloria

Directed by: John Cassavetes
©: Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc.
Presented by: Columbia Pictures
Produced by: Sam Shaw
Associate Producer: Steve Kesten
Auditor: Susan Hoffman
Production Manager: Steve Kesten
Location Managers: Tom Lisi, Jim Foote
Field Man: John (Red) Kullers
Production Assistants: Harvey Portee, Chip Cronkite, Liz Gazzara, Jed Weaver, Mark Sitley, John Thomas
Office Production Co-ordinator: Eileen Eichenstein
Assistants to the Producer: Larry Shaw, Robert Fieldsteel
Second Unit Director: Gaetano Lisi
1st Assistant Director: Mike Haley
2nd Assistant Director: Tom Fritz
DGA Trainee: Penny Finkleman
Assistant to John Cassavetes: Kate Barker
Script Supervisor: Nancy Hopton
Casting: Vic Ramos
Written by: John Cassavetes
Director of Photography: Fred Schuler
Aerial Photography: Peter Gabarini
Camera Operator: Lou Barlia
1st Assistant Camera: Sandy Brooke
2nd Assistant Camera: Ricki-Ellen Brooke
Key Grip: Dennis Gamiello
Best Boy [Grip]: Tom Volpe
Dolly Grip: John Mazzoni
Gaffer: Rusty Engels
Best Boy [Electrical]: Ken Connors
Stills Photographers: Jessica Burstein, Adger Cowan
Special Effects: Connie Brink, Al Griswold, Ron Ottesen
Editor: George C. Villaseñor
Assistant Editor: Lori Bloustein
Art Director: René D'Auriac
Set Decorator: John Godfrey
Paintings by: Romare Bearden
Chargeman Scenic: Bill Lucek
Property Master: Wally Stocklin
Costume Designer: Peggy Farrell
Miss Rowland's Clothes by: Emanuel Ungaro
Wardrobe: Marilyn Putnam
Make-up: Vince Callahan
Hair stylist: Verne Caruso
Title Design: Sam Shaw
Prints, Titles and Opticals by: MGM
Processing by: Technicolor
Lenses and Panaflex Camera by: Panavision
Music: Bill Conti
Saxophone: Tony Ortega
Guitar: Tommy Tedesco
Music Editor: Clifford C. Kohlweck
Music Scoring Mixer: Dan Wallin
Sound Mixers: Dennis Maitland Sr, Jack C. Jacobsen
Sound Recordists: Danny Rosenblum, James Perdue
Boom: Tod Maitland
Re-recording Mixers: Wayne Artman, Tom Beckert, Michael Jiron
Sound Effects: Pat Somerset, Jeff Bushelman, Burbank Editorial Service,
Transportation Captain: Jim Giblin
Dialogue Coach: Richard Kaye
Publicity: Ann Guerin

Tough-as-nails ex-mob moll Gloria lives alone with her cat, her gun and an endless supply of cigarettes, until she's forced to go on the lam with a child in tow. Gena Rowlands' energy and broad Bronx accent prove infectiously entertaining as she reluctantly drags her unlikely ward across New York in a blaze of gunfire. All of John Cassavetes' signature character work and emotion are present in this explosive slice of genre filmmaking.

Ruby McGuigan, bfi.org.uk

A contemporary review

There is a marvellous *coup de théâtre* quite early on in *Gloria* when Gena Rowlands dowdily ordinary and self-confessedly 'overweight, out-of-shape', is suddenly transformed into Humphrey Bogart in a placid little city square as she whips out her gun and coolly empties it into a carload of startled hoods. Utterly unprepared for in the characterisation, the moment is nevertheless implicit from the outset as the camera embarks on a stately helicopter journey across the nocturnal New York skyline to zero in on the Bronx in the daytime, just as a girl (the Puerto Rican wife) is sent flying by sudden braking as she prepares to descend from a bus, then mildly disturbed by the figure lurking in the hallway of her apartment block, terrified by the black youth playing sinister games with the lift doors, and in full hysterical flight by the time she bursts into her own home.

The ambience here is twofold, with the stunningly shot helicopter sequence suggesting either the placidly indifferent urban background against which a tale of domestic tribulations will unfold or the tortured setting for a gangster story of pain and sudden death. Where Cassavetes systematically demolished the conventions of the gangster genre in *The Killing of a Chinese Bookie*, in other words, here he keeps them going in tandem with more personal concerns.

So while the opening sequences of *Gloria* are exemplary in genre terms (the frayed, nerve-end tensions which build the Puerto Rican girl's nervous irritation into hysteria while the hoods coolly and systematically deploy their forces throughout the apartment block), they also incorporate thematic preoccupations which might seem more appropriate to films like *Faces* or *Husbands* (the astonishingly detailed history of family difficulties and differences glimpsed in the relationships between husband, wife, children and grandmother). Thereafter, Cassavetes replays genre scenes in his own terms: either paradoxically, as in the wonderfully funny scene in a sleazy hotel room where the six-year-old Phil, manfully playing up to the notion of himself as a guy faced with a doll, hopefully embarks on a seduction scene only to be kicked out of bed with the shaming recommendation to 'Forget it; I outweigh you by sixty pounds!'; or critically, as in *Gloria*'s confrontation with Tony Tanzini, a classic genre climax where the traditional formalities are undermined since, instead of encountering opponents deployed as rigidly as pieces on a chessboard, she finds herself in a gangster headquarters manned by a puzzling array of people manifesting more interest in their own inexplicable concerns than in the business on hand.

While this reference to gangster conventions sometimes threatens to become repetitive (with *Gloria* winning the argument at gunpoint on four not-too-different occasions), any danger of stagnation is averted by the subtlety with

Cast:

Gena Rowlands (*Gloria Swenson*)
Buck Henry (*Jack Dawn*)
Julie Carmen (*Jeri Dawn*)
John Adames (*Phil Dawn*)
Tony Knesich (*1st man/gangster*)
Gregory Cleghorne (*kid in elevator*)
Lupe Garnica (*Margarita Vargas*)
Jessica Castillo (*Joan Dawn*)
Tom Noonan (*2nd man/gangster*)
Ronald Maccone (*3rd man/gangster*)
George Yudzevich (*heavy set man*)
Gary Klar (*Irish cop*)
William E. Rice (*TV newscaster*)
Frank Belgiorno (*Riverside Drive man 5*)
J.C. Quinn (*Riverside Drive man 4*)
Alex Stevens (*Riverside Drive man 7*)
Sonny Landham (*Riverside Drive man 8*)
Harry Madsen (*Riverside Drive man 6*)
Shanton Granger (*car flip cabbie*)
John Pavelko (*bank teller*)
Raymond Baker (*assistant bank manager*)
Ross Charap (*Ron, man in the vault*)
Irvin Graham (*clerk at Adams Hotel*)
Michael Proscia (*Uncle Joe*)
T.S. Rosenbaum (*desk clerk at Star Hotel*)
Santos Morales (*New York cemetery cabbie*)
Meta Shaw (*hostess*)
Marilyn Putnam (*waitress*)
John Finnegan (*Frank*)
Gaetano Lisi (*Mister*)
Richard M. Kaye (*Penn Station hood 3*)
Steve Lefkowitz (*Penn Station hood 5*)
George Poidomani (*Penn Station hood 4*)
Lawrence Tierney (*Broadway bartender*)
Asa Adil Qawee (*East 104th Street cab driver*)
Vincent Pecorella (*boy in bitch mother's apartment*)
Iris Fernandez (*bitch mother 1*)
Jade Bari (*bitch mother 2*)
David Resnick (*subway person 2*)
Thomas J. Buckman, Joe Dabenigno (*men in Newark Station*)
Bill Wiley (*bellman*)
John M. Sefakis (*Greek cashier*)
Val Avery (*Sill*)
Walter Dukes (*Newark cabbie*)
Janet Ruben (*Lincoln Tunnel cabbie*)
Ferruccio Hrvatin (*Aldo*)
Edward Wilson (*Guillermo d'Antoni*)
Basilio Franchina (*Tony Tanzini*)
Carl Levy (*Milt Cohen*)
Warren Selvaggi (*Pat Donovan*)
Nathan Seril (*The Baron*)
Vladimir Drzenovic (*Tonti*)
Edward Jacobs (*desk clerk at Newark Hotel*)
Brad Johnston (*1st traveller*)
Jerry Jaffe (*Pittsburgh cabbie*)
USA 1980©
121 mins
Digital

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which Cassavetes explores his central theme. The 'song' accompanying the credit titles, themselves superimposed over children's paintings – a male voice cries the one word 'Mama!', wailingly echoed by a solo saxophone – suggests a concern for the motherless child expressed as simply and as sentimentally as in Cassavetes' third film, *A Child Is Waiting*. *Gloria*, however, is neither simple nor, except in so far as it is a given of the plot that Gloria and Phil will develop a mother-son relationship, sentimental. Cassavetes cleverly negotiates this plot reef by demonstrating from the outset that under the tough images they like to project of themselves, his characters are unaware of their subconscious drives. 'I am the man, not you!', Phil yells angrily every time they come to a crossroads, but the end result is invariably Phil's helpless 'What do we do now?'; and Gloria, disgustingly declaring 'I hate kids – especially yours!' when asked to help, nevertheless instinctively discovers the right maternal ploy when, failing to arouse Phil from his lethargy with suggestions that they play 'Twenty Questions' or watch TV, she abruptly shoves her amiable cat into his arms.

A mother unconsciously in need of a son and vice versa, they must inevitably discover each other sooner or later; and the real motif of the film is the complex learning process whereby Gloria gradually moulds herself to the boy's needs (her resentment, for instance, when he protests that she has killed the father of his 'friend', a boy he has only just casually met, gradually shading into her acceptance of the fact that she is indeed killing too much).

With superlative performances by Gena Rowlands and John Adames heading a fine cast, and equally superlative camerawork by Fred Schuler (a camera operator here making his debut as a director of photography), *Gloria* completes the movement begun by *Killing of a Chinese Bookie* and *Opening Night* towards a fascinating new stage in Cassavetes' career, with the laxities of his earlier improvisational-locational-Method approach tightened up by the screws of Hollywood disciplines.

Tom Milne, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, March 1981

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