



AFRICAN ODYSSEYS PRESENTS

# 'Round Midnight

## 'Round Midnight

*Director:* Bertrand Tavernier  
*Production Companies:* Warner Bros., P.E.C.F. (Paris), Little Bear  
*Producer:* Irwin Winkler  
*Unit Manager:* Albert Prévost  
*Production Manager:* Pierre Saint-Blancat  
*Production Manager (NY):* Monty Diamond  
*Production Office Co-ordinator (NY):* Jane Bartelme  
*Location Manager (NY):* Lydia Pilcher  
*Production Assistants:* Eddy Moine, Mathieu Howlett, Thierry Verrier, Catherine Guillot, Michel Kostromine  
*Assistant Directors:* Frédéric Bourboulon, Philippe Bérenger, Véronique Bourboulon  
*Assistant Directors (NY):* Mel Howard, Paula Brody  
*Screenplay:* David Rayfiel  
*Based on original incidents in the lives of:* Francis Paudras, Bud Powell  
*Director of Photography:* Bruno de Keyser  
*Camera Operator:* Philippe Brun  
*Editor:* Armand Psenny  
*Production Designer:* Alexandre Trauner  
*Art Directors:* Pierre Duquesne, Josh Harrison  
*Set Designer:* Philippe Turlure  
*Costume Designers:* Jacqueline Moreau, Alexander Julian  
*Wardrobe Assistants:* Monique Dury, Billy Lodger  
*Make-up:* Paul Lemarinel  
*Titles and Optical Effects:* Euro-Titres  
*Music Composed, Arranged and Conducted by:* Herbie Hancock  
*Music Co-ordinator:* Tony Meilandt  
*Music Consultant:* Henri Renaud  
*Associate Music Consultant:* Dexter Gordon  
*Sound Recording:* Michel Desrois, William Flageollet  
*Sound Re-recording:* Claude Villand, Bernard Leroux  
*Sound Editor:* Sophie Cornu  
*Dialogue Editor:* Sylvie Pontoizeau  
*Sound Effects:* Jean-Pierre Lelong, Mario Melchiori, Jean Duguet  
*French Translation:* Colo Tavernier  
*Cast:*  
Dexter Gordon (*Dale Turner*)  
François Cluzet (*Francis Borier*)  
Gabrielle Haker (*Bérangère*)  
Sandra Reaves-Phillips (*Buttercup*)  
Lonette McKee (*Darcey Leigh*)  
Christine Pascal (*Sylvie*)  
Herbie Hancock (*Eddie Wayne*)  
Bobby Hutcherson (*Ace*)  
Pierre Trabaud (*Francis' father*)  
Frédérique Meiningner (*Francis' mother*)  
Liliane Rovère (*Madame Queen*)  
Hart Leroy Bibbs (*Hershell*)  
Ged Marlon (*Beau*)  
Benoît Régent (*psychiatrist*)  
Victoria Gabrielle Platt (*Chan*)  
Arthur French (*Booker*)  
John Berry (*Ben*)  
Martin Scorsese (*Goodley*)  
Philippe Noiret (*Redon*)  
Alain Sarde (*Terzian*)  
Eddy Mitchell (*drunk*)  
Charles Belonzi  
Arnaud Chevrier  
Marpessa Djian  
Guy Louret  
Patrick Massieu  
Philippe Moreau  
Jacques Poitrenaud

+ discussion with writers Gary Younge and Caryl Phillips. The screening will be introduced by Caryl Phillips.

## Bertrand Tavernier on 'Round Midnight

'Round Midnight is a film about Black American jazz musicians who went to Paris in the late fifties. Can you tell us a little bit about the story?

First of all, it should be clear that it's not strictly a jazz film per se but also a film about two people who just happen to be musicians. They could be painters or anything else. Although the dialogue wouldn't be the same as with jazz musicians, the essential relationship, the emotional core between the two main characters, would be the same. David Rayfiel and I tried for a long time to find the right relationship between two musicians but it was impossible because musicians can be very enigmatic. Their interaction and communication happens when they're playing music. I watched them closely during the shooting, the way they were together, the way they talked. Believe me, they made Harold Pinter sound like the most verbose person in the world.

*What is their relationship like when they're playing?*

Herbie Hancock told me that when he was playing with Miles Davis, they had to be the best before each other, to find something different every night, to journey even farther than the night before. He said it was devastating because it was like putting a rope around your neck every night in expectation of being hanged. What pressure! It's not like classical music, where everything is written down. In jazz, you have to find new developments, to be constantly exploring. Bobby Hutcherson improvised some great lines in the film, explaining how jazz musicians live on the edge in order to be able to leap into the musical unknown every night.

*Why did you choose a French graphic artist and an American jazz musician for the two main characters?*

I found the key when Francis Paudras told me: 'You cannot have a story between two musicians, because their relationships are not dramatic enough. Music is the only thing that happens among them.' So we looked for a story that would be about a musician and a non-musician. Originally, we had thought of a story by James Jones about a blacklisted musician in the Paris scene who had cultivated many relationships with other jazz musicians, including Django Reinhardt. But when David and I began to write, we realised that the blacklist issue was too heavy. After I talked with Francis Paudras and he told me about the relationship he'd had with Bud Powell, how sometimes he had no money and stood in the rain to listen to Bud, it came to me: 'My God, this is the story!'

*As the project came together, how much research did you do with the musicians themselves?*

Originally, David was thinking of the musicians he had known, the musicians of the thirties, while I was thinking of the be-bop musicians of the fifties, which is a completely different type of people, with different attitudes. When we had divergent views, Dexter was very helpful in giving us insight and so were other musicians, such as sax soprano Wayne Shorter. I always discussed the meaning of their lines with them, checking to see if they rang true or not. The line, 'Do you like basketball?' is Dexter's. David had written a good line but Dexter felt that we needed something that wouldn't be about the main subject of the film. He said, 'Okay, what is the most foreign thing for a tiny French girl? Basketball!' It's one of the best lines in the movie and I decided to use it a few times. Sometimes when you hear a line somewhere and then you discover it again, it starts gathering a special meaning. I wanted the same freedom in the lines as there is in jazz. A line

Luc Sarot  
 Jimmy Slyde  
 Pascal Tedes  
 Pascale Vignal  
 Noël Simsolo  
 Billy Higgins (drums, *Blue Note*)  
 Bobby Hutcherson (vibes, *Blue Note*)  
 Eric Le Lann (trumpet, *Blue Note*)  
 John McLaughlin (guitar, *Blue Note*)  
 Pierre Michelot (bass, *Blue Note*)  
 Wayne Shorter (tenor saxophone, *Blue Note*)  
 Ron Carter (bass, *Davout Studio*)  
 Billy Higgins (drums, *Davout Studio*)  
 Palle Mikkelborg (trumpet, *Davout Studio*)  
 Wayne Shorter (soprano saxophone, *Davout Studio*)  
 Mads Vinding (bass, *Davout Studio*)  
 Cheikh Fall (percussion, *Lyon*)  
 Michel Perez (guitar, *Lyon*)  
 Wayne Shorter (soprano saxophone, *Lyon*)  
 Mads Vinding (bass, *Lyon*)  
 Tony Williams (drums, *Lyon*)  
 Ron Carter (bass, *New York*)  
 Freddie Hubbard (trumpet, *New York*)  
 Cedar Walton (piano, *New York*)  
 Tony Williams (drums, *New York*)  
 USA-France 1986  
 133 mins  
 Digital

Total running time 210 mins, including a short break before the discussion

## TEAR THIS BUILDING DOWN: JAMES BALDWIN ON FILM

### I Heard It through the Grapevine

Thu 24 Oct 20:40; Sun 3 Nov 13:30

### A Raisin in the Sun

Sat 26 Oct 15:30; Sat 9 Nov 18:10;

Thu 28 Nov 20:30

### I Am Not Your Negro

Sat 26 Oct 20:35; Sat 9 Nov 15:30;

Thu 21 Nov 18:30

### Color Adjustment

Fri 1 Nov 20:55; Mon 4 Nov 18:10

### James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket

Fri 8 Nov 18:15; Mon 18 Nov 20:35

### Go Tell It on the Mountain

Fri 22 Nov 18:10 (+ intro)

### If Beale Street Could Talk

Fri 22 Nov 20:40; Sat 30 Nov 17:50

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**SIGHT AND SOUND**

like, 'Happiness is a nice, wet reed...' is Dexter's, too. Wayne Shorter contributed a lot and then I discovered that he is a film fan and knew a lot of film dialogue by heart. I had him imitate Walter Brennan in *Swamp Water* and tell the story about *The Red Shoes*.

*How much inspiration did you draw from the lives of Bud Powell and Lester Young?*

We borrowed a few scenes from Lester's life, though not any of his language per se. The references to the army were a combination of Dexter Gordon and Lester Young, but their experiences were similar to most jazz musicians of that time. The army was a traumatic experience, the worst in their lives, especially for the ones who used to play in the cities. In the service, they were suddenly in a segregated world. Dexter told me of the shock he had when he went into the army. He was saved by a Jewish doctor and if it wasn't for this man he would have died.

*How much of the relationship between Francis (François Cluzet) and Dale Turner (Dexter Gordon) was based on the Bud Powell-Francis Paudras story?*

The idea behind the relationship of Dale and Francis originated with Bud Powell and Francis Paudras but there is also a lot of embellishment and deviation in the movie. We invented the story of Francis' wife, for instance. We had to add a lot of fiction because we were not telling the story of a pianist. It was hard at times to make Francis Paudras understand the changes we made. But people who play horn are completely different than pianists, both physically and in their attitudes. Bud was much further gone than the character Dexter plays. Bud could go for a whole week and speak only five or six words; usually he wouldn't speak at all during the day. Dexter's way of expressing himself was much closer to people like Lester Young, even down to the funny language he made up.

*Like calling his friends 'lady'?*

Lester Young did things like that, too. He was a great inventor, coining famous phrases like 'The Big Apple', for New York. Dexter Gordon is the link between Lester Young and John Coltrane; he has a sense of humour, he can have relationships with people whereas Bud could not.

Production notes

**Gary Younge** is an award-winning author, broadcaster and a professor of sociology at the University of Manchester in England. Formerly a columnist at *The Guardian*, he is an editorial board member of *The Nation* magazine, the Alfred Knobel Fellow for Type Media and winner of the 2023 Orwell Prize for Journalism. He has written six books: *Dispatches from the Diaspora*, *From Nelson Mandela to Black Lives Matter*, *Another Day in the Death of America*, *A Chronicle of Ten Short Lives*; *The Speech*, *The Story Behind Martin Luther King's Dream*; *Who Are We?*, *And Should It Matter in the 21st Century*; *Stranger in a Strange Land*, *Travels in the Disunited States* and *No Place like Home*, *A Black Briton's Journey through the Deep South*. He has also written for *The New York Review of Books*, *Granta*, *GQ*, *The Financial Times* and *The New Statesman* and made several radio and television documentaries on subjects ranging from gay marriage to Brexit.

**Caryl Phillips** is the author of numerous plays for the theatre, television, and radio. He is best known as a novelist and essayist; his many books include the novels *Crossing the River*, *A Distant Shore* and *The Lost Child*, and the non-fiction titles *The European Tribe* and *Colour Me English*. He wrote the screenplay for *Playing Away* (directed by Horace Ové) and the Merchant Ivory production of V.S. Naipaul's *The Mystic Masseur*. A member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and a Fellow of the Royal Literary Society, he is Professor of English at Yale University.