



Close to the Edge: The Films of Kathryn Bigelow

The Loveless

The Loveless

Directors: Kathryn Bigelow, Monty Montgomery
Production Company: Pioneer Films Corporation
Producers: Grafton Nunes, A. Kitman Ho
Unit Manager: Susan Danzig
Location Manager: Clayton Townsend
Production Assistants: Kimberly Evans, Mac Gordon, Kevin Harrison, Jane Hoover, Ron Merrick, Sherri Scott, Shi Sun
Assistant Directors: David Anderson, Chloe Amateau
Screenplay: Kathryn Bigelow, Monty Montgomery
Director of Photography: Doyle Smith
Special Effects: Eddie Drohan
Editor: Nancy Kanter
Production Designer: Lilly Kilvert
Costumes: Karin Luner
Wardrobe Co-ordinator: Mary Ann Monforton
Make-up: Michael Tyler
Titles and Opticals: Computer Opticals
Music: Robert Gordon
Additional Music: John Lurie
Sound Recording: Chat Gunter
Sound Re-recording: Jack Higgins
Sound Editors: Sandy Tung, Ron Kalish
Stunt Co-ordinator: Vern Hyde
Stunt Consultants: Jerry Sommer, Jack Gill
Stock footage supplied by: Nat Zucker
Cast:
Willem Dafoe (*Vance*)
Robert Gordon (*Davis*)
Marin Kanter (*Telena*)
J. Don Ferguson (*Tarver*)
Tina L'Hotsky (*Sportster Debbie*)
Lawrence Matarrese (*La Ville*)
Danny Rosen (*Ricky*)
Phillip Kimbrough (*Hurley*)
Ken Call (*Buck*)
Elizabeth Gans (*Augusta*)
Margaret Jo Lee (*Evie*)
John King (*John*)
Bob Hannah (*Sid*)
Jane Berman (*lady in T-Bird*)
A.B. Callaway, Michael Gorgick (*truck drivers in diner*)
Leslie Kribbs (*wino*)
Don Tilly (*cook*)
Herbie Benton (*customer at diner*)
Isaiah Houston (*old man at pipeline*)
Charles Robertson, Cliff Hall, Chris Johnson (*children at pipeline*)
Ned Lambert (*man outside package store*)
Freddie West (*package store owner*)
Earl Jackson (*card player at package store*)
Oscar Waycaster (*GI in lounge*)
Michael Birnes, Robin Davis, Allan Hunt, George Logan, Virginia Logan, Nicholas Warf, Paul Williams, Mary Ann Monforton, Wallace Melton, Huey Dixon (*customers in lounge*)
John Cottes (*bartender*)
Edward McDuffie (*redneck*)
Alan Rawlins (*local youth*)
USA 1981
82 mins
Digital

A graduate in fine art and film studies, Kathryn Bigelow wrote and directed her stylised, colour-saturated first feature with Monty Montgomery. *The Loveless* was both the last of the juvenile delinquent/rebel biker movies of the 1950s-70s and among the first of the 1980s-90s arthouse cool school that would include *Rumblefish*, and the break-out films of John Waters, David Lynch, Gus van Sant and *le cinéma du look*.

All black leather and chrome, Dixie and Thunderbird, snarling dialogue and themes of Nowheresville violence, ennui and sexual corruption, *The Loveless* is fully appreciative of the male form with its *Scorpio Rising*-style crotch shots and casting of Willem Dafoe (channeling Brando and James Dean; butt-naked in a memorable scene) and rockabilly musician Robert Gordon, who also provided the film's fabulous soundtrack.

There is no other female director like Bigelow, whose films over the following decade were *Near Dark* (1987), *Blue Steel* (1989) and *Point Break* (1991).

Jane Giles, *Sight and Sound*, October 2015

Kathryn Bigelow: *The Loveless* was a psychological bikers' film. We wanted to suspend the conventional kind of plotting where everything spirals into problem solving after problem solving, and create a meditation on an arena, on an iconography, using the bikers as the iconography of power and trying to make a more cerebral biker film. It was very tongue-in-cheek, certainly inspired by film noir, and by Douglas Sirk, *Written on the Wind*, Kenneth Anger, *The Wild One*. It's a homage to the material that we adore.

The Loveless was released in England first and took about a year-and-a-half to reach the States. It came out there in 1982 and it was fairly well received but it was still quite obscure. So then I wrote scripts so that I could make another movie, and I was presented with some scripts to make. But the only material I was really interested in was material I generated myself, so I realised I just had to write. I wrote *Near Dark*, together with Eric Red. I attached myself as a director so I owned the property and sent the script to producer Ed Feldman thinking that he might like this strange, dark, vampire Western and he did. He was hesitant about my directing it, only because it was a fairly big film and *The Loveless* was very small in comparison. But my response was that if he wanted to make the script he had to take me with it. He thought about it for around 24 hours. Once he made the decision to go with it, he unequivocally supported me throughout the entire production.

I met Oliver Stone, who co-produced *Blue Steel*, when I made *The Loveless*. Alex Ho [A. Kitman Ho] was the producer of *The Loveless* and has produced all Oliver's films from *Platoon* on. At one point, Oliver and I were going to write a script together. That was abandoned at the point when *Salvador* got a green light. He loved *Near Dark* and wanted to help on my next project. He shepherded *Blue Steel* through the early stages when financing was very critical and without his support it might not have happened.

I'm interested in playing with genre, mixing it up a bit to create a hybrid. *Near Dark* is a vampire Western, and *The Loveless* is sort of biker-noir. It enables you to invest the genres with new material, seeing where the edges of the envelope are, so to speak.

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Close to the Edge: The Films of Kathryn Bigelow

The Loveless

Sun 1 Feb 18:30; Fri 20 Feb 21:10;
Mon 2 Feb 18:20

Near Dark

Tue 3 Feb 21:00; Sun 22 Feb 18:30

Blue Steel

Sat 7 Feb 18:30; Mon 23 Feb 20:55

Strange Days

Sun 8 Feb 18:00; Sun 15 Feb 18:00;
Tue 24 Feb 20:10

The Hurt Locker

Tue 10 Feb 20:25; Sat 21 Feb 17:20;
Fri 6 Mar 20:20

Point Break

Fri 13 Feb 17:50; Fri 27 Feb 20:30;
Sat 14 Mar 20:30

K-19: The Widowmaker

Fri 13 Feb 20:20; Sat 7 Mar 17:30

The Weight of Water

Mon 16 Feb 20:30; Sat 28 Feb 18:00

Zero Dark Thirty

Tue 3 Mar 20:00; Sun 8 Mar 14:30

A House of Dynamite

Thu 5 Mar 17:50; Sat 14 Mar 18:15;
Tue 17 Mar 20:40

Detroit

Fri 13 Mar 20:15; Mon 16 Mar 17:45

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My background as an artist means that the visuals come fairly easily. They are very important to me, but finally, I think, the essence of a movie is the story and characters, because that is where the audience's emotional investment lies. Art requires the audience to have some information to enable it to appreciate fairly arcane material, whereas for film there are no such requirements, except simply that it work on more than just the level of entertainment, yet it must succeed in that respect as well. Art also works on many different levels, so I think the transition for me is fairly direct. On the other hand, with film, you are constantly faced with an art vs. commerce equation. There is a responsibility to the investment, but at the same time the piece is more satisfactory if it has some artistic integrity.

I worked with the Art and Language group in the early to mid-70s in New York, and that was where I made a transition from painterly work to something more literary, which took into consideration the context of what I was doing and wasn't just an attempt to make a visually pleasing surface. I had not applied that kind of perspective before to what I was doing. It really gave me an ability to gain critical distance. Probably what drew me to film was its potential as a social tool. It can reach such a broad spectrum of people. Not that the filmmaker should take a superior attitude to the audience and pretend to be pedagogical. I think films are most successful when they're provocative, when they challenge your thinking.

Making experimental films you have complete freedom. My first short film, *Set-Up*, was an experimental art film. It was really valuable for me because I was able to explore violence in a cinematic context. The film is a dialogue between a couple of theorists who are talking about the material they see, and what you are watching is what they are watching while they're interpreting the data. They come to the conclusion that violence in a cinematic context is therapeutic. At the time, I was interested in material that had a lot of emotional energy. I wanted to get a response from the audience so I went for the jugular.

I find B-movies inspiring because they delve into a darkness and talk about the demons that exist in all of us. They take a lot of chances. When I was moving away from the art world and into the world of film, I stumbled on to noir films and couldn't get enough of them. I was fascinated by them, riveted to them. I found Joseph H. Lewis' *Gun Crazy* extraordinary, lurid, very brave, with characters who were willing to transgress, who were so far beyond the edge that they were almost in a sort of Z world of vicarious thrills. *Detour*'s another picture that I think is a flawless masterpiece. I'm a huge fan of film noir, but I'm less interested in updating it than in reinventing it, or perhaps just using it as a point of departure.

Monthly Film Bulletin, November 1990 (Adapted from a profile of Kathryn Bigelow in BBC2's *Moving Pictures*; thanks to Paul Kerr and Sally Rowland)