



Point Break

Director: Kathryn Bigelow

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Production Companies: Levy/Abrams/Guerin,
JVC Entertainment

Presented by: Columbia Pictures Corporation

Executive Producer: James Cameron

Producers: Peter Abrams, Robert L. Levy

Co-producers: Rick King, Michael Rauch

Screenplay: W. Peter Iliff, Rick King

Director of Photography: Don Peterman

2nd Unit Photographer: Steve Yaconelli

Underwater Photography: Yuri Farrant,

Ron Condon, Bob Condon, Lee Allison

Camera Operator: Keith Peterman

Additional Camera Operators:

Michael St. Hilaire, Jeff Laszlo

Helmet Camera: Tom Sanders, Ray Cottingham

Aerial Camera: Frank Holgate

Steadicam Operator: James Muro

Computer Animation/Displays: Video Image

Special Optical Effects: Fantasy II Film Effects

Special Effects Co-ordinator: Terry Frazee

Special Effects (Hawaii): Donovan Ahuna,

Archie Ahuna

Editor: Howard Smith

Additional Editors: Scott Conrad, Bert Lovitt

Production Designer: Peter Jamison

Art Director: Pamela Marcotte

Set Designer: Ann Harris

Set Decorator: Linda Spheeris

Costume Supervisors: Colby P. Bart, Louis Infante

Costumers: N. Edward Fincher, Leah Brown

Make-up Artists: Wes Dawn, Greg La Cava

Title Design: Robert Dawson

Titles: Cinema Research Corporation

Opticals: Pacific Title

Music: Mark Isham

Music Supervisors: Gary Goetzman, Sharon Boyle

Music Supervisor for MCA Records: Kathy Nelson

Music Producers: Mark Isham, Stephen Krause

Music Recording: Stephen Krause

Sound Recording: David MacMillan

Sound Re-recording: Donald O. Mitchell,

Robert Beemer, Greg P. Russell

Sound Editors: Donald Flick, David Whittaker,

David Bartlett, Joel Valentine

Sound Effects: Stephen Flick, John Dunn

ADR Group Co-ordinator: Leigh French

ADR Recordist: Tom O'Connell

Foley: Joan Rowe, Greg Barbanell

Stunt Co-ordinator: Glenn Wilder

Cast:

Patrick Swayze (*Bodhi*)

Keanu Reeves (*Johnny Utah*)

Gary Busey (*Angelo Pappas*)

Lori Petty (*Tyler*)

John McGinley (*Ben Harp*)

James LeGros (*Roach*)

John Philbin (*Nathaniel*)

Bojesse Christopher (*Grommet*)

Julian Reyes (*Alvarez*)

Daniel Beer (*Babbit*)

Chris Pederson (*Bunker Weiss*)

Vincent Klyn (*Warchild*)

Anthony Kiedis (*Tone*)

Dave Olson (*Archbold*)

Lee Tergesen (*Rosie*)

Sydney Walsh (*Miss Dear*)

Christopher Pettiet (*'15'*)

Dino Andino (*Psycho-stick*)

Michael Kopelow (*Passion for Slashin'*)

Matt Archbold (*Surf Rat*)

Close to the Edge: The Films of Kathryn Bigelow

Point Break

Production on *Point Break* began on 9 July 1990, some three years after the project was first developed. Of the long gestation period for the film, producers Robert L. Levy and Peter Abrams note, 'We've sort of been in pre-production the entire time. When Peter Iliff first wrote the script, we had four studios that wanted it. In the space of a month, we had a director, a star and a studio committed. Then a new regime took over at the studio, and everything fell apart. Kathryn Bigelow was the first director we wanted when we began to regroup. We'd go over directors, around and around, and we'd always come back to Kathryn.'

Bigelow, who is quickly earning a reputation as one of the most stylish directors working in film, describes her attraction to the project: 'It's a psychological tug of war between two young men who keep pushing each other to increasingly dangerous and ultimately life-threatening extremes. I love the psychological dimension of the piece, and it's a wonderful rollercoaster ride.'

Casting the right actors for the leading roles was obviously crucial. 'I've been an enormous fan of Keanu Reeves ever since *River's Edge*,' says Bigelow. 'When this film came up, I thought Keanu's innate physicality, intelligence and charm would make him perfect to play Johnny Utah. His choices, as an actor, are extraordinary. He holds the screen, and he's got a magical ability to put the audience in his back pocket. In addition, the role was a departure from the work he's done in the past – he's never played an "action hero". We all felt it would be a fresh approach for the picture.'

Casting Bodhi, Johnny's dark alter ego, was also a challenge. 'Bodhi is a complicated part,' explains Bigelow, 'and we needed an actor who is multi-dimensional. Patrick can be very sensitive, very moving, yet has tremendous edge at the same time. He is an actor with great depth, which imbues his character with a larger-than-life quality.'

The surfing sequences were filmed on Southern California beaches as far north as the Ventura County line and as far south as Manhattan Beach. The crew travelled to Hawaii to shoot key scenes at Oahu's north shore, site of the famed Bansai Pipeline.

For the electrifying bank robbery scenes, now-defunct bank branches in various parts of Los Angeles were used. So realistic were the bank scenes shot early in production that passing neighbors and pedestrians were convinced the banks had reopened and were dismayed when told by filmmakers that they'd best take their bank business to their regular branches.

Among the other locations used in the film were the Federal Building in Westwood, the Santa Monica Airport, residential homes in Santa Monica and Palos Verdes, the Manhattan Beach Pier and the LAPD Academy. The skydiving sequences were filmed at several airstrips near Edwards Air Force Base in Palmdale, California, and at Lake Powell in Arizona.

'What's interesting about this film is that it's set in a landscape you think you know, yet from frame one of the movie, it suddenly becomes very tribal, primal and foreign,' reflects director Bigelow. 'The beach community is explored in the film as an exotic, mysterious world full of these strange characters. You feel like you're entering some really bizarre culture that somehow exists simultaneously in the world as we know it. It's wonderful to be able to introduce audiences to a world that's so unique.'

Production notes

Julie Michaels (*Freight Train*)
 Kimberly Martin (*Fiberglass*)
 Mike Genovese (*Corey*)
 Jack Kehler (*Halsey*)
 Galyn Görg (*Margarita*)
 Paulo Tocha (*cab driver*)
 Elizabeth Berkley (*macrame girl*)
 Raymond Forchion (*neighbour*)
 Betsy Lynn George (*girl at party*)
 Shannon Brook (*fast food girl*)
 Gloria Mann (*fierce woman*)
 Ping Wu (*dispatcher*)
 Jared Chandler (*pilot*)
 John Apicella (*security guard*)
 Richard Grove (*Cullen*)
 Anthony Mangano (*off-duty cop*)
 Deborah Lemen (*Miss Jennings*)
 Mick Regan (*Mr Duggan*)
 Randy Walker (*Combat Alley supervisor*)
 Marcha L. Carter (*FBI receptionist*)
 Sedrick J. Azurdia (*fruit vendor*)
 USA 1991
 122 mins
 Digital 4K

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A contemporary review

Brought to Kathryn Bigelow as a ready-made project, the unhelpfully retitled *Point Break* (it was originally scripted, with aptly grandiloquent resonance, as *Riders on the Storm*) converts Bigelow's own previous night creatures into joyous elementals, unleashed at every sunrise for a renewed orgy of physical bravado. The film is constructed from a series of increasingly outrageous tests to which the director herself has responded with an unflagging zeal, in celebration not only of the spectacular pleasures of surfing and skydiving and chasing bank robbers, but also of the remarkably visceral extremes that violence itself can achieve when orchestrated for the cinema.

Recalling Bigelow's bikers and vampires, it's no surprise that her interest in the beach community of *Point Break* is as a 'really bizarre culture that somehow exists simultaneously in the world as we know it', nor that this same sense of self-contained eccentricity extends to cop partnerships, bank employees, and the offices of the FBI. What is a surprise about *Point Break* is that, on the positive side, Bigelow in broad daylight has unfurled a powerfully epic canvas far transcending the timid rustic glimpses of *The Loveless*, and that, more negatively, she has stepped aside from the fascinatingly ambiguous feminism of *Blue Steel* to deliver a dose of macho claptrap such as to leave John Milius and Walter Hill pale with envy.

Breathlessly hurling us, after its initial fusillade under the opening credits, into the heart of FBI headquarters with a single labyrinthine shot that threads through doors, desks, people and a monologue of disdain to leave the imperturbable Johnny Utah with a muttered punchline, *Point Break* sets an awesome pace from the start. The painterly Bigelow, whose contemplative lacunae for *The Loveless* evoked critical references to Edward Hopper, now seems fully wedded to the urgent hustle of her executive producer, James Cameron. One gasps one's way through *Point Break*, partly in admiration, partly in shock, often because time to breathe appears limited. The 90-second bank robbery, for example, which dumps us on the floor along with the bank's bewildered customers, is an enthralling blitz of genre expletives, with bizarre echoes of presidential calumny evoked by the sight of Nixon (whose clones performed a comparable feat in John Flynn's *Best Seller*), Reagan, Carter and LBJ on a mission of cheerful pillage.

A similar discouragement to rational response comes with the raid on the Razorhead house, a close-quarters fusillade of vicious confusion culminating in a struggle over the spinning blades of a lawnmower. Like the attenuated chase scene that later races through streets, houses, and assorted glass and canine obstacles, this is heatedly exploitative filmmaking, urged on by percussive bursts of sound. The chase, while unlikely as a sample of stamina, at least leaves our hero impotently on his back, emptying his gun into the air in recognition that the escaping target is one aspect of himself.

Oddly lightweight in cast, as though the theme (which, taking our hint from *Near Dark*, might be termed that of persistent immortality) belonged to some departed race of Hollywood giants, *Point Break* usefully resists the temptation to act as a vehicle for Patrick Swayze, who plays king beach rat with commendable reticence and not so much a swagger as a quickstep prance. Instead, limelight, laugh lines and love interest are devoted to Keanu Reeves who, understandably perplexed by the strange humours of his opening scenes, and outfaced by the intensity of Lori Petty's skill as his partner, settles for an oafish stare in which the joy of a burgeoning mysticism seems sadly missing. If there is some vestige of apotheosis remaining – apart, perhaps, from the astonishing sight of Johnny Utah diving out of the sky with nothing but a gun – it is the confirmation that Kathryn Bigelow, aside from her other qualities, is now one of the finest action directors in the business.

Phillip Strick, *Sight and Sound*, December 1991