



Big Screen Classics

To Catch a Thief

To Catch a Thief

Directed by: Alfred Hitchcock

©: Paramount Pictures Corporation

A Paramount Picture

Second Unit Director: Herbert Coleman

Assistant Director: Daniel McCauley

Screenplay by: John Michael Hayes

Based on the novel by: David Dodge

Director of Photography: Robert Burks

Second Unit Photography: Wallace Kelley

Technicolor Colour Consultant: Richard Mueller

Special Photographic Effects: John P. Fulton

Process Photography: Farciot Edouart

Edited by: George Tomasini

Art Direction: Hal Pereira,

Joseph MacMillan Johnson

Set Decoration: Sam Comer, Arthur Krams

Costumes: Edith Head

Makeup Supervision: Wally Westmore

Music Scored by: Lyn Murray

Sound Recording by: Harold Lewis, John Cope

Sound System: Western Electric

Dialogue Coach: Elsie Foulstone

uncredited

Producer: Alfred Hitchcock

Production Manager: C.O. Erickson

France Continuity: Sylvette Baudrot

Cast:

Cary Grant (*John Robie*)

Grace Kelly (*Frances Stevens*)

Jessie Royce Landis (*Mrs Jessie Stevens*)

John Williams (*H. H. Hughson*)

Charles Vanel (*Bertrani*)

Brigitte Auber (*Danielle Foussard*)

Jean Martinelli (*Foussard*)

Georgette Anys (*Germaine*)

uncredited

René Blancard (*Commissaire Lepic*)

Roland Lesaffre (*Claude*)

Jean Hébéty (*Mercier*)

Dominique Davray (*Antoinette*)

Russell Gaige (*Mr Sanford*)

Marie Stoddard (*Mrs Sanford*)

Frank Chellano, Otto F. Schulze (*chefs*)

Guy De Vestel, Bela Kovacs, John Alderson,

Don Megowan (*detectives*)

William 'Wee Willie' Davis (*big man in kitchen*)

Edward Manouk (*kitchen help*)

Aimée Torriani (*woman in kitchen*)

Paul Newlan (*vegetable man in kitchen*)

Lewis Charles (*man with milk in kitchen*)

Leonard Penn, Michael Hadlow

(*Monaco policemen*)

Philip Van Zandt (*jewellery clerk*)

Steven Geray (*desk clerk*)

Gladys Holland (*elegant French woman*)

Louis Mercier (*croupier*)

Alfred Hitchcock (*passenger at back of bus*)

USA 1954©

107 mins

Digital 4K

Hitchcock on 'To Catch a Thief'

Straightening out the zigzag course conversations are apt to take, especially when prompted by questions, I find that in the main my talk with Alfred Hitchcock after the London premiere of *To Catch a Thief* covered two subjects: the combination of realism and fantasy, and the difference of opinion between himself and certain critics about the existence of metaphysical elements in his work.

Melodrama, Hitchcock said, breaks the bounds of realism in much the same way, if not to the same extent, as ballet – the kind, that is, where the performers 'dance characters'. For him all melodramas are a form of fantasy. There is, in his own films, usually a documentary germ, taken perhaps from the shelves of the Surêté, Scotland Yard or the New York Police Department. 'You take something ordinary to start with, but you have to whip it up into colour. And you give it the colour of melodrama chiefly by choice of situation. It's all very fine to talk of the action being motivated by the characters, but because of the difficulties in constructing a screenplay, what in fact happens is that you make it appear so. In thrillers it's the situations that matter most, and their originality.'

'People often ask me how I get offbeat effects. Here's an example. The other day I thought: "Wouldn't it be fun to open a mystery in a big motor plant in Detroit – shiny new cars coming off the assembly line, and at the wheel of one of them... a dead body." Well... it's vivid, it's offbeat. And I haven't the vaguest idea whether it'll ever develop into a story, or fit into a picture I make. But I've just used an idea I had 17 years ago, turning it into a new opening for my remake of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* – my only remake, incidentally.' (Hitchcock's reason for remaking this picture is that the American public never saw it.)

The ending of *To Catch a Thief*, originally planned by Hitchcock himself, was one of the more curious instances of an idea developed by him from a 'documentary germ'. Talking one day with the head of the Homicide Department in New York, he overheard an officer in telephone conversation with a wanted man, who had just been located; the officer was agreeing quite amiably to allow this man to give himself up on the following Monday (this was a Saturday) so that he should not have to break his weekend date with a girl.

This struck Alfred Hitchcock as so delightfully bizarre that he modelled a scene on the incident. It was to follow the moment when the thief, hanging by her hands from the edge of the roof, is caught, and would have shown her and her accomplice casually agreeing to be arrested – when, in a couple of days' time, they were ready. 'It would have made an amusing payoff,' Hitchcock said, 'but it would also have deflected the story, and at this stage the spectator would want to know what happens to the principal characters. Besides, it might have seemed incredible. Very often the truest things appear too far-fetched. If you're an observer of life as a whole, of the oblique, the not-quite-on-the-nose, you come to accept the fact that it's no good showing certain things as they are – people just wouldn't believe them.'

Become a BFI Member

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at bfi.org.uk/join

Big Screen Classics

The Grand Budapest Hotel

Sat 1 Aug 12:10; Mon 24 Aug 18:10;
Sat 29 Aug 20:45

Grand Hotel

Sat 1 Aug 14:45; Tue 11 Aug 14:30;
Fri 14 Aug 20:30; Wed 19 Aug 14:30

Somewhere

Sat 1 Aug 20:40; Sun 16 Aug 18:10;
Thu 20 Aug 14:40; Mon 31 Aug 18:40

The Last Laugh Der letzte Mann

Sun 2 Aug 15:10; Mon 10 Aug 20:45 (+ intro by
programmer Margaret Deriaz)

Key Largo

Mon 3 Aug 20:45; Sun 23 Aug 11:55

Hôtel du Nord

Tue 4 Aug 18:20; Fri 21 Aug 20:35

In the Mood for Love

 Fa yeung ninwah

Tue 4 Aug 20:45; Sat 8 Aug 18:10;
Mon 17 Aug 20:50; Thu 27 Aug 17:50

Waiting to Exhale

Wed 5 Aug 18:00 (+ intro); Tue 11 Aug 20:30

To Catch a Thief

Thu 6 Aug 20:30; Fri 14 Aug 14:30;
Sat 15 Aug 20:50; Sun 30 Aug 18:10

The Shining (Extended Version)

Fri 7 Aug 18:00; Thu 27 Aug 20:15

The Silence Tystnaden

Fri 7 Aug 20:40; Thu 13 Aug 18:10;
Sat 22 Aug 12:15

I Am Cuba Soy Cuba

Sun 9 Aug 12:00; Wed 19 Aug 18:00 (+ intro by film
curator and writer Jonathan Ali); Fri 28 Aug 20:20

Hotel Monterey

Wed 12 Aug 18:20 (+ intro by scholar and critic
Erika Balsom); Tue 25 Aug 20:35; Sat 29 Aug 15:20

Nightshift

Tue 18 Aug 20:50; Wed 28 Aug 18:30 (+ intro by
writer and film programmer Sophia Satchell-Baeza)

Sight and Sound

Never miss an issue with **Sight and Sound**,
the BFI's internationally renowned film magazine.
Subscribe from just £25*

* Price based on a 6-month print subscription
(UK only). More info:

sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk/subscribe

**SIGHT
AND
SOUND**

BFI Player

We are always open online on BFI Player where
you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema
on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark
British and independent titles, films are available to
watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals
& Free to view.

See something different today on player.bfi.org.uk

A good thriller, he went on, should be like a switchback; the spectator is taken along, up and down, so that, identifying himself with the hero, he is mentally levitated from his seat and has to grip the edges. 'The whole art of movie-making is based on the audience's identification with the people on the screen – that's why, whatever you show, reality or fantasy, it must seem credible.' *To Catch a Thief*, he said in answer to a question of mine, is a woman's picture. Not that he sets out to make his films specially for either men or women, but since his arrival in Hollywood he has realised that it would be foolish not to take into account the fact that the majority of cinema audiences are women. 'It's important that filmmakers should have a sense of responsibility for the stability and continuity of their industry... And if sometimes you have to make corn, try at least to do it well.'

When Hitchcock was in France, shooting exteriors for *To Catch a Thief*, articles about him were constantly appearing in the press; *Cahiers du cinéma*, indeed, devoted the whole of its October 1954 issue to his work. 'I wouldn't on principle discourage analytical writing,' Hitchcock said seriously, then gave a roguish smile, 'but I must admit that some of those articles made me wonder – "is this really me they're discussing?"' If, as was suggested, he introduces a Roman Catholic argument into his work, this is, he says, instinctive rather than deliberate. Certain critics, for instance, were under the impression that his villains are usually given opportunities for confession. 'It depends on the circumstances,' he remarked about this. 'You see, I'm not particularly interested in villains. I believe that most criminals are really sick people; they're born that way; they can't help it. I don't really go into their psychology much in my films.' And, though a practising Roman Catholic (educated at St. Ignatius College by Jesuits, from whom it was that he 'learnt, among other things, to be realistic'), he does not purposely bring religion into them either.

There is, however, nothing new in believing that he does. In *The Lodger*, made in 1926, there is a scene showing a man, who has been hanging for hours by his handcuffed wrists from an iron railing, being taken down in a state of collapse. 'It's just possible,' Hitchcock said, 'that I made some passing reference to the effect that this figure resembled Christ's when being taken down from the cross. But the scene was not intended to suggest this. Nevertheless, one of the newspapers thought that it did. No – what interested me was the drama of being handcuffed. There's a special terror,' he said, 'a sort of "thing" about being tied up, haven't you noticed? The classic line when somebody in a melodrama is about to be handcuffed goes: "Oh no, Inspector, not that, please!" And the answer: "We must – this is a serious case." I've often exploited this situation,' he added. In *The 39 Steps*, of course, it was fundamental...'

Catherine de la Roche, *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1955-6