

*Bonnie and Clyde*  
(1967)

COMPONENT 1  
NEW HOLLYWOOD  
SECTION A GROUP 2: (1961-1990)



# WARREN BEATTY FAYE DUNAWAY



THEY'RE YOUNG...  
THEY'RE IN LOVE...  
AND THEY  
KILL PEOPLE

## BONNIE AND CLYDE<sup>x</sup>

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WRITTEN BY DAVID NEWMAN and ROBERT BENTON · MUSIC BY Charles Strouse · PRODUCED BY WARREN BEATTY · DIRECTED BY ARTHUR PENN · **TECHNICOLOR<sup>®</sup>** FROM WARNER BROS.-SEVEN ARTS · RELEASED THROUGH WARNER-PATHE

# The real Bonnie and Clyde

Did the film do them justice?



# The 'cigar' pose





# In love, and violent during the Great Depression of the 1930s



# Clips

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9smHLhj75CU> - What's it like?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLC0omm3N98> - Getaway driver

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pb1N5TcA5to> - Parking the car

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFGm7rZkzsU&pbjreload=10> -  
Opening sequence

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EddrEjG8K3I> - End sequence

# Areas of comparative study with Casablanca (40 marks)

- ◆ Auteur
- ◆ Gender
- ◆ Form and style – challenging and reinforcing Hollywood tradition (through micro analysis)
- ◆ Political/social/production context
- ◆ Spectatorship



# Narrative summary

*Bonnie and Clyde were real criminals (robbed banks, small stores and petrol stations) who died in a hail of gunfire in 1934 – they were alleged to have killed 9 Police Officers and 4 civilians (in the pic she is reaching for a Policeman's pistol). The film depicts their life and death, but also glamourises their exploits in part, through A List stars Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway.*

*Bonnie and Clyde was considered to be one of the first films of the New Hollywood era (American New Wave) – next slide.*

# Cultural Context: New Hollywood/American New Wave

- ◆ Younger filmmakers took on a more **auteur role** than previously under the Studio System
- ◆ Representation of the anti hero (aspirational) common with many films of this period more violent/graphic with heightened sexual references/sex scenes (**coinciding with end of the Hayes Code** at the start of the 1960s)
- ◆ Glamourous, disaffected youth was a key theme in Bonnie and Clyde, typical of the movement in the same way Dustin Hoffman broke all the social and moral rules in *The Graduate*
- ◆ More than useful brief analysis of Bonnie and Clyde/New Wave: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IkLjmwz942Y>

Aspirational representations, violence and moral ambiguity polarised critics in 1967



# Cultural Context (cont.)

- ◆ Bonnie and Clyde broke new ground and paved the way for other auteur Directors like Scorsese, Polanski et al
- ◆ But, but, but – it had to jump through hoops to get there (Warner's only gave it a limited release initially)
- ◆ After critical success and in particular a Time Magazine article that said it represented 'new cinema' through genre experimentation, it was re-released
- ◆ It is now a canon of New American Cinema from this time period

Overt sexuality from the opening scene  
challenged the spectator



# Production Context 1

- ◆ \$2.5m production budget including star marketing (recouped \$70m at the box office)
- ◆ Very interesting was the involvement of **Nouvelle Vague** (French New Wave) Directors Truffaut and Godard
- ◆ Truffaut had been sent the script, declined but made some suggestions and changes for Warners and then told Beatty about it in Paris – Beatty bought the rights (Godard was even considered at one point as Director)
- ◆ As Producer, Beatty offered it to several Directors including Penn (see later Auteur analysis)

Beatty/Jack Warner in control of production  
– Penn in terms of what it looked like



# Production Context 2

- ◆ Beatty wanted black and white for **verisimilitude** but Warner's rejected this, paving the way for squibs (the first film to use blood bags inside the actors clothes – bullet hits)
- ◆ This ironically added to the degrees of realism (and escapism) the film encoded
- ◆ Jack Warner and Beatty warred ceaselessly over small, and large parts of the film (at one point the crew were ordered back to the studio because they went over budget and over schedule)



# Studio executive, Jack Warner





Director  
Arthur Penn  
talking to  
Beatty and  
Dunaway on  
set.

# Form and Style

- ◆ Influenced by the style of Nouvelle Vague (see Godard's choppy, jump cut editing in *Breathless*)
- ◆ **Representation of realism** was important to Beatty and Penn but within an impressionistic diegesis – blood made the film visceral and more shocking to the spectator
- ◆ Costume departed from historical realism – see Beatty's clothes and shoes and Dunaway's wardrobe suggesting glamour
- ◆ Often challenged Hollywood Continuity Editing techniques and disrupted the spectator with creative framing and innovative choice of shot

# Sharp suits and glamour – the film 'looks good'



# Gender 1

- ◆ Bonnie and her ECU lips and naked body are **more than simply the male gaze** – her body language suggests she is ‘imprisoned’ by her gendered identity as a waitress
- ◆ Reading suggests she is framed as an **iconographic representation of the liberated 60s woman** (mapping the film’s narrative time to the contemporary time period was one of Beatty’s intentions)
- ◆ In the highly charged next scene in the car she runs her lips over a Coke bottle and is ‘impressed by his weapon’ however, asserts her power by taunting him: “But you wouldn’t have the gumption to use it”

Mise-en-scene full and rich. Bonnie confident  
body language



# Gender 2

- ◆ Clyde is in no way emasculated but seems to have a to prove himself to Bonnie throughout the film – she has gendered control
- ◆ This links with the much discussed picture of the real Bonnie, holding a gun and munching on a cigar – Faye Dunaway pays homage to this identity within a 60s framework
- ◆ Clyde asserts his masculinity initially by rejecting her: “I aint’ much of a lover boy” suggesting an impotence but still **welcoming her as an equal partner**
- ◆ Their sexuality is acted out in their robberies, not in the bed

# Auteur 1

- ◆ The term auteur can reference both **Beatty's control over production (and also even auteur-actor method acting) and Penn's control over artistic Direction** – one argument suggested Beatty 'selected' Penn because he could control him
- ◆ New Wave American film made notions of the auteur more pertinent as this was the era of less collaborative studio control
- ◆ Penn, as an auteur was a Director closely linked with the American New Wave (he made a number of films during this period) – arguably only his films of this period had a 'signature'



# Actor/Producer auteur



# Auteur 2

- ◆ Penn controlled B & C artistic direction, see end sequence that was 'all him' (4 cameras running at different speeds)
- ◆ His 60s/early 70s films (career declined in the 70s) **borrowed from 'nouvelle vague moments'** e.g. Belmondo's death in *Breathless* (one of the reasons Godard was discussed as a potential Director of B & C)
- ◆ A cerebral Director, one reason offered as to why his career declined in the 70s and 80s (onset of the escapist blockbuster)
- ◆ With a backdrop of the Vietnam War, Penn was also seen to be the 'auteur of the anti heroes'

# Full lips and the gaze – using sexuality to recruit CW Moss



# Auteur 3

- ◆ Penn's image handling started early as an adviser to JFK. As an intelligent, and political Director he references Marshall McLuhan's ideas that 'the medium is the message' (he liked the 'surfaces' and messages that film could offer)
- ◆ Themes underpinning his films included the inner lives and secrets of his characters
- ◆ Known for filming every scene from a number of different angles, filming on location, some hand held camera and natural sound, use of the long take – **all from the Nouvelle Vague**
- ◆ Regular collaboration with Editor Dede Allen.

# Aspirational anti heroes



# Recruiting CW Moss 1

- ◆ Soft colour palette – browns, reds and beiges
- ◆ Images of Coke bottle in shot and Pepsi slate encode nostalgic Americana
- ◆ Shot/reverse/shot between Moss, Clyde and Bonnie as Clyde nods to Bonnie to ‘start’ the recruitment (in many scenes he used her sexuality)
- ◆ Wide shots show American mid west (cultural heritage along with iconic car)

# Recruiting CW Moss 2

- ◆ Moss and Bonnie in two shot – she is alluring him and teases him (head tilted back, full lips, challenging his gendered mechanical car knowledge)
- ◆ Two shot of Bonnie and Clyde in car show them as well dressed and glamorous – classic Penn anti heroes
- ◆ Humour encoded into scene through “stolen 4-cylinder Ford Coupe” line
- ◆ CW Moss’ masculinity is in binary opposition to the confident pose and swagger of Clyde