

USA

1995

Director:
Jon Amiel

Technicolor,
Panavision

123 mins

Producers:
Aron Milchan,
Mark Tarlov

Script:
Ann Biderman,
David Madsen

Photography:
Laszlo Kovacs

Music:
Christopher Young

Cast:
Sigourney Weaver
(Helen Hudson),
Holly Hunter
(M.J. Monahan),
Dermot Mulroney
(Ruben Goetz),
Will Patton
(Nicoletti),
William McNamara
(Peter Foley),
John Rothman
(Andy).

It is not just the high body count or the grim way they perpetuate their crimes that guarantees serial killers their notoriety - it is the fact they are caught.

Sigourney Weaver and Holly Hunter co-star in *Copycat*, a nail-biting suspense thriller about the race against time to find - and stop - an obsessed murderer on the loose in San Francisco.

Scripted by newcomers Ann Biderman and David Madsen and directed with some flair by Jon Amiel as a follow-up to *Sommersby*, *Copycat* has an ingenious premise. Its serial killer is reconstructing a history of infamous cases from the Boston Strangler to Ted Bundy to the movie's fictional Daryll Lee Cullum. It could be argued that *Copycat* is just as much about the wave of serial killer movies as about the murders - not because it quotes from any directly, but rather it explores familiar themes with a feminist perspective.

Whenever there's a movie about a serial killer there's often an outcry about violence against women but where *Copycat* especially scores is the fact that it ensures that those determined to bring the slayer to justice are two very different but equally tenacious female adversaries.

Hunter is ambitious police detective Mary Jane Monahan who is determined to halt the latest slew of murders in her great city. Her investigation leads her to a reluctant and agrophobic former criminal 'shrink' Helen Hudson (Weaver) who makes crank calls to the station claiming she can help. An expert on serial killers, Hudson now lives in a fortress like home - the joke being that this gothic space has been recreated in a high tech glass and steel apartment block in which Amiel deftly explores the dramatic possibilities of its occupant's condition. Her only contacts with the outside world are through her assistant Andy and her computer.

Hudson is still haunted by demons after her near-death encounter with now jailed psycho Daryll Lee Cullum - a terrifying performance from the crooner Harry Connick Jr, now sporting ginger hair and teeth that have evidently not seen the inside of a dental surgery.

British director Jon Amiel (BBC's *The Singing Detective*) knew who he wanted to star in his movie and had clear ideas about the characters' development.

SIGOURNEY WEAVER
US actress (1949-)

Tall and striking, she began her career in avant-garde theatre, but broke the Hollywood gender barrier by carrying big action films. The daughter of an NBC television chief and a British actress, she attended Stanford and Yale and struggled through the 1970s constantly told she was too tall (5ft 11in) to be a leading lady. Plucked from off-Broadway for *Alien* (79) she became the indomitable Ripley, foe of the relentless, acid-drooling monster in three films. She went on to play strong, independent women across genres, with Mel Gibson (qv) in *The Year of Living Dangerously* (83), playing straight woman to the *Ghostbusters* (84), a super bitch in *Working Girl* (88) and the murdered wildlife champion Dian Fossey in *Gorillas in the Mist* (88). More recently she was the harrowing lead in the adaptation of Ariel Dorfman's play *Death and The Maiden* (95).



in the line of fire: Sigourney Weaver

HOLLY HUNTER
US actress (1958-)

She studied at the Carnegie Mellon University in New York and began a successful stage career, notably in four Beth Henley plays. She repeated her performance in The Miss Firecracker Contest in the 1989 film version. A diminutive (5ft 2in) southerner from Georgia, she is difficult to cast but usually makes an impact. Her best year - until her Oscar-winning performance as the mute heroine in *The Piano* (93) - was 1987 with *Broadcast News*, which attracted critics' awards and an Oscar nomination, and *Raising Arizona* with Nicolas Cage (qv). She has twice starred with Richard Dreyfuss (qv), in *Always* (89) and *Once Around* (91), and was nominated for an Oscar for *The Firm* (93) with Tom Cruise (qv).

"Helen is an immensely intelligent, highly capable woman. But she was the victim of a sadistic, terrifying attack and came within an inch of being killed. The woman we meet at the beginning of the movie has suffered a nervous breakdown and is afraid to leave her apartment even for a moment.

"Sigourney has a tremendous range and the capability to play an enormous emotional spectrum. She can be both intensely vulnerable and very, very strong."

If her character provides the brainwork, it's tiny Hunter's Monahan who lends the physical force. "MJ is a woman of action," explains Amiel. "She's an excellent shot, not afraid of anything and wants to prove she's as good a cop as any man."



Holly Hunter

Sigourney Weaver admits that she was reluctant to take on the disturbing and intensive research necessary for her role as a top criminal psychologist.

"At first I didn't want to do any research at all; I found the subject simply too grim," admits the actress. But she finally gave in and ended up going through the entire script with eminent forensic psychiatrist Dr Park Dietz, a man who has interviewed countless killers including the notorious Jeffrey Dahmer.

Her discussions with doctors who work in this specialised field confirmed the actress' instincts about them: "It seemed to me that they have to be very good actors. They must seem very relaxed and non-judgmental in order to get the whole story from the killer. It was fascinating to work with him."

By contrast, Hunter's research was far more hands-on, working with police officers in order to add authenticity to her role: "Suddenly I had carte blanche into the homicide division at Rampart Boulevard Station in Los Angeles," says Hunter.

"It was incredible! I had never spent any time around the cops and I needed to get a cop 'feel'. It's a very different life," adds the Oscar-winning star.

With *Copycat's* two female investigative protagonists venturing into uneasy territory and the once-assured Hudson being forced to overcome fears that have incapacitated her, it is obvious that *The Silence of the Lambs* was a point of departure for Amiel. Following convention, law-breaker and law-maker become confused categories from which the two women have to extricate themselves. Hudson describes herself as the serial killer's muse, the 'dead pin-up girl'. After being attacked by Cullum and forced to witness the murder of a policeman in the University of California at Berkeley, she is deemed, by default, a cop killer by the police chief. Consequently Monahan must defy her boss in order to work with Hudson.

The casting of Holly Hunter and Sigourney Weaver in these roles is pivotal to the film, enhancing its status as an instant post-feminist classic. While the role of Monahan couldn't be more different for Hunter than her mute migrant Ada in *The Piano*, her two characters share the same steely resolve. Similarly, Weaver is forever Ripley - the viewer is somehow safe in the knowledge that she is immune from the dangers that threaten, however sadistic. And they are pretty sadistic. Many of the scenes throughout *Copycat* involving just Weaver could be transposed to outer space. The addition of a cat would have made the comparisons too close for comfort.

At first Hudson and Monahan are victim-identified with cross-cuts between the two women examining photos of the dead girls. But as they stealthily turn the tables, the film builds up to a victorious climax. The euphoric final battle on the lecture hall rooftop, though, is won more by Hudson's outburst of delirious laughter than by Monahan's gun. In that moment a whole range of fears are exorcised. However, you will never again be able to listen to *The Police* or Sting for that matter, without looking over your shoulder - be warned . . .



Dermot Mulroney

Jonathan Beare

LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN

22 reactions, average score 6.41

Comments

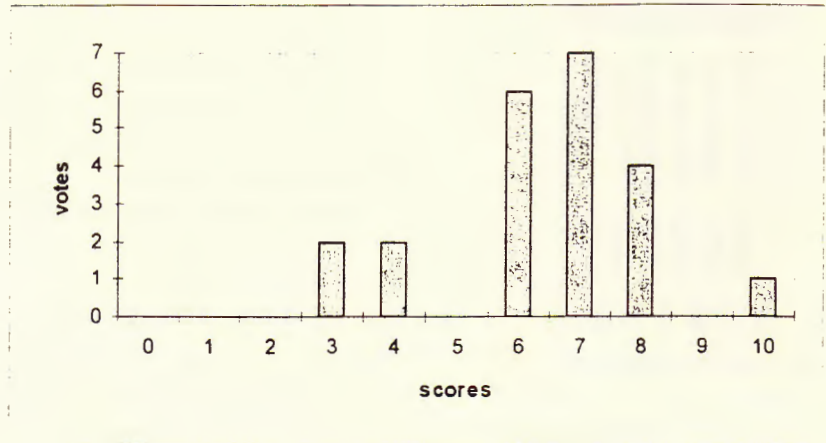
Beautiful love story.

The only thing worth watching was Louis Jordan.

Joan Fontaine is always worth watching.

A real period piece.

Oh dear!



REACTIONS: The Story So Far.....

BRASSED OFF.....	8.14%	[51 votes]
PYGMALION.....	8.09%	[32 votes]
SHINE.....	8.03%	[43 votes]
SECRETS & LIES.....	7.88%	[40 votes]
FARGO.....	7.51%	[37 votes]
STAGECOACH.....	7.44%	[39 votes]
THE PROMISE.....	7.25%	[44 votes]
CARRINGTON.....	6.73%	[49 votes]
SMOKE.....	6.71%	[35 votes]
LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN...	6.41%	[22 votes]
SCENT OF GREEN PAPAYA.....	6.34%	[29 votes]
THE LAST DETAIL.....	6.15%	[41 votes]
VERONIKA VOSS.....	5.03%	[32 votes]

FARGO

37 reactions, average score 7.51

Comments

The Minnesota woodchipper Massacre!

An oddball movie - good choice.

Almost black and white!

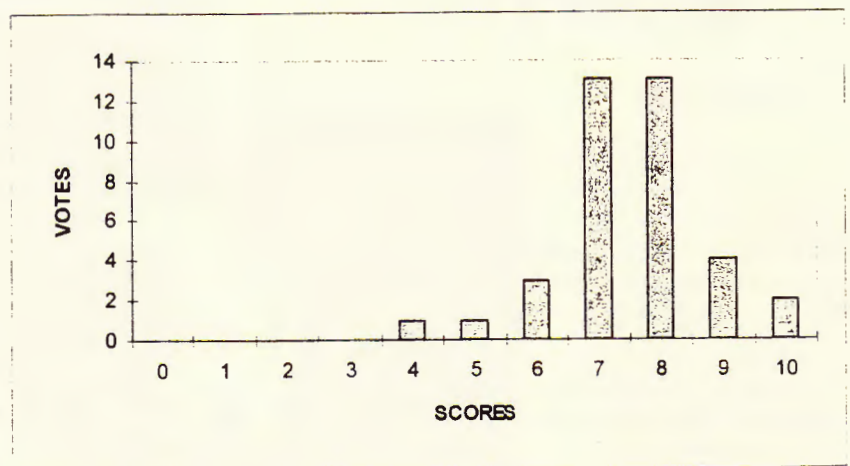
Slightly unsettling.

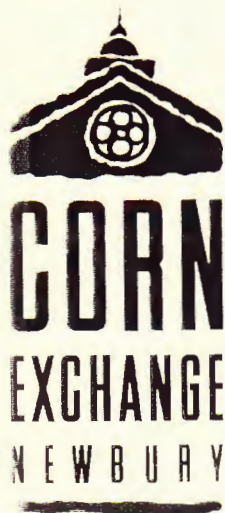
Loved the setting, camera shots and music.

Was this a true story?

What is it about Steve Buscemi that makes casting directors think of him for all barking hitmen?!

“Jeez Norm, there are some really strange people out there.....”





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Tuesday 12 May

7.30 pm

Silent Film Classics
FILMS INSPIRED BY MUSIC

This selection of silent film classics will be enhanced by the evocative musical accompaniment provided by the accomplished pianists John Lenehan and Kathleen Page of **Sounds for Silents**. Many of the arrangements have been made especially by John Lenehan who was inspired by the technical brilliance of the film makers of 70 years ago. The films to be shown include:

Papageno (1935) delightful silhouette film by Lotte Reiniger based on Mozart's opera 'The Magic Flute'

Images pour Debussy (1952) Jean Mitry interprets piano music by Debussy with beautiful images of reflections in water

In the Night (1931) Walter Ruttmann's dark and stormy film accompanies music by Schumann

Carmen (1933) The music of Bizet's opera provides the inspiration for another of Lotte Reiniger's enchanting silhouette films.

Oscar Fischinger Programme (1928 - 35) Three wonderfully contrasted films which draw on music as diverse as Brahms, a popular foxtrot and the overture to the Merry Wives of Windsor.

TICKETS £5.50 Licensed bar

10

**THINGS YOU
NEVER KNEW
YOU WANTED
TO KNOW...**

*THE last lines of
ten classic movies:*

1 'Well, Tillie, when the hell are we going to get some dinner?' (Spencer Tracy in *Guess Who's Coming To Dinner?*)

2 'We saw her many times again, born free and living free, but to us she was always the same, our friend Elsa' (Virginia McKenna in *Born Free*)

3 'I haven't got a sensible name, Calloway' (Joseph Cotten as Holly Martins in *The Third Man*)

4 'Hello, everybody. This is Mrs Norman Maine' (Judy Garland in *A Star Is Born*)

5 'The way we're swimming, old girl' (Humphrey Bogart in *The African Queen*)

6 'Hell, he's a natural born world-shaker' (George Kennedy in *Cool Hand Luke*)

7 'I guess we all died a little in that damn war' (Clint Eastwood in *The Outlaw Josey Wales*)

8 'Mediocrities everywhere, I absolve you, I absolve you, I absolve you all' (F. Murray Abraham in *Amadeus*)

9 'Madness, Madness' (James Donald in *The Bridge On The River Kwai*)

10 'Thank you. I'm glad it's off my mind at last' (Wylie Watson as Mr Memory in *The 39 Steps*)

Daily Mail, Tuesday, March 17, 1998

**COMING
NEXT
MONTH**

14th May 1998

at Mayford Village Hall,
commencing at 8.00 pm

Brilliantly transplanted to a 1930's setting, Loncraine's powerful adaptation was conceived as a showcase for Ian McKellen's riveting performance in the title role. He's the perfect villain in a powerful cast, bulldozing his way to power with a seductive mixture of daring and charisma. With glorious costumes and striking use of Art Deco locations, Loncraine has created an excellent way to give Shakespeare a contemporary perspective in today's multi-media world.

"As slick and exciting as Pulp Fiction... without doubt one of the BEST FILMS OF THE YEAR"
Jonathan Ross, News of the World.

"SENSATIONAL
ACTED TO THE HILT
BY AN ALL-STAR CAST"
NEW YORK TIMES

"RIVETING
A RIVETING AND WILDLY
ORIGINAL WORK OF ART"
NEW YORK POST



IAN MCKELLEN
RICHARD III

MAGGIE SMITH NIGEL HAWTHORNE
ANNETTE BENING ROBERT DOWNEY JR.
KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS JIM BROADBENT
DIRECTED BY RICHARD LONCRAINE



Programme ends at 10.20 pm (approx)

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