

L.A. Confidential ¹⁸

United States, 1997

138 minutes



Director: Curtis Hanson

Producers: Arnon Milchan, Curtis Hanson, Michael Nathanson

Screenplay: Curtis Hanson and Brian Helgeland based on the novel by James Ellroy

Cinematography: Dante Spinotti

Music: Jerry Goldsmith

Starring: Russell Crowe (Bud White), Guy Pearce (Ed Exley), Kevin Spacey (Jack Vincennes), Danny DeVito (Sid Hodgeons), Kim Basinger (Lynn Bracken), James Cromwell (Dudley Smith)

"ONE OF THE BEST FILMS OF THE YEAR..."

**A thrilling, gripping, expertly written
superbly directed piece"** LA TIMES SYNDICATION

"An electrifying thriller" ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY **"Riveting"** LA TIMES



Los Angeles, 1950's, a thriving metropolis of opportunity. A paradise on earth. But underneath lurks a different side. One of police brutality, racism and sex scandals. James Ellroy's novel is brought to the screen with devastating effect in one of the best mystery thrillers of the decade.

The difference between *LA Confidential* and numerous other, more routine films of the genre begins with the script. Smart, insightful, and consistently engaging, Hanson and Brian Helgeland's faithful adaptation of Ellroy's novel is a real treat for anyone who views film as a medium for both art and entertainment. The movie is filled with twists and turns, but not so many as the plot becomes too difficult to follow. Some have commented that it's too much like hard work, but isn't it nice not to have it so blatantly obvious as to be disappointing/insulting?

The story follows the investigation into the death of a disgraced cop, whose body was found at the scene of a bungled restaurant hold up. Since a former cop was the victim of the crime, the police department makes it top priority to catch the killers. Things fall into place rather quickly with the lead investigator arresting three very guilty looking suspects. Somehow, the suspects manage to escape from jail, but are then killed in a second arrest attempt. The deaths of the three put an official closure on the case; but in the world of *LA Confidential*, things seldom tie up in neat little packages.

James Cromwell, usually the epitome of stolid kindness, is, as Police Chief Dudley Smith, malevolence incarnate. He assigns the case to three of the LAPD's "finest" men: The first, Bud White (Russell Crowe), a brutal cop whose weakness for women in distress may be his only hope of salvation. The second Jack Vincennes (Kevin Spacey), is the kind of officer who prefers the spotlight to the down-and-dirty lifestyle. He's the high profile technical advisor to the hit TV series *Badge of Honour*, and has a clandestine agreement with the editor (Danny DeVito) of "Hush Hush" magazine, a sleazy tabloid that publishes photos and stories showing Jack arresting

celebrities in compromising positions. Finally there's Ed Exley (Guy Pearce), a crusading moralist who believes in doing it by-the-book. Frustrated by the corruption of the LAPD he soon alienates himself from his fellow officers. However as the plot unfolds they find that they must rely on one another for survival.

All three male leads give strong performances. It's interesting to note that two of the three actors in this distinctly American tale are Australian (Crowe & Pearce). Who can forget Pearce's big break when he cross-dressed in *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. Both actors have perfected that American accents to the point where it is almost impossible to detect the down under twang

In reviewing this film, many seem to overlook the merits of it's Oscar winning "star", Kim Basinger. As Veronica Lake look-a-like, Lynn Bracken, Basinger brings a depth of feeling to the role that demonstrates her talents have been sorely wasted many times before. She portrays a prostitute who services her clients by fulfilling their dirty movie star fantasies. However behind this façade her vulnerability is evident. Caught between the brashness of Ed Exley and the troubled Bud White.



L.A. Confidential

The atmosphere is another of *LA Confidential's* strengths. This is technicolour Noir – a film made in colour that has black and white sensibilities. Whilst the Los Angeles of *LA Confidential* may not accurately reflect the real city during the '50s, it nevertheless represents what we expect Hollywood to have been like, from the femme fatales to the sure-handed, silent man.

Director and Co-Writer Curtis Hanson's record includes *The Hand That Rocks The Cradle* and *The River Wild*. These works gave no indication of the mastery with which he controls this film – in particular Exley's whirlwind interrogation of three murder suspects.

As a film that can be recommended with confidence, *LA Confidential*, gets just about everything right. All elements, from the light, the architecture, the slang and the music, serve to create this refreshing, big budget, film noir.

Suzi + Michelle

Romeo and Juliet (22/4/99)

31 reactions, average score 6.58

Comments

Fair in parts.

Excellent, modern realisation.

Too awful for words - just a noisy brutish mess.

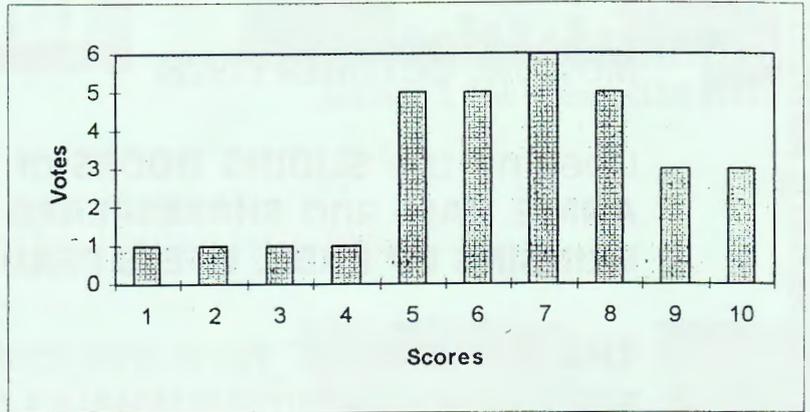
Obviously made for teenagers - noise, violence, car crashes etc.

An amazing choice of setting which worked well.

An interesting failure. The Bard's words need an articulation which was mostly beyond the cast.

Too clever by half, and only half as good as others.

Wonderful, novel treatment of an old story. Nothing lost of Shakespeare - over the top and dramatic.



Helen Sayer

WNCC Members' Reactions Summary
19th Season, 1998-99.

Title (No. of Reactions)	Score >>>3>>>>4>>>>5>>>>6>>>>7>>>>8>>>>9>>>>10
8= Road to Morocco (33)	7.52
5 Mrs. Brown (45)	7.93
15 Twelve Monkeys (23)	6.00
13= Letter From My Village (20)	6.50
7 Grosse Pointe Blank (38)	7.58
6 Ridicule (46)	7.78
2 It's A Wonderful Life (27)	8.41
8= Shooting Stars (27)	7.52
4 The African Queen (32)	8.06
11 The Boston Strangler (37)	7.24
10 The Wings Of The Dove (42)	7.29
13= The Blue Angel (28)	6.50
1. The Full Monty (36)	8.50
3. Le Grand Chemin(29)	8.07
12. Romeo & Juliet(31)	6.58

A POSTCARD TO WNCC

Moscow, **OCTOBER** [1928]

Opening the **SLIDING DOORS** of **CENTRAL STATION**, I spotted **ANNIE HALL** and **SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE**, obviously enjoying **BRINGING UP BABY. LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL!**

THE APARTMENT here overlooks **THE SMALLEST SHOW ON EARTH**, with its famous **WHALES OF AUGUST** exhibit, plus other **GODS & MONSTERS**, (as featured on **THE TRUMAN SHOW**).

Last night, at '**THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTER**' ball, I was asked "**SHALL WE DANCE ?**" by both **HILARY & JACKIE.....**this really is **AS GOOD AS IT GETS !**

Best wishes for your **20TH SEASON**,

MILDRED PIERCE.

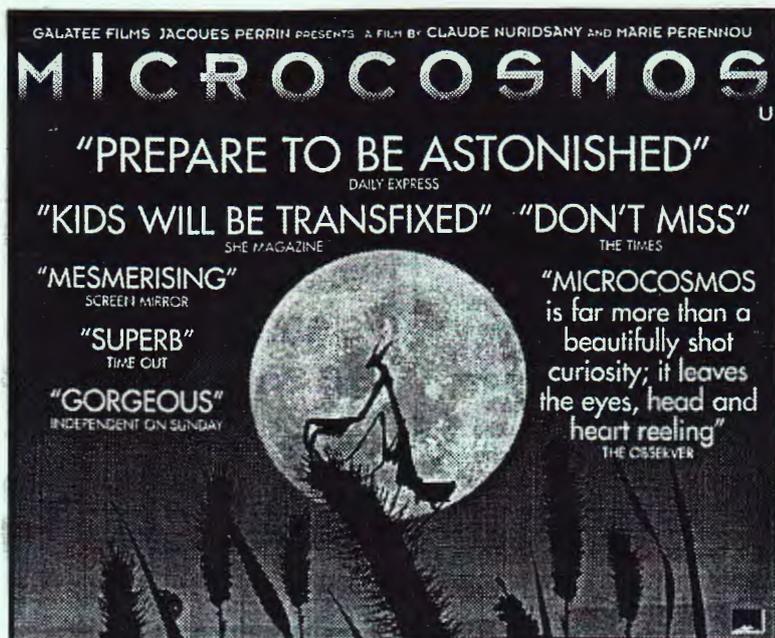
27th May - After the Annual General Meeting relax with the award-winning natural history film:

MICROCOSMOS [U], Fra/Switz/Italy, 1996. Directed by Nuridsany & Perennou.

This may sound like science fiction, but it's actually a wordless documentary account of a day and a night in a French meadow, catching the unscripted drama of its insect community's struggle for survival with amazing technical wizardry that renders David Attenborough almost pedestrian by comparison.

Microcosmos will be preceded by the Annual General Meeting.

Programme ends at 10.50 pm (approx)



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