

Bonnie and Clyde (1967)

When Bonnie and Clyde was released in 1967 it couldn't have been released at a more appropriate time. The Production Code was near its end and independent studios were emerging with new, young and innovative directors. Bonnie and Clyde was one of the first American films that portrayed the rebellious, sexually liberated, cool detachment of authority figures which started a trend that would be created again and again with new upcoming actors like Robert Deniro, Jack Nicholson, Al Pacino, Gene Hackman, Dustin Hoffman and Robert Duvall during Hollywood's golden age of 1967-1974.

One of the very first films that directly started that trend was Jean-Luc Godard's masterpiece Breathless which is considered one of the first films of the French New Wave. Coincidentally, the screenplay of Bonnie and Clyde was first approached by the two leading directors of the French New Wave which were Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut but they both turned it down. Interestingly enough Truffaut's earlier film Jules and Jim was very similar to Bonnie and Clyde in style and tone; in which its two lovers perish in the end.

What made Bonnie and Clyde such a landmark film was not only its quick cut editing, and rapid change of tone, but its groundbreaking portrayal on violence in American cinema. Alongside Sam Peckinpah's classic western The Wild Bunch which was released a year later, the

graphic violence in Bonnie and Clyde shocked audiences in 1967. Violence before Bonnie and Clyde were portrayed in films much more differently. Violence was like the cowboy and Indian games you would play as a young child in which you shoot the bad guy and the bad guy grabs his shoulder and yells out as he dramatically collapses to the ground. Not only does the audience know that the character didn't really get shot, but they also know he isn't really dead. Bonnie and Clyde changed all that.

The most debated and controversial part of the film is its iconic blood-soaked ending where a spew of bullets tear through Bonnie and Clyde in slow motion. What was different about the violence shown in this scene was that the audience clearly sees the pain and anguish of its character's as they sit by and watch the tragic aftermath of the two lovers lying soaked in their own blood. The violence is disturbingly excruciating as the audience realizes that the characters they just witnessed were not only brutally shot but are also truly dead; and they emotionally have to come to terms with it.

This unflinching violence was also stating to the public that times have changed, and our culture has changed within our society. With the height of the Vietnam War, the assassination of President Kennedy, the rise of drugs and sex, and the horrific Charles Manson murders, these events in our society were rapidly changing people's perceptions on our country and our culture. After Bonnie and Clyde, other films started telling similar stories about the lost of youth, sex, violence and the antiestablishment of the law which include, The Graduate, Taxi Driver, Midnight Cowboy, The French Connection, The Godfather, Easy Rider, Five Easy Pieces, Dog Day Afternoon and Mean Streets.

The infamous death scene of Bonnie and Clyde was such a impactful scene, Frances Ford Coppola even paid homage to the film years later in *The Godfather*, in which he shows the brutal slaying of one of the characters within a street tollbooth. Even though the story of two lovers on the road fleeing authorities has been done before in films like *Gun Crazy* and *You Only Live Once*, *Bonnie and Clyde* was the most successful and influential.

The film restarted the road genre once again which brought upon other films like *Badlands*, *Thelma and Louise* and *Natural Born Killers*. *Bonnie and Clyde* is one of the first films to really explore the violent youth culture and it's fascination on breaking free from what is looked at as acceptable in society; and the film is now looked upon as the first modern American film.