



The Main Feature

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Breakfast at Tiffany's

US 1961

115 mins. Certificate PG

Director	Blake Edwards
Screenplay	George Axelrod, from the novella by Truman Capote
Cinematography	Franz Planer
Music	Henry Mancini
Cast	
Audrey Hepburn	Holly Golightly
George Peppard	Paul Varjack
Patricia Neal	2E Failenson
Buddy Ebsen	Doc Golightly
Martin Balsam	OJ Berman
Jose Luis de Vilallonga	Jose
Mickey Rooney	Mr Yunioshi
John McGiver	Tiffany's salesman



That iconic image: the hair, the dress, the jewellery, the cigarette holder, is, like Audrey Hepburn herself (and the New York store of the title) the epitome of style, glamour, and sophistication. But is this just the surface?

Holly Golightly (Hepburn) is a high-class escort who seems to have it all. She has an apartment in a classy district of New York City, gorgeous clothes, plenty of bling, and a hectic social life. She is totally scatty, but someone always seems to be there to pick up the pieces. However, we can see underneath this veneer a sadness and insecurity, a yearning for something better. Henry Mancini's haunting song "Moon River" underpins the whole film. As events unfold, her whole life begins to fall apart. But as Hepburn brings out her vulnerability, we can also see her strength. Holly has an innocence, but can she really be as innocent as she claims?

This is billed as a romantic comedy, and it *is* very funny. Hepburn and Peppard have some very witty lines, and the film brilliantly mocks the pretensions of New York's upper crust: loads of money but no moral compass (the party scene is a masterpiece of satire!)



The film is sixty years old and reflects some attitudes of its time that we may find uncomfortable today, such as the sexism, and the racial stereotyping. Mickey Rooney's performance as Mr. Yunioshi has been described as the worst example of this ever.

Truman Capote wrote *Breakfast at Tiffany's* as a novella and is said to have dissatisfied with how his work was adapted and sanitized for the cinema-

going public. He had already been forced to make changes to the book before it would be published. But he did allow his name to be associated with the movie, so he cannot have been too upset. He also disagreed with the casting of Hepburn, preferring the part to go Marilyn Monroe. It is interesting to speculate how this movie would have turned out.

Audrey Hepburn herself had an unsettled early life. Child of a British father and a Dutch mother, she was taken to Holland and lived there throughout the Second World War, supposedly involved with the Dutch resistance. After the war she trained as a dancer but was too tall and too frail to make it her career, so she turned to acting. Her credits are too numerous to mention, but she was in many British films before going to Hollywood. In later life, she worked actively for UNICEF.

In contrast, George Peppard was all-American. He trained as an engineer before taking to acting. Like Hepburn, his roles were numerous, but he is largely known for two: Paul Varjak in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and Col 'Hannibal' Smith in television's *The A-Team*. Because of his physique and good looks, he was often cast as the action hero, roles he disliked as he felt they had no character to explore. He called himself "an actor, not a star", and gained a reputation for being difficult to work with.



Hepburn and Peppard make their characters very sympathetic in spite of their unsavoury lifestyles, and they are backed up by a strong supporting cast.

Last, but in no way least, I must mention the real star of the film. In 2011, Peter Bradshaw wrote in the Guardian 'Well, the movie still looks very good, and you'd need a heart of stone not to love that cat.'

Diana James



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Sidney Poitier: the actor who broke down Hollywood's racial barriers

Sidney Poitier, who died on 6 January 2022 aged 94, once turned down the role of Othello because he did not want to be typecast as a black actor. It underlined the dilemma faced by a man who broke down many of Hollywood's racial barriers. As the first black winner of the Academy Awards' best actor statuette, he was always aware of being the standard-bearer for greater racial integration. But often he felt he had become something of a racial token, and this denied him the opportunity of taking on more varied roles.

Sidney Poitier was born on 20 February 1927 in Miami, Florida. His parents were Bahamian farmers who had travelled to the US to sell tomatoes.

Aged 15 he went to live with his brother in Miami before moving to New York, where he worked as a dishwasher. It was in the US that he experienced racism for the first time. "I lived in a country where I couldn't get a job, except those put aside for my colour or my caste."

After a spell in the US Army he joined the American Negro Theatre, which had been set up as a community project in Harlem in 1940. He decided his future lay as a serious stage actor and he was offered a leading role in a production of Aristophanes' comedy *Lysistrata* in 1946. It was a sign of the times that the production featured only black actors.

In 1949 he took the difficult decision to move away from stage productions and into films. His performance in the 1950 film *No Way Out*, in which he played a newly-qualified doctor confronted by a racist patient, brought him to the attention of the studios. His breakthrough came in *The Blackboard Jungle* in 1955, in the role of a disruptive pupil in an inner-city school. The film was immensely popular, not least because it was one of the first to have a soundtrack featuring rock 'n' roll, including Bill Haley's classic *Rock Around the Clock*.

The Defiant Ones, in 1958, saw Poitier nominated for best actor at the Academy Awards, and he won a Bafta for the same film. Five years later he was awarded an Oscar for *Lilies of the Field*, the first black winner of the Best Actor trophy.



Then 1967 saw him at his commercial peak with three films, making him Hollywood's most bankable star that year. He played a newly-qualified teacher in a tough London school in *To Sir, With Love*, based on the autobiographical novel by E R Braithwaite.

Poitier was nominated for Bafta and Golden Globe awards for Norman Jewison's film *In the Heat of the Night*. He played a Philadelphia detective who found himself stranded in a red-necked Mississippi town on the night a businessman is murdered. His developing relationship with the bigoted local sheriff, played by Rod Steiger, gave Poitier his strongest role and the film won five Oscars, including best picture. Poitier's response to Steiger's question "What do they call you, boy?" produced one of cinema's most famous lines: "They call me Mr Tibbs."

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner featured Poitier as the boyfriend of a white, middle-class girl who takes him to meet her parents. Played by Spencer Tracey and Katherine Hepburn, her parents were torn between their liberal values and their reaction to a prospective black son-in-law. Poitier faced criticism from some black civil-rights activists who complained his characters were just too good to be true. It helped to persuade him to move away from acting roles.



By the end of the 1970s, Poitier had formed his own production company. Successes behind the camera included *Stir Crazy*, with Richard Pryor and Gene Wilder, and the thrillers *Shoot to Kill* and *Little Nikita*.

Poitier became the first black actor to receive a life achievement award from the American Film Institute in 1992. In 2016 he was awarded a Fellowship by Bafta, a recognition of his outstanding contribution to cinema. "If I'm remembered for having done a few good things," he once said, "and if my presence here has sparked some good energies, that's plenty."

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-2719848>

Comments and reactions to: **Pain and Glory**

No of reaction slips received = 27

Average score = 6.59

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	~	~	~	~	1	5	7	6	7	1	~

I was expecting more of Almodóvar

Profoundly sad; wonderful colours. Loved it

Subtitles disappeared too quickly – unable to follow

Very difficult to make a comment! A strange film, it had its moments but was also very slow!

Visually opulent and multi-layered. A few too many coincidences but an engrossing watch!

Excellent acting. Good light and shade with a serious undertone

Engrossing – but one had to be a quick reader!

Enjoyed the film until the final scene. What a strange ending!

Seemed a bit self-indulgent: Cinema Paradiso on heroin

Found the ending was too soon

Both emotionally dextrous and finely passed

Position	Film	Average score
1	Nomadland	7.13
2	Parasite	7.07
3	The Farewell	6.85
4	The Personal History of David Copperfield	6.67
5	Permission	6.60
6	Pain and Glory	6.59
7	The Crimson Pirate	6.42
8	Baby Driver	6.19
9	Bait	5.35

Forthcoming attraction: 24 February 2022 – **Jojo Rabbit**



A World War II satire that follows a lonely German boy named Jojo (Roman Griffin Davis) whose world view is turned upside down when he discovers his single mother (Scarlett Johansson) is hiding a young Jewish girl (Thomasin McKenzie) in their attic. Aided only by his idiotic imaginary friend, Adolf Hitler (Taika Waititi), Jojo must confront his blind nationalism.

imdb