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## CAST

**Christian Slater** Clarence Worley

**Patricia Arquette** Alabama Whitman

**Dennis Hopper** Clifford Worley

**Val Kilmer** Mentor

**Gary Oldman** Drexel Spivey

**Brad Pitt** Floyd (Dick's Roommate)

**Christopher Walken** Vincenzo Coccotti

**Bronson Pinchot** Elliot Blitzer

**Samuel L. Jackson** Big Don

**Michael Rapaport** Dick Ritchie

**Saul Rubinek** Lee Donowitz

**Conchata Ferrell** Mary Louise Ravencroft

**James Gandolfini** Virgil

**Anna Thomson** Lucy

**Victor Argo** Lenny

**Paul Bates** Marty

**Chris Penn** Nicky Dimes

**Tom Sizemore** Cody Nicholson

## CREW

Directed by **Tony Scott**

Produced by **Samuel Hadida, Steve Perry and Bill Unger**

Written by **Quentin Tarantino**

Director of Photography **Jeffrey L. Kimball A.S.C.**

Production Designer **Benjamin Fernandez**

Edited by **Michael Tronick & Christian Wagner**

Music by **Hans Zimmer**

Costume Designer **Susan Becker**

Casting **Risa Bramon Garcia & Billy Hopkins**



**RICOS  
TACOS**

CABEZA  
LENGUA  
AL PASTOR  
**98¢**

**OPEN**



# I THINK I LOVE YOU

by Kim Morgan

*This essay is extended from a piece originally written for the New Beverly Theater.*

There's a scene early in Tony Scott's *True Romance* in which Patricia Arquette's character Alabama is so full of love and feeling and guilt, that I'm *always* taken aback by emotion when I see it. She's just so moving, so sure to prove her ability to 'come clean' that you want to reassure her that it's all going to be OK. And when you first see the movie, you're worried for her: *will it be OK? It should be, but will it?*

She has to confess something to her date (Clarence, played by Christian Slater) – a date who will soon be her husband. She tells him that she was actually hired as a birthday gift for him by his boss. She's not a "whore," she's a "call girl," she exclaims. "There's a difference!"

How will Clarence react? Is he going to be angry with her? Upon first viewing, you *know* these two will be together – this is a movie called *True Romance* – but what is he going to do first?

It's a scene where a macho ego might lash out at a woman who, in his eyes, just faked their attraction, romance, and compatibility; though, to her delight and fear, she realises she's not faking. It's also the kind of scene many critics take for granted because it often occurs in what would be termed a pulpy action movie – though it's much more than that. It's a *brilliant* pulpy action movie/love story full of invention and insanity and bright bloody artistry; and also, an influential one, notable for the excellence of Quentin Tarantino's screenplay (his first, in fact).

And though Arquette has indeed received kudos by many, her skill at showing such complex feeling in the picture is, perhaps, not recognised enough. Not in the way a big, "important" awards-bait speech would be praised.

Well, Alabama *has* a big, important speech precisely because she's a woman in a dangerous, looked-down-upon profession. She wants Clarence to know she's not a habitual liar or "damaged goods" after revealing that their dream date was actually bought and paid for. And on top of that, she's now overwhelmed with a passionate purity of feeling: love. And that's terrifying. Falling in love is scary. So – how will he react? Refreshingly and wonderfully, he's not mad:

## ALABAMA

*I gotta tell you something else. When you said last night was one of the best times you ever had – did you mean physically?*

## CLARENCE

*Well, yeah. Yeah, but I'm talking about the whole night. I mean, I never had as much fun with a girl as I had with you in my whole life. It's true. You like Elvis. You like Janis. You like kung fu movies. You like The Partridge Family. Star Trek...*

## ALABAMA

*Actually, I don't like The Partridge Family. That was part of the act. Clarence, I feel really goofy saying this after only knowing you one night and me being a call girl and all, but I think I love you.*

Ah, but she is quoting the title of one of The Partridge Family's greatest songs ("I Think I Love You") without even knowing it! ("I think I love you! / So what am I so afraid of? / I'm afraid that I'm not sure of / A love there is no cure for...") When you think of their dialogue in this scene, you can practically hear the song in your head without it being on the soundtrack. You might then think of a 24-year-old Tarantino writing this script in 1987 and how "personal" this movie is. As Tarantino said in a 1993 interview with Graham Fuller, "Clarence was me at the time when I wrote it. He works at a comic-book shop – I was working in a video store... It was weird when I first saw the movie because it was like looking at a big-budget version of my home movies, or memories. What happened with that film was exactly what I wanted to happen, in that I saw my world through Tony Scott's eyes."

It takes a clever, expressive, emotional screenplay, and an inventive, fearless director to balance all of these feelings with such romance, fun, and sadness (and on a beautifully big, super-cinematic rooftop with an enormous billboard behind them). And it takes great actors. Arquette's angst and relief that Clarence isn't going to reject her, or worse, smack her and haul off are so palpable, the viewer buys her insta-love without a doubt. And thanks to Slater's tender, excited reaction (this is one of his best performances), you completely buy his love towards her. He says with a *what am I so afraid of* vulnerability: "You just said you love me, now if I say I love you and just throw caution to the wind and let the chips fall where they may, and you're lying to me, I'm gonna fuckin' die." She's not lying.

So, of course the two young lovers get married, and right away.







Their swoony beginning seems too good to be true, but it is true – their chemistry cannot be denied, it's real. But their future? That's where the fairy tale is amped up and enters, not just mythic *Bonnie and Clyde-meets-Badlands* terrain, but Tony Scott channeling the Brothers Grimm or Lewis Carroll or L. Frank Baum. The land of Oz with bullets, cops, and mobsters as flying monkeys. Detroit is not Kansas, but neither is Hollywood and so their love, writ large, the kind that makes a person crazy and brave and stupid, mirrors the fantastical dominion they're driving into. And Clarence is nobly stupid at first. Or perhaps he's nobly stupid throughout the entire movie. He's clever and cool, he's hip enough to figure things out, but even he admits he's an amateur – he's lucky as hell. He's also got Elvis to talk to, the mentor in his mind: "I like you, Clarence. Always have. Always will."

Thinking he's nabbing Alabama's clothes but is, in fact, actually stealing a suitcase full of cocaine from her Big Bad Wolf pimp, Drexel (the darkly funny but scary Gary Oldman), whom he's just shot and killed, Clarence figures they can sell the goods in Los Angeles and escape their lives forever. And then all... of... this: he says goodbye to his comic book store job and his papa ex-cop (Dennis Hopper, whose scene with gangster Christopher Walken is now legendary), drives off with Alabama in his beat-up classic Cadillac, meets up with a Los Angeles actor pal (Michael Rapaport) and his continually stoned roommate (a scene-stealing Brad Pitt), makes contact with a Hollywood producer (Saul Rubinek) and his nervous actor/assistant (Bronson Pinchot)... and the insanity begins.

Actually, the craziness started back with Oldman, Walken, and Hopper, but Clarence and Alabama aren't entirely aware of all of the layers and levels and twists and turns that will happen, culminating in a showdown at the Beverly Ambassador Hotel; cops, bodyguards, and mobsters locked in a standoff. This is one hell of a story, so vividly written, so smart and hilarious, so violent and nuts, that yes – this is how love can feel too. This is part of the romance.

It all winds together and explodes in an exhilarating, surrealistic swirl through the unabashedly entertaining, hyped-up and artful direction of Scott working with cinematographer Jeffrey L. Kimball. It's part fairy-tale, but also part splashy outrageous Hollywood tale/satire about movie people who pile in the coke while making pulpy war pictures, and struggling actors auditioning for a *T.J. Hooker* reboot while their lovable loafer roommates recline on the couch all day, smoking out of Honey Bear bong – and then give very high directions to a group of mobsters busting into the pad. (Pitt's character was cited as an influence on David Gordon Green's *Pineapple Express* [2008] by producer Judd Apatow.)







And yet, with that depiction of life in Los Angeles in mind, it's not even that unrealistic – not entirely. Like *The Big Lebowski* (1998), *Mulholland Dr.* (2001), and *Inherent Vice* (2014) after it, you'll recognise this Los Angeles on those days when the air feels chemically off and all of this heightened chaos and absurdity crashes down on you. Tom Sizemore screaming/directing Bronson Pinchot's Elliot, a now wired-up narc with, "You're an actor. Act, motherfucker!" is a sublime metaphor of how on edge 'talent' feel in this town.

It's interesting because, in Jeff Dawson's book, *Quentin Tarantino: The Cinema of Cool* (2000), Tarantino says that even when he wrote it, he didn't understand Hollywood as much as his lead character does: "I didn't know it when I wrote it, and it took me almost four years to figure it out – is that once you actually get into the Hollywood area and you start meeting people, it's a very, very, very small town. One person leads to another person. I didn't know that in real life, I didn't do it in real life. Clarence knows Dick, and he knows Elliot, and Elliot knows Lee Donowitz. It's a very small town. Clarence was hip enough to understand that, and I wasn't."

Tarantino certainly understood it when the picture came out in 1993. *True Romance* was released between two other landmark Tarantino movies – his debut, *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) and *Pulp Fiction* (1994). Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers*, from another early Tarantino script, was also released in 1994. According to Tarantino, in his original script, Clarence wants to be in the movies, and has a 500-page script he's carting around called... *Natural Born Killers*. Tarantino said on Amy Schumer's podcast *3 Girls, 1 Keith*, that "you'd have the situation where you would see Clarence and Alabama do their things and then he'd read her scenes from script. And then you'd see this fantasy version of Mickey and Mallory..." Tarantino said it worked, but it was too long: "I go, 'if Mickey and Mallory are that interesting, maybe they deserve their own movie.'"

Clarence's negotiations with the coke-buying producer resonate for multiple reasons. Is Clarence ass-kissing to get the deal done like every Hollywood jerk? Sort of. But, no, he's not. He's genuinely sincere in his admiration of the producer's movies. Even his guide, the ghost of Elvis Presley (Val Kilmer), in a bit of sublime fantasia during which the movie again recollects the dream of Oz – Elvis as Glenda the Good Witch – reassures him he's not being an asshole. And Clarence, the Sonny Chiba-loving movie fan, talks to the producer almost as if he's talking about the real-life movie he's currently found himself in:

## CLARENCE

*You know, most of these movies that win a lot of Oscars, I can't stand them. They're all safe, geriatric coffee-table dogshit... All those assholes make are unwatchable movies from unreadable books. Mad Max, that's a movie. The Good, the Bad and the Ugly, that's a movie. Rio Bravo, that's a movie. And Coming Home in a Body Bag, that was a fuckin' movie.*

Tony Scott understood that speech well. Scott, who tragically took his own life in 2012, was popular, admired and loved by many in the industry but often an underappreciated director among critics. The younger brother to director Ridley Scott (whose films *did* win Oscars) started out with the intent to be a painter, graduating from the Royal College of Art. He remained an artist, only his enormous canvas was cinema – exploding with fun and violence and subversion and soulfulness. Even Scott's misfires are fascinating, and his more 'conventional' (if you can call them that) movies are intriguing when you look beneath the surface or wonder about the subtext. (Tarantino made a memorable cameo in 1994's *Sleep With Me* espousing the homoerotic subtext of *Top Gun*.) He has earned some much-deserved auteur-driven discussion in the last ten-fifteen years: from those who have reassessed his movies, to those who always loved Scott (as Tarantino did) and saw depth and meaning in his work. When Scott passed away, the *New York Times'* film critic Manohla Dargis wrote a lovely piece discussing his talents as a "maximalist" and how: "More than one colleague dinged me for liking his films, as if happily admitting to their pleasures was an unpardonable breach of good taste (or correct politics). There was plenty about his work that was problematic and at times offensive, yet it could have terrific pop, vigour, beauty, and a near pure-cinema quality. These were, more than anything, films by someone who wanted to pull you in hard and never let you go."

As Tarantino said in a 2012 discussion with Richard Kelly (moderated by Jeff Goldsmith) after Scott had died: "He's like Douglas Sirk, he never got respect, was too commercial, people put him down. Now they teach classes about him."

A craftsman who worked hard, he revelled in action, sex, explosions, fabulous art direction, and quick cutting throughout his career, and he also had wit and intelligence, a darkness and a light. He worked wonderfully with so many great actors, including Denzel Washington whom he directed in five films. His movies had a rhythm and flow, like music. His films could be brutal, could be magnificently crazy, but they rarely lacked humanity.





And he loved transporting audiences while learning new things himself. He told me in a 2006 interview: "I have no regrets. I love the fact that people will continue to employ me and pay me to do what I want to do, which is attempt another world. That's what's so great even about this. I get the opportunity to do new things. I get the chance to do the research, educate myself, and I get the chance in... touching this world."

"Attempt another world" and "touching this world" – what a beautiful way to explain his artistry and love. And as he expressed to me and to others, he loved *True Romance*. He loved Tarantino's script, and he loved all of those brilliant performances, and he loved Clarence and Alabama. The script originally had Clarence dying, but Scott just couldn't do it – he had to change the ending. He said to me in 2006:

*"I love all my films, but True Romance was the best screenplay I ever had. And all that was Quentin. It was so well crafted. But I did change the end... I shot the film in continuity, so by the time I got to the end of shooting the movie, I had fallen in love with the two characters. It was a love story. I wanted these characters to live."*

You can feel it in every inch of the movie, right down to the smallest roles. From Oldman to Pitt to Samuel L. Jackson to Chris Penn to Sizemore, to James Gandolfini.

Gandolfini makes an impression (to say the least) when Alabama has her showdown with his hitman. It's a painfully violent, terrifying scene, and Scott and Tarantino spare Alabama no comfort – but they also don't exploit or condescend to her. Her ferocity in fighting back, her loyalty to Clarence, even the way she breathes and lunges and screams, blood dripping down her face, smiling in his face, middle finger extended high, fills the viewer with a range of emotions, much like her angst-filled confession of love on the rooftop. She's surviving, and it's bloody as hell, but it's supremely moving. When I brought up this scene to Scott, and how emotionally charged it was, he said it was "multi-layered in terms of charm, humour, and violence at the extreme. Patricia is unique," he said. "She's got this angelic childlike quality, yet she's got this strangeness."

Her sweetness and strangeness melds with the picture's pulpy lyricism and beauty. When composer Hans Zimmer's *Badlands* homage chimes in, at both beginning and end, and Arquette's loving, haunting narration is heard, an ode to Sissy Spacek, you feel a wistfulness that, though a cinematic homage, belongs to Clarence and Alabama as well. They've earned that music.

And after all the guns and coke and blood and Hollywood craziness, it leaves one with a feeling that bad times are behind you, and hopefully, love is in front of you (though one can never be sure). Alabama watches Clarence run on the beach with their child in a final scene that looks like a dream from heaven; as if, maybe, their characters never made it out alive, and Clarence really, *truly* got to meet Elvis. Are we dreaming? Yes and no – this is a movie. But in the movie, they do make it out alive. As Scott would say, they're attempting "another world."

*Kim Morgan is a film writer and screenwriter whose work has appeared in Sight & Sound, Criterion, the Los Angeles Review of Books, the New Beverly, and her own blog, Sunset Gun. She co-wrote the screenplay, Nightmare Alley, with Guillermo del Toro.*





# TONY SCOTT, YOU'RE SO COOL

by Nicholas Clement

Sometimes, it takes an artist's death for them to experience the critical adoration that should have been bestowed upon them during their prime working years. This is what has happened with filmmaker Tony Scott, who tragically passed away in 2012. His unmatched style, despite legions of imitators, evolved in fascinating ways over the years; try comparing the pictorial design of films like *Top Gun* (1986) or *Revenge* (1990) to efforts like *Man on Fire* (2004) or *Domino* (2005). His full-throttle filmmaking career certainly contained unexpected twists and turns, and throughout all of the blockbusters and avant-garde experiments, his identifiable directorial stamp firmly placed him in the realm of visual auteur, with a body of work that feels stylistically and narratively tethered to a dynamic set of filmic principles. Not only does a Tony Scott film have a distinct aesthetic personality, his movies have numerous common emotional threads that help to create a seamless effect that runs the course of his entire body of work, no matter the genre.

Born in Tynemouth, Northumberland, in the North East of England, Scott was the youngest of three sons, whose father, Colonel Francis Percy Scott, served in the Royal Engineers. Tony took a cue from his older sibling, Ridley, and followed in his footsteps, with big brother paving the way in terms of Tony's immediate passion for art. From his life-long love for painting, to the way that he used shape, colour, and texture to approximate cinematic mood, it's easy to see how Tony became enamoured with generating a personal style that he could call his own. He'd go on to study first at the Grangefield School, which was followed by the West Hartlepool College of Art. Scott then graduated from Sunderland Art School with a fine arts degree, and then, just as Ridley had done, Tony attended and graduated from the Royal College of Art in London. All of these experiences helped to shape how Scott viewed the world around him, so it seemed only natural that he'd enter the world of commercials and advertisements, a space that he dominated, along with Ridley, for over a decade.

And then, at the start of the 1980s, the great British invasion of Hollywood would commence, with high-energy contemporaries such as Hugh Hudson (*Chariots of Fire* [1981], *Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan* [1984], *Revolution* [1985]), Alan Parker (*Midnight Express* [1978], *Fame* [1980], *Pink Floyd: The Wall* [1982]), Adrian Lyne (*Flashdance* [1983], *9 ½ Weeks* [1986], *Fatal Attraction* [1987]) and brother Ridley (*Alien* [1979], *Blade Runner* [1982], *Legend* [1985]) emerging from the ranks of the ad world and bursting on the scene of very commercial studio filmmaking.

Legendary producers Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer caught notice of Scott's artsy Hollywood directorial debut, *The Hunger* (1983), which starred David Bowie and Catherine Deneuve as quite ancient yet very modern vampires, looking for a fresh bite of love and blood. And while *The Hunger* flopped with critics and baffled audiences, the super-producers saw in Scott the raw visual talent that they needed for their high-concept, high-gloss actioners. Then, after viewing a famous Saab television commercial which pitted the automobile vs. a fighter jet, the "visionary alliance" knew they'd found the right filmmaker to helm *Top Gun*, which blasted Scott off into the box-office stratosphere, and cemented him as an A-list, in-demand craftsman.

After a trio of populist entertainments (*Beverly Hills Cop II* [1987], *Days of Thunder* [1990], *The Last Boy Scout* [1992]), there seemed to be a decided switch in Scott's head in terms of what type of material he became attracted to. His mid-career masterpiece, 1993's *True Romance*, boasted arguably the best screenplay that he ever worked with (penned by Quentin Tarantino), and in retrospect, really played to all of his strengths as a director. Mixing slick images with gritty locales and staccato editing, *True Romance* is a supremely stylish, cheerfully profane, and absurdly entertaining fantasy about a comic-book reading, Sonny Chiba/Elvis Presley loving geek (Christian Slater, in a career best performance) who crosses paths with a heart-of-gold-hooker (Patricia Arquette, also a career best performance), and then gets mixed up with the mafia, the FBI, scuzzy drug dealers, a suitcase of cocaine, obnoxious Hollywood movie producers, a stoned-out Brad Pitt sitting on a couch smoking pot from a homemade Honey Bear bong, and one very dangerous and racially confused pimp with some interesting ideas on personal hygiene. Tarantino's floral, vulgar voice can be heard in every line of sharp-tongued dialogue, and Scott's hard-charging visual style can be felt in every single frame, creating a nearly overwhelming cinematic experience for the viewer.

The insane supporting cast is hard to fathom: Christopher Walken at his scene-stealing best; Dennis Hopper, hitting unexpected grace notes to go along with his usual brand of hostility and anger; a young and thin James Gandolfini as a most lethal enforcer; Val Kilmer as the shadowy ghost of The King, constantly haunting Slater's mental state; a dreadlocked, one-eyed, totally rambunctious Gary Oldman playing the pimp from hell; Bronson Pinchot as a put-upon Hollywood assistant who has to deal with Saul Rubinek as his sleazy producer/boss, both giving hilarious performances of Tinseltown excess run amok; Samuel L. Jackson as a quickly dispatched hood who shares his lovely opinions regarding oral sex; and Michael Rapaport as the innocent nice-guy caught up in all of the chaos, the kind of person everyone has met at once in their life, the lovable naïve friend who can't get out of

their own way. Every film that Scott made benefitted from a deep and robust cast, but it's almost as if it was with *True Romance* that Scott truly realised the power that comes with getting the perfect actor for each role, no matter how big or small.

And while *True Romance* bombed at the box office and was met with surprisingly indifferent reviews at the time of its release, the film is now considered ahead of its time, and has rightfully become a major cult favourite, with numerous critics who disliked it upon first glance and condemned its violent content, becoming fans down the road. Christian Wagner, co-editor of the film says: "Many concerns stemmed from the level of violence. We did 42 MPAA submissions with *True Romance*, and it kept getting an X-rating. They were just so taken back by the violence, and Tony was adamant that the film retain its level of intensity. It got extremely political, lots of phone calls were made, and we finally got an R-rating after Tony basically said 'stop trimming' because they'd never realise from cut to cut what had been taken out. At the Lakewood premiere, half of the audience walked out because they were turned off by the violence. Critics were mixed and the film only grossed \$10 million. But then, of course, it took on a second life after the success of *Pulp Fiction* and *Natural Born Killers* (both 1994). We were ahead of the curve by a year."

Despite making violent and testosterone fuelled action pictures throughout most of his career, Scott's films always had one thing going for them: heart. He was a filmmaker who genuinely loved his characters, flaws and all, so when it came to the climactic gun battle of *True Romance*, it's no surprise that Scott wanted things to play out a bit differently than Tarantino may have intended. And even if Scott softened Tarantino's original ending (the writer's initial script had Slater's character getting killed during the finale), the Oscar-winning scenarist has revealed in interviews that he ultimately understood why Scott did what he did with that creative decision. "When we finished the movie, Quentin looked at it. He asked if we could make him a black and white dupe, and if he could do a cut of his own," says Wagner. "Tony said sure, go for it! Quentin used one of the assistants and he cut together his edit and he showed it to Tony. The thing was, Tony was so impressed with Quentin's writing, he was in awe of him. He'd have let him do pretty much anything. The movie that was released was Tony's vision, but that he allowed Quentin to do his own cut says a lot about who Tony was as a person and collaborative partner."

Over the years, as the two seismic cinematic voices continued to make their own motion pictures, many people now agree that the marriage of Scott and Tarantino was a match made in cinematic heaven; at the time of the film's creation, we didn't really know the gift we were all being given. And when you look at future Scott efforts,









many of which were produced by Don Simpson and Bruckheimer, including *Crimson Tide* (1995), *Enemy of the State* (1998), and *Déjà Vu* (2006), you notice that each title features characters that we really care about and become invested in. That's what separated Scott from some of his action-filmmaking contemporaries; he understood that without a rooting interest in the people who are driving the narratives forward, the overall effort wouldn't carry the same level of impact. So it's almost miraculous, especially when looking back over the cumulative body of work, to notice just how consistent Scott was in terms of delivering a film that fired on all cylinders.

Music and sound were also of the utmost importance to Scott, and in *True Romance*, he continued his relationship with Hans Zimmer, who had previously scored *Days of Thunder* for the director, and who would go on to collaborate with Scott on *Crimson Tide* and *The Fan* (1996). Most memorably, and starting with the evocative opening credits in *True Romance*, the images conjured up by Scott and cinematographer Jeffrey L. Kimball have a particular hardness to them, so when you hear the score's opening theme, which is based on "Gassenhauer" from Carl Orff's *Schulwerk*, it's a startling juxtaposition of chilly Detroit locations and inviting, almost warm sonic ambience, which of course draws the viewer in with a unique sense of anticipation. This theme, combined with Arquette's spoken voiceover, is clearly a tip of the hat to Terrence Malick's 1973 crime film *Badlands*, in which Sissy Spacek provides the dreamy voiceover, with the two films also sharing similar dramatic motifs.

Unfairly derided by many critics for being too stylish and obsessed with his camera techniques and not enough by story and character, Scott was a filmmaker that was often misunderstood, despite setting so many standards each time a film was released. However flashy and exuberant, his aggressive sensibilities were always in service to his material, but it was because his style was so significant and exotic that many people were often left shell-shocked by his visual abilities in ways they couldn't truly appreciate at first. For a wide swath of his career, Scott's bold cinematic language served as a new form of cinematic communication being created by a director who had a true zest for his craft and the endless possibilities of the medium. He was a trendsetter, a bar-raiser, someone who the phrase "pure cinema" was coined for, and the sense of loss that movie fans have felt since his passing is palpable; there was *nothing* like the Tony Scott Experience.

Just think about the now-famous scene between Walken and Hopper, where Walken and his goons have their moment of death with Hopper. Everything about this sequence is all about the details, with so many individual moments contributing to an overall sequence that has stood the test of time and become a classic movie moment.

There's abrasive humour and graphic violence rubbing up against each other during this beautifully lit and cut sequence, and by casting the normally volatile Hopper as the good guy, the audience still got that sense of edge from the actor, even when he earns honest sympathy. And with Walken being so calm about his own psychopathy, there's a chilling sense of finality to the entire thing. According to Wagner, "I cut the film for three months on my own, and then Michael Tronick came in and we worked together for a month. We'd watch the dailies every night and Tony would pick his selects with the producers and cinematographer Jeffrey Kimball. I got assigned the 'Sicilian' sequence and it was done in my first pass. Tony approved it when he saw it, and he absolutely loved all of the cutaways to the various guys in the room while Dennis and Chris were doing their thing."

No filmmaker shaped the modern action film, nor set trends in pop aesthetics, like Tony Scott. He was an artist who consistently presented an uncompromised vision, with one hand firmly on the pulse of his commercial audience, with the other experimenting in an overtly artistic manner in an effort to stretch his craft and the medium. Despite his hard-charging style, his films have a fully beating heart at their centre, displaying wonderful empathy for multidimensional characters. Yet his movies also display an intense desire to showcase the tiniest of character details, while the individual narratives became expanded in increasingly ambitious scope and intent throughout the years. Never one to make a sequel or to fully repeat himself, Scott's desire to hit new heights with each project is evident when looking at all of the pieces that go into making a major motion picture. So when viewed in this context, the notion of making *True Romance*, especially at the exact time in his life that he made it, had to have been extremely appealing to Scott as an artist.

The early 90s were fertile ground for cinematic artists to flex their muscles within the studio system, and another film birthed from the indelible pen of Quentin Tarantino was 1994's *Natural Born Killers*, which was directed by incendiary filmmaker Oliver Stone (*Platoon* [1986], *JFK* [1991]), and which helped to usher in a new sense of hyper-stylised, action-first storytelling. *True Romance*, which of course had come out a year before *Natural Born Killers* made serious waves in the media, also helped to pave the way for a trend I'll call Modern Cubist Action Cinema, which inspired Scott's own *Man on Fire* and *Domino*, Wayne Kramer's *Running Scared* (2006), Joe Carnahan's *Smokin' Aces* (2006), Michael Davis's *Shoot 'Em Up* (2007), and countless other efforts which vary on the quality scale. These films ignited a sub-genre of modern action pictures that are seemingly shot through the aesthetic lens of a painting by Picasso; expressiveness meets the abstract, with tiny pieces of pictorial information melding into one big heap of visual fury. These films have an almost



surreal quality to them, and while they aren't meant to be taken wholly literally, they traffic in substantial ideas, themes, and emotions. The imagery on display is jacked and juiced for extreme impact, while their respective narratives jumble and blur into a cacophony of freewheeling expression (both verbal and visual) and overall flamboyant artistry.

The phrase "in-your-face" applies, but only in the crudest sense of the term; yes, these filmmakers are hurling their visions at their audiences, but not without serious intent or regard for the form and the content they're purveying. All of Scott's films were a blitzkrieg of colour, sound, movement, and cinematic ferocity that slapped the viewer wide awake, never letting them off the hook for a second, winking a sly wink one minute, and then playing for keeps the next. There's a post-MTV quality to all of these films, with filmmakers like Stone and Scott making it easier for many others to branch into these exciting realms. Stone's *Natural Born Killers* served as a seismic contribution to the landscape of world cinema, representing both the high-water-mark and a new jumping-off point for this sort of adrenaline-fuelled style. That film acted as a crescendo of sorts for Stone as an artist, who had evolved and refined his passionate filmmaking style over the years with efforts such as *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), *JFK*, and *The Doors* (1990), and it's very easy to see Stone's influence on Scott with his handling of many elements in *True Romance*.

Scott would go for broke with his acid-tinged visual style in some of his later work, stretching what had been allowed or even contemplated in big-budget storytelling in terms of their overall design, and their eagerness to actively involve the viewer on various levels of visual and sonic information. *Man on Fire* is a classically plotted revenge movie goosed by Scott's desire to immerse the viewer in a hyperactive aesthetic that grabs you by the neck and never lets up. Subtitles race across the screen, images are blown-out to hot-whites, and every single edit feels razor sharp, as the increasingly disorienting style feeds off the main character's broken mental psyche – it's what a descent into a violent nightmare would be like. And *Déjà Vu* is a mind-bending thriller with fantastic nods to real-world science fiction, a genre that Scott only had the chance to dip into once. Snazzily photographed by Paul Cameron (*Collateral* [2004], *Man on Fire*), *Déjà Vu* combines cop-procedural elements with a neat time travel twist, with Chris Seagers' elaborately rendered production design becoming one of the film's best assets, as the fast moving computer images zoom off the time-machine's control panels, which keeps your head continually buzzing. It's easily one of the artsiest, most gorgeously conceived studio programmers ever crafted; even when making "one for them," Tony Scott was never content to play it 100% safe.

But the one film in Scott's oeuvre that directly benefitted the most from the effect of *True Romance* would be 2005's *Domino*, which was his ultimate directorial passion project, and which made its critical and box-office failure even more disheartening for the artist. The sheer exuberance of *Domino* should have been noticed by scholars and audiences at the time of its release, and over the years, it's become one of Scott's most divisive and misunderstood offerings. In many ways, *Domino* represents the apex of what Scott wanted to achieve as a storyteller and stylist. Boasting an intricately plotted script and a wild cast of colourful characters (shades of *True Romance* abound all over the place, especially during the final, 'Mexican stand-off' set-piece), *Domino* is a sexy and aesthetically pulsating pseudo-biopic of bounty hunter Domino Harvey (the fantastic Keira Knightley) that exists not only as a premiere showcase for Scott's obsession with style, but as one of the best meta comments on pop and celebrity that's been attempted. It's also stunningly conceived and progressively sophisticated in terms of its craft and construction, resembling the purest form of cubist-style filmmaking that any team has accomplished. *Domino* feels like it's been sent from the future, a hyper-stylized blend of visual tricks that feed off of adrenalin, excitement, and raw visceral impact, using small, fragmented images to tell a complete picture and story.

What makes *Domino* work as a whole is that the narrative is as intense as the style, with much of the film taking place through a cloud of mescaline, and the third act incorporating a mental-trip aspect to the proceedings. And then there's *Domino* herself, a rowdy and rebellious British model turned bounty hunter, uninterested in simply sitting pretty as she could easily have done. The real *Domino* Harvey did in fact lead an insane life, but it probably wasn't as over the top as Richard Kelly and Steve Barancik's crisscrossing and zig-zagging script, which is something the filmmakers slyly made clear upfront, even including an on-screen graphic that reads: "Based on a true story... sort of." What's most noticeable about *Domino* is how aggressive it is, and how incredibly intricate the plotting becomes, and yet, Scott's exhilarating style would mean nothing if it wasn't in service of an engrossing plot with multidimensional characters you can root for. Starting with the arresting opening credits sequence and climaxing with an exploding casino and a massive, three-party shoot-out, *Domino* is akin to a roller-coaster ride, and it's hard to imagine a world where *True Romance* wouldn't have come first for Scott.

And, ultimately, what one is left with when all of the bullets have been fired, and all of the couch feathers have fallen to the floor, is that Scott intended *True Romance* to be a complete and utter blast of fun, which is a sentiment that stretched all the way throughout his entire body of work. The mixing of black comedy and ultra-violence







was just becoming mainstream and would of course hit new peaks with Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*, so when tone is discussed, it's important to note that Scott beat everyone to the punch by a year before this trend really took off. And also, and likely most important, Scott demanded that you feel everything in *True Romance* – every kiss, every punch, every gunshot. The now-legendary fight between Arquette and Gandolfini still feels dangerous and shockingly hardcore despite so many other films from over the years throwing insane levels of violence at the viewer, and it's because of how Scott always allowed his viewer to be a participant in the action, through his use of camera movement and placement, and his customarily heightened use of sound and colour, that moments like that one still register as genuinely harrowing. The audience cared because Tony Scott cared, and we're all the richer for this relationship between artist and audience.

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# TRUE ROMANCE: 15 YEARS LATER

by Marc Spitz

*This candid oral history on the making of the film, featuring interviews with key cast and crew, was originally published by Maxim (maxim.com) in 2008. Reprinted through the kind courtesy of Maxim Digital.*

On September 10, 1993, a major motion picture – penned by future hotshot Quentin Tarantino, directed by action pro Tony Scott, and starring Christian Slater and Patricia Arquette — hit theaters with a brash fusion of stylized violence and whip-smart dialogue. It bombed. But *True Romance* was born again when it was released on video, achieving cult status among film geeks, rock stars, and regular Joes who got hip to Tarantino after 1994's *Pulp Fiction*. Now, on the iconic flick's 15th anniversary, you'd never guess the saga of an Elvis-obsessed loner who marries a hooker and flees to California with her pimp's cocaine, was anything but a Hollywood hit. A few of its scenes – cue the Christopher Walken/Dennis Hopper face-off – are held in mythic esteem. We corralled the stars and creators to reconstruct the secret history of *True Romance* – the production screwups, the on-set madness, and the sex and violence that reverberate so strongly to this day.

## Act I: Boy Screenwriter Meets Hollywood

**Tony Scott (director):** When I was directing *The Last Boy Scout*, my assistant was hanging out with this quirky guy named Quentin Tarantino, and he'd be around the set. She said, "You gotta read his script." I said, "Yeah, right."

**Quentin Tarantino (screenwriter):** When you're a nobody, it's murder to get anyone to read your scripts. So my thing was making the first page fantastic, with dialogue that grabbed you right away. The original *True Romance* script started with a long discussion about cunnilingus. Most people said the script was racist and that the grotesque violence would make people sick. I told Tony, "Read the first three pages. If you don't like it, throw it away."

**Scott:** He gave me two scripts: *True Romance*, which was his first script, and *Reservoir Dogs*. I'm a terrible reader, but I read them both on a flight to Europe. By the time I landed, I wanted to make both of them into movies. When I told Quentin, he said, "You can only do one."

Scott got *True Romance*. Given his blockbuster track record (*Top Gun*, *Days of Thunder*), Harvey and Bob Weinstein, whose Miramax Films would also distribute *Reservoir Dogs*, came aboard as executive producers. Now Scott needed to find the right cast.

**Christian Slater (Clarence Worley):** I was making *Unchained Heart* in Minnesota when I got the script. Clarence, the lead character, was an oddball. Not your typical film hero. He obviously spent a lot of time alone, talking to his imaginary Elvis. His brain wasn't all there.

**Tarantino:** For most first-time writers, the lead character is your stand-in. Clarence was me. If you'd asked me then if Christian Slater was right for the part, I'd have said no – he was too handsome. I was thinking of Robert Carradine.

**Slater:** I met Quentin during rehearsal and remember thinking that Clarence was a version of who he wanted to be. I had visions of guys like Quentin who worked in video stores and are energetic about movies, but could never really be Charles Bronson. Tony had a different take. He thought of Clarence as much cooler.

**Scott:** Christian and I watched *Taxi Driver*. Before that I think he saw Clarence as softer. I was chasing black fucking comedy, and Christian was looking at it as more of a comedy.

**Patricia Arquette (Alabama Whitman):** My agent told me about this script for a Tony Scott movie. There was a lot I liked about it, but I didn't like when Alabama was sort of racist. By now we've all gotten used to Quentin's tone, but at the time I was somewhat shocked by it. I was asking myself, "What is this? Whoa!" I don't know if the line about being turned off by Persians was in the script. Actually, every time we shot that scene, I would say a different ethnic group—I wanted to be equally offensive to all people.

**Tarantino:** When I wrote it, my ideal Alabama was Joan Cusack.

**Arquette:** Tony really wanted Drew Barrymore as Alabama. He was obsessed with her. He had pictures of her wearing little outfits. But I think she was unavailable.

**Scott:** We met with Patricia, and Christian had a woody from the first time he saw her. That made my life a lot easier. The viewer believing they're in love comes from their chemistry. Patricia fell in love with Christian, and he with her. They had a true romance.

**Arquette:** The material led to this incredibly romantic, magnetized relationship. Christian is charming and funny, and there was a sexual attraction between us.

**Slater:** It was love at first sight. But working with Patricia was tricky, because I was in a relationship. We both made attempts to be professional, but at that age it was difficult.

**Gary Oldman (Drexel Spivey, pimp):** I hadn't read the script, and knew nothing about it. Tony and I had tea at the Four Seasons and he said, "Look, I can't really explain the plot. But Drexel's a pimp who's white but thinks he's black." That was all I needed to hear. I said, "I'll do it."

**Scott:** Gary called me out of the blue and said, "I've got it. I know exactly who this guy is: He's my drug dealer."

**Oldman:** My drug dealer? Tony would fucking get me arrested, wouldn't he? I've never had a drug dealer! I organized Drexel's dreadlocks under my own steam. Then I went to a dentist who made the teeth. Then I thought about giving him a weird eye. I'm only in the film for about 10 minutes – I wanted to make my mark. I heard this gang of black kids outside my trailer and thought, "That's Drexel." I showed this kid my lines and said, "Does this seem authentic?" He changed some words. He said, "That don't fly. Drexel wouldn't say 'titties'; he'd say 'breasteses.'"

**Tarantino:** Those kids were clowning him, and he believed them because he didn't know any better. Because he's British.

**Bronson Pinchot (Elliot Blitzler, drug connection):** I got the script during the last days of *Perfect Strangers*. I read the entire pussy-eating monologue in my character Balki's accent. People on set were scandalized.

**Scott:** Meanwhile, Quentin became a sensation around Hollywood. He was making his indie movie with *Reservoir Dogs*, and I was doing the big movie. Everybody wanted to be a part of it. Brad Pitt, who had recently done *Thelma & Louise*, called and said, "Why don't you let me play the roommate?" I said, "Are you serious? Fucking yes!" because he was on the bloom of stardom. Val Kilmer wanted to play Clarence. I had a different vision, so Val said, "Then let me play Elvis." For six months before we started shooting, he would sing Elvis songs on my answering machine.

**Slater:** I watched as many Elvis movies as I could, doing my best to fall in love with him like Clarence does. Elvis the imaginary friend was real to Clarence.

**Tarantino:** Is Elvis really visiting Clarence, or is it his imagination? I can give you the answer, but I'm not going to. It's for you to decide.

## **Act II: Hollywood Actors Meet, Lose Egos**

*When filming began, the combination of veteran actors and breakout talent fostered a spirit of collaboration. Together they'd tackle racially sensitive monologues, a vicious fight between a hulking mobster and a petite hooker, and a bullet-riddled climax. Improvisation would be embraced. Tears would be shed. And if the director had to slap someone around, so be it.*

**Tom Sizemore (Cody Nicholson, LAPD detective):** Tony started every take like this: "Rock'n'roll, motherfuckers! Action!"

**Scott:** Gary would bring his 70-year-old mum to the set. After a take he'd go, "Mum, what do you think?" She'd say, "It's good," and he'd go, "What the fuck do you know? It's terrible."

**Oldman:** Yeah, my mother was on the set. She's seen it all. God bless her, she's still running around at 88 years old.

**Scott:** His mum was also there for the scene where Drexel's dick gets blown off. She said, "Yeah, I thought that was really good."

**Oldman:** The gun fired blanks, but there was still a flare and powder coming out of the barrel. I wore a metal cup. I've died in a lot of movies, but to have my dick blown off and then get shot in the face with my eyes open, that's up there. That beats a stake through the heart.

**Arquette:** I had a hard time with the scene where Clarence tells me he's killed Drexel and I say, "What you did was so romantic." I couldn't jump to that reaction. My acting coach and I came up with the idea that here's a man I barely know, who killed someone and is eating a burger. He could kill me next. As a female, the way to stay safe is to be in a love bubble. Part of her does think it's romantic, like, kill all the mistakes I ever made.

*The classic standoff between a Mob boss (Walken) and Clarence's protective father (Hopper) is among the movie's most memorable scenes. Due to its racially charged language, it's also the most controversial.*



**Arquette:** I'd worked with Dennis on *The Indian Runner* and had a little crush on him, but never expressed it. We had this scene where I kiss him, and he goes, "She does taste like a peach." I had someone go buy this lip gloss from when I was a kid. I wanted him to lick his lips and go, "Wow, she actually does taste like peach."

**Dennis Hopper (Clifford Worley, Clarence's father):** The only lines Christopher Walken and I improvised in our big scene were my line "You're part eggplant," and his line "You're a cantaloupe." The rest was written by Quentin. Was I worried about the racial overtones? Not really. Because it's factual. The Moors did invade Sicily, and they did breed. Quentin writes like people speak. He doesn't have to be PC.

**James Gandolfini (Virgil, Mob henchman):** I was glad to just be observing Hopper and Walken. We were crowded into this little trailer when Hopper gets shot, so everyone was offered earplugs. I remember Walken didn't ask for any, so, being very cool, I didn't ask for any either. I couldn't hear for three goddamn days.

**Hopper:** Tony has this special gun that you fire and flames come out the side. I said, "Tony, you're not putting that gun right to my head." He said, "It's fine, do it to me." So a crew guy shot him, and he started bleeding. He said, "OK, that won't work."

*Clarence and Alabama's plan to sell the stolen cocaine in L.A. allowed Tarantino to add a layer of Hollywood satire to the story. And Scott, whose Last Boy Scout was coproduced by fast-talking über-producer Joel Silver, was ready to inject his own observations.*

**Slater:** I think the movie captured what L.A. is pretty much about. There are lots of shady characters and wacky producers.

**Tarantino:** I didn't write the part of the producer who buys the coke to be Joel Silver. Tony turned him into Joel Silver.

**Saul Rubinek (Lee Donowitz, Hollywood producer):** I was auditioning and Tony said, "You got him exactly right. That's Joel. You nailed him." And I said, "Sorry, I'm confused – Joel?" "Joel Silver," he said. I had no idea who that was.

**Scott:** The Hollywood satire is affectionate. But Joel didn't talk to me for a while after that.

*The original script set a preliminary drug deal involving Clarence and two wannabe actors at a zoo. But Scott, wanting more action, switched the locale to an amusement park.*

**Scott:** The roller-coaster scene was difficult. Pinchot was shitting himself, and Rapaport was so scared that he dropped a bunch of Quaaludes and couldn't say his lines.

**Michael Rapaport (Dick Ritchie, wannabe actor):** I don't like roller coasters. They had to convince me to ride it, and I threw up, so we had to reshoot it a week later. The second time, they sedated me. Some shots show me smiling because I'm drugged out of my mind, and some show me crying because I honestly thought I was going to crap.

**Gandolfini:** Everybody was young and nuts. Brad Pitt was around, too. I don't think he was 'Brad Pitt' then, but he was great. I just had to watch him and say, "What a fuckin' flake." He improvised a lot.

**Scott:** "Don't condescend me." That's not in the script. That was Pitt.

**Tarantino:** Not only is Brad good, but his scene with the gangsters got the audience laughing so hard. It was one of the best reactions I've ever seen in a piece of my work.

*True Romance's most shocking scene may be Gandolfini's brutal interrogation and beating of Arquette, in which both actors bravely push the movie's trademark blend of eloquence and violence to the limit – and wind up with the bruises to show for it.*

**Tarantino:** At that point in the movie, if Clarence is getting the shit kicked out of him, you know he isn't going to die because he's the star and there are 20 minutes to go. But dramatically speaking, Alabama could have died. She was expendable.

**Scott:** Gandolfini exudes both childlike innocence and enormous fucking danger. The fight scene between him and Patricia builds slowly, like a volcano. There's small talk at the beginning: "You're so cute – spin around for me." Then he pops her.

**Arquette:** First it's about a girl waiting for her boyfriend to rescue her, and she's working through her natural bag of tricks: flirting, being dumb. Then Virgil tells her about the transition he made to being a killer. And really, he's telling her what's going to happen to her in a moment. She's going to make this transition, and she's never going to be the same person.

**Gandolfini:** Patricia was totally down with it – she was very strong and tough. I'd do something to her character, and her stunt woman would call me a pussy.





**Arquette:** My mind wasn't where I wanted to be, so Tony said, "Do you want me to help you?" I said yes, and he smacked me in the face. I was shocked. I started crying.

**Scott:** When she couldn't get herself there emotionally, Patricia used to call my right hand "The Persuader." She'd say, "Bring on The Persuader," and I'd have to slap her. She'd say, "Hit me harder!" I'd stand there on the set giving Patricia right-handers. That does not happen a lot with me and actors.

**Gandolfini:** It was a little rough. There was a lot of throwing. You didn't see that often with a man and woman. I ended up doing it a lot on *The Sopranos* for some reason.

**Pinchot:** I can't watch the scene where Patricia's being beat up. It's so good it makes me sick. Chris Penn and Tom Sizemore were also amazing as the cops who make me wear a wire to the drug deal. We did takes where Chris slapped me across the face with the bag of coke, then grabbed me in a stranglehold and smashed my head on the table. There's some woman talking about her boobs, and all of a sudden Chris Penn is strangling me.

**Sizemore:** It was tough keeping a straight face during the scenes with Bronson. It was very funny when he had the listening device in his crotch. My laughs in that scene are authentic.

**Pinchot:** When Clarence pulls the gun in the elevator, my character fucking loses it. If you're going to do a scene like that, you have to stay up all night. I said to myself, there's nothing else in my head but reality. Nobody on set is eating a Snickers bar right now. There is only me, and I'm gonna die.

**Sizemore:** The scene where we're listening to what's going on in the elevator was all improvised. We didn't work on anything. God rest his soul, Chris Penn was a wonderful, underrated actor – a real pro. He also was the brother of Sean Penn, one of the greater actors of all time. So he had a tough road.

**Arquette:** We filmed the hotel drug deal at the abandoned Ambassador Hotel, where Robert Kennedy was shot. We just called that scene the clusterfuck.

**Sizemore:** It was a clusterfuck. And the fucking feathers from the exploding pillows were there for four days, man. I got killed in take one, and I had to lay there the whole time with feathers in my mouth.

**Scott:** In Quentin's original script, Christian dies and Patricia takes off with the money. All the cynical people die. Rapaport is spared because he's innocent, and everybody else gets their comeuppance.

**Tarantino:** I tried like hell to convince Tony to let Clarence die, because that's what I wrote and it wasn't open for conjecture. I made this big dramatic plea: "You're losing your balls. You're trying to make it Hollywood shit. Why are you doing this?" He listened to the whole thing and then convinced me 100 percent that he wasn't doing it for commercial reasons.

**Scott:** I just fell in love with these two characters and didn't want to see them die. I wanted them together.

**Tarantino:** When I watched the movie, I realized that Tony was right. He always saw it as a fairy tale love story, and in that capacity it works magnificently. But in my world Clarence is dead and Alabama is on her own. If she ever shows up in another one of my scripts, Clarence will still be dead.

### **Act III: Movie Meets Multiplex, Loses Money, Earns Fans**

*When the movie wrapped, the actors wiped off the fake blood and went their separate ways, while Scott dived into editing and working with Warner Bros. to market his movie. All concerned had high hopes.*

**Scott:** We had test screenings in Orange County. Christian was a date-movie star at the time, so our focus group was a little miscast. Two thirds of the theater emptied when Gary blew away Sam Jackson, and the rest left when Christian blew away Gary.

**Hopper:** Every time they showed it to an audience, they'd get standing ovations.

**Tarantino:** Warner Bros. was going to change the title to *Reckless Hearts*. I called Patricia, Christian, and Tony and said, "Let's go to the press junket and talk about how bad that title is and how good the real title is. We'll name the head of the marketing department in every interview so he's on the fucking hook."

**Rubinek:** The movie bombed. I don't think the studio knew how to market this kind of movie. If they released it today, it would be a hit.

**Hopper:** I was surprised. The movie had no theatrical life – it came and went in a week. Were people expecting a traditional love story?

*Indeed, True Romance made a miserable \$11.5 million at the box office. It did receive some good reviews, but not from Senator Bob Dole, who, as a presidential candidate in 1995, lambasted it as an example of movies that “revel in mindless violence and loveless sex.”*

**Arquette:** Senators talked about *True Romance* because they were advocating more censorship. Bob Dole said our movie was “disgusting” – or maybe that I was disgusting.

**Tarantino:** I knew Dole hadn’t seen *True Romance* or *Natural Born Killers*. I couldn’t believe that a guy running for president of the United States, the land of the free and the home of the brave, was condemning art he hadn’t even seen. You fucking asshole, you’d say anything to get elected.

**Hopper:** I don’t know anyone in the industry who hasn’t seen it now. It’s a wonderful movie, and not just because I have a great scene.

**Rapaport:** People still call me Dick Ritchie. I’ve had people come up and start quoting Christopher Walken, and it scares the shit out of me, because I don’t realize they’re movie lines.

**Oldman:** My most quoted line is, “I know I’m pretty, but I ain’t as pretty as a pair of fifties.”

**Tarantino:** People have told me that they put the “You’re so cool” line in their wedding vows. I even met a couple with matching “You’re so cool” tattoos. *True Romance* and *Reservoir Dogs* were the growing pains for *Pulp Fiction*’s success. Audiences were seeing something they hadn’t seen before – comedy and violence switching on a dime. They’d be horrified one second and laughing the next.









# THE GREAT TONY SCOTT

by Edgar Wright

*This tribute to Tony Scott was published by director Edgar Wright (Shaun of the Dead, Hot Fuzz) on his now-defunct blog on August 20th 2012, upon the announcement of Scott's death.*

When I visited Arlight Hollywood on November 12, 2010 to see Tony Scott's *Unstoppable* on its opening night, I was almost certain that I would have a great time watching it. And I did.

What I didn't know is that it would be the last time I would enjoy a new Tony Scott movie.

Forgive the name drop on such a sad occasion, but one of the people who came to see *Unstoppable* with me that night was Quentin Tarantino. We sometimes joked that we were two members of the somewhat exclusive *Domino* fan club.

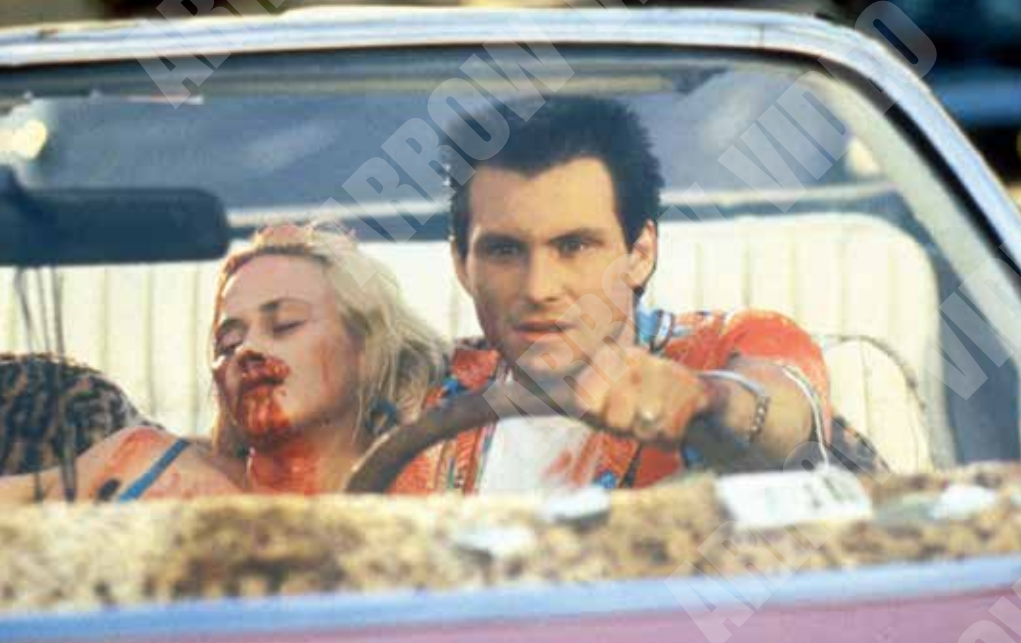
Quentin had been a long-time fan of Tony, even before the British director had zeroed in on his early scripts *Reservoir Dogs* and *True Romance* with a mind to make them both. Of course, he only directed the latter.

But even before *True Romance* was released, I remember reading QT interviews where he waxed lyrical about *Days of Thunder* being like a race car movie directed by Sergio Leone. I also remember him raving about *Revenge* when almost everyone else ignored it.

I am not going to pretend that I was as hip to Tony's greatness as early. I do have vivid memories of watching his debut feature *The Hunger* late at night on Channel 4 and distinctly remember rewinding the Bauhaus opening over and over.

I also was well aware of the decade-defining *Top Gun* and the noticeably slick *Beverly Hills Cop II*, but as I was only 13 at the time and I hadn't quite got my auteur radar working.

The film that made me sit up and pay attention to an insane, cinematic genius was 1991's *The Last Boy Scout*. Shane Black, Joel Silver and Tony Scott all had their problems with this movie, but this did not matter one single jot to the 18-year-old me. And it doesn't matter to me now.



The movie still plays like a dragon eating its own tail, an action thriller framed by flaming air quotes. While completely dismissed by some, it predates the 90s vogue for meta madness and exhibits the thick ear exuberance of a coked-up *Kiss Me Deadly*. As you can tell, I highly recommend it. Indeed, I have shown it again to appreciative audiences at London's Prince Charles Cinema and LA's New Beverly Cinema when curating there. The film is a blast.

Scott followed up this neon explosion with the film that is fast becoming his most cherished work: *True Romance*. It's quite ironic that this movie has been trending all day on Twitter, as it was one of Tony Scott's few financial flops. But this is absolutely no indication of the quality of the movie. Indeed I barely need to tell any of you how great this film is.

Having seen it again recently on the big screen, what struck me is what Tony Scott does during the now classic scene between Dennis Hopper and Christopher Walken. Nothing.

For a director often derided for his flashiness, it should be noted that he knew exactly when to reign his pyrotechnics in and just let a great scene play. And it's worth noting that there's nearly never a bad performance in any of his films.

From here Scott delivered the formidable *Crimson Tide* as well as *Enemy of The State* and *Spy Game*. But then around 2004 at the age of sixty, Scott unleashed a series of increasingly experimental films into the mainstream that felt like the work of a man less than half his age.

*Man on Fire* exploded onto the screen with its dazzling use of handcranking and double exposures. Suddenly Tony Scott films looked positively avant-garde next to other studio releases of the day. He truly became artier as he got older, the exact reverse of all action directors.

His next film was the divisive *Domino*. But as I said at the time and will happily repeat now; I am just glad that someone got to go as over the top as he did here. Who knows where the line is until it's crossed? Much of *Domino* is caffeinated dynamite and I remember sitting in the cinema frequently applauding it's go-for-broke energy.

Both this film and *Man on Fire* influenced my own *Hot Fuzz*. I always admired that fact that an English director from Tyneside was twice as bombastic as the American directors of his generation. The central premise of my movie was a big 'What If'; the question being what if Tony Scott had to make a film in sleepy old England again...

Aping some of Tony's style in *Hot Fuzz* just made me appreciate his talents even more. Breaking his films down to analyse them, I was even more aware of the staggering amount of work that had gone into the locations, lighting, operating, editing and sound design. He didn't get anywhere near the credit for his talents as an artist.

I actually edited *Hot Fuzz* using the *Man on Fire* score as a temp track, so in my added memories there's always a lost version of my film still scored to "The Drop" and "Bullet Tells the Truth" by Harry Gregson Williams.

As a further irony, when I came to test screen *Hot Fuzz* in New York (still with the *Man on Fire* temp) I watched *Deja Vu* at the same multiplex immediately before. It was quite the experience to see the two back-to-back.

I am sad to say I never met the man, but I am told that he liked *Hot Fuzz*. I hope that's true. And I hope it's clear that I have nothing but affection and respect for his creativity.

The one time we almost crossed paths was for a screening to promote *Hot Fuzz* in London. I was planning to show *The Last Boy Scout* at the ICA and do a Q&A with Tony Scott. He agreed on the condition that I show *True Romance* instead as it was the film he was most proud of. I switched the films, but then Tony had to change his travel plans anyway and couldn't make it.

It was a shame, but I intro'd Tony's choice anyway and once the opening credits for *True Romance* started playing, I was lost in escapist bliss again.

I won't write too much more, because I find the loss of Tony Scott unspeakably sad.

Some say he was underrated. Not by me. I just wish I could have told him that he rocked.

My thoughts go out to his family and loved ones.



TELEPHONE







## ABOUT THE RESTORATION

*True Romance* is presented in its original aspect ratio of 2.39:1 with stereo 2.0 and 5.1 sound. The film is presented in both the original Theatrical and Director's Cut versions.

The original 35mm negative and 35mm intermediary elements were scanned in 4K resolution at Illuminate Labs, Hollywood. The film was restored and graded in 4K HDR/Dolby Vision at Silver Salt Restoration, London.

The stereo and 5.1 mixes were sourced from the original sound mix masters.

All original materials supplied for this restoration were made available by Revolution via Park Circus.

Restoration supervised by **James White, Arrow Films**

Silver Salt Restoration: **Anthony Badger, Steve Bearman, Mark Bonnici, Lisa Copson, Simon Edwards, Lucie Hancock, Ray King, Rob Langridge**

Illuminate: **Jim Hardy**

Park Circus: **Gareth Tennant**

Additional audio conforming by **Matt Jarman, Bad Princess Productions**

Compression and authoring for Blu-ray and UHD Blu-ray were carried out at Fidelity in Motion, New York. Seamless branching was used to present both the Theatrical and Director's Cuts with the lowest possible level of compression.

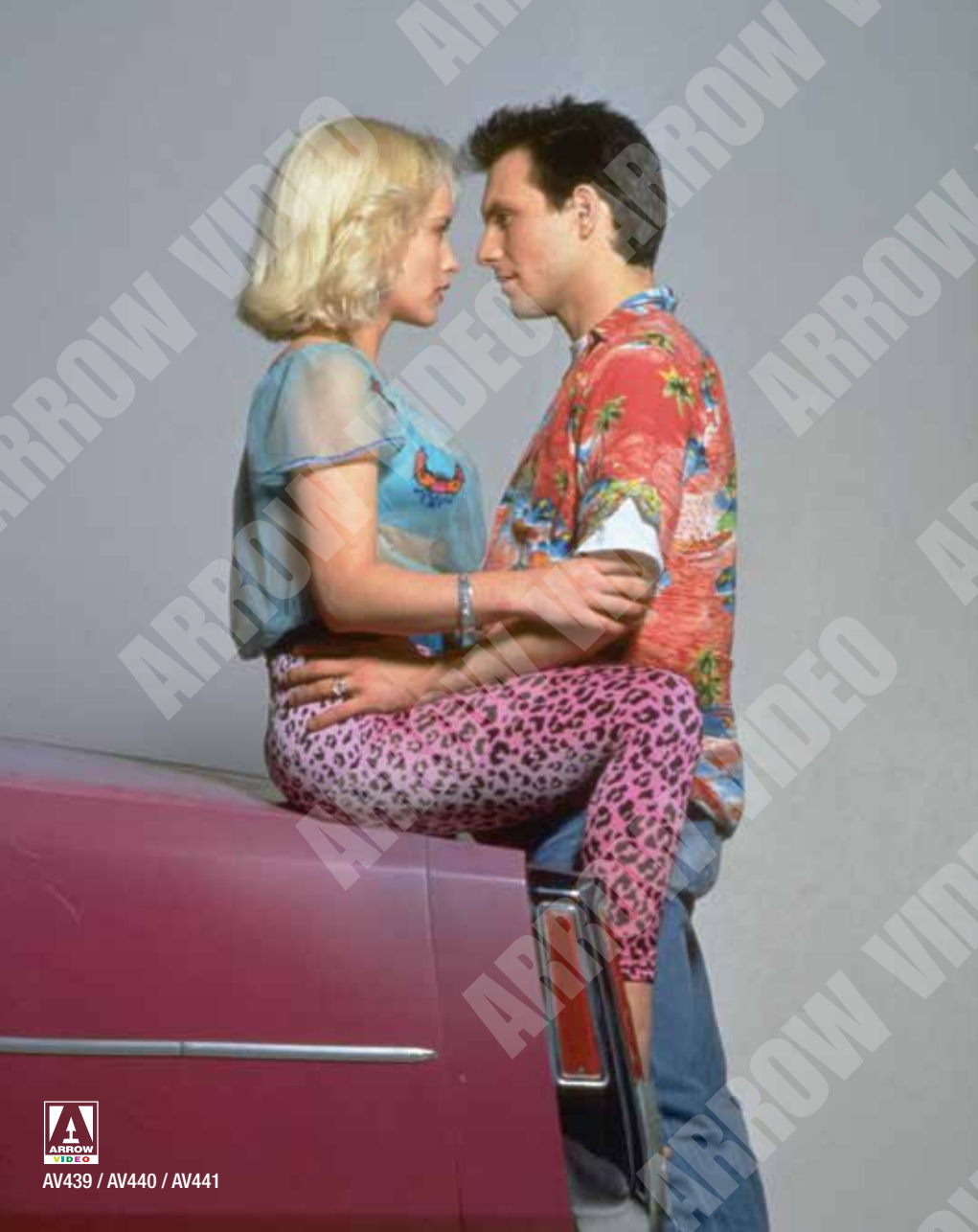
Fidelity in Motion: **David Mackenzie**

## PRODUCTION CREDITS

Discs & Booklet Produced by **James Flower**  
Executive Producers **Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni**  
Technical Producer **James White**  
Disc Production Manager **Nora Mehenni**  
QC **Alan Simmons**  
Production Assistant **Samuel Thiery**  
Disc Authoring **David Mackenzie, Fidelity in Motion**  
Subtitling **The Engine House Media Services**  
Artwork **Sara Deck** and **Sam Gilbey**  
Design **Oink Creative**

## SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, Nicholas Clement, Jen Davies, Elijah Drenner, Tim Lucas,  
Kim Morgan, Demi Rodriguez, Frida Runnkvist, Gareth Tennant,  
Kate Timperley, Chris Wilson, Edgar Wright



AV439 / AV440 / AV441