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CAST

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David Lewis as Al Kirkeby
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Johnny Seven as Karl Matuschka
Joyce Jameson as the Blonde
Willard Waterman as Mr Vanderhoff
David White as Mr Eichelberger
and
Edie Adams as Miss Olsen

CREW

Produced and Directed by **Billy Wilder**
Written by **Billy Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond**
Associate Producers **I.A.L. Diamond, Doane Harrison**
Director of Photography **Joseph LaShelle, A.S.C.**
Film Editor **Daniel Mandell, A.C.E.**
Music by **Adolph Deutsch**
Art Director **Alexandre Trauner**

SWEET AND SOUR: THE GREATNESS OF BILLY WILDER'S *THE APARTMENT*

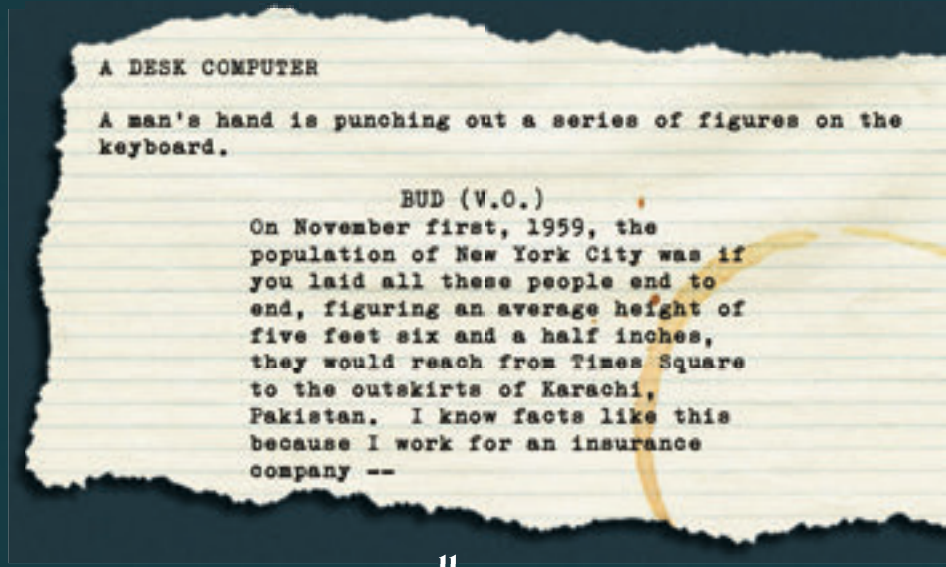
by Neil Sinyard

Billy Wilder's *The Apartment* (1960) has one of the most devastating revelation scenes in all movies. During an office Christmas party in full licentious swing. a budding executive C.C. Baxter (Jack Lemmon) has invited the elevator operator, Fran Kubelik (Shirley MacLaine), whom he secretly loves, back to his office to show off his new status symbol, a bowler hat. (Hats often have a significant role to play in a Wilder movie.) Before he can do this, he has to remove a kissing couple from his office, a fleeting reminder perhaps of the way his apartment has been used by his grateful superiors for extra-marital hi-jinks. When he tries on the bowler for her reaction, however, she stares blankly at it, as if her mind is elsewhere. Is he wearing it correctly? She hands him her compact case so he can inspect for

himself in the mirror. “What’s the matter?” she asks, when she notices the peculiar expression on his face. “The mirror – it’s broken,” he says, hesitantly. “I know,” she replies. “I like it this way. Makes me look the way I feel.”

One of Wilder’s golden rules for screenwriting was: The more subtle and elegant you are in hiding your plot points, the better you are as a writer. There are some particularly felicitous strategies of concealment here. Fran is puzzled by Baxter’s expression because, unknown to her, he recognises her compact as something he retrieved in his apartment for his boss, Mr Sheldrake (Fred MacMurray) and is thus made suddenly aware that he has been unwittingly abetting their affair. Baxter has been disconcerted by Fran’s numbed reaction, because, unknown to him, she has been accosted at the party by Sheldrake’s secretary, Miss Olsen (Edie Adams), who jealously informs her of Sheldrake’s numerous other infidelities. Wilder adorns these twin traumas with two refinements of mental torture. Before borrowing the compact, Baxter has been boasting of his closeness to Sheldrake and shown Fran a Christmas card

with a picture of Sheldrake and his family: it is like rubbing salt into an open wound. Immediately after the revelation, the stunned Baxter has a phone-call of a private nature which prompts him to ask Fran to leave the office. The call is from Sheldrake, unconsciously intensifying Baxter’s anguish by checking that his arrangements for meeting Fran that evening in the apartment are all in place. Baxter’s celebration has turned into a disillusioned discovery of what his path to promotion really means. It is the beginning of his transformation.


A DESK COMPUTER

A man's hand is punching out a series of figures on the keyboard.

BUD (V.O.)
On November first, 1959, the population of New York City was if you laid all these people end to end, figuring an average height of five feet six and a half inches, they would reach from Times Square to the outskirts of Karachi, Pakistan. I know facts like this because I work for an insurance company --

One of the key mantras in William Goldman's classic account of Hollywood and screenwriting, *Adventures in the Screen Trade* (1983), was: Screenplay is Structure. He likened it to carpentry; no point in making the most beautiful shelves if, in the end, the bookstand cannot stay upright. No film has a more solid foundation than *The Apartment*. The elements are welded beautifully together through a subtle pattern of recurring visual and verbal motifs; and the control of tone and tempo is a thing of wonder. To return to that Christmas party scene, for example. It is the narrative's decisive turning-point and it occurs pretty much exactly halfway through the film. Wilder has handled the mood so expertly until then that the close-ups of Lemmon and MacLaine, as Baxter pops on his bowler, alternate between humour and sadness, inviting us to laugh and cry almost simultaneously.

And for all that Wilder, with his indispensable writing partner, I.A.L. Diamond, is providing a masterclass in dramatic construction, the revelation is made all the more powerful because it is not lazily verbal but satisfyingly visual.

Indeed, the imagery has a symbolic significance beyond its immediate narrative purpose of disclosure. In its context, as Fran indicates, the broken mirror is emblematic of her broken heart. Also, when Baxter sees his own reflection in the broken mirror, it is not simply the moment when his illusions about Fran are shattered; it compels a recognition of his own fractured personality, as he struggles to reconcile ambition with decency, social fulfilment with self-regard in an organisation where moral integrity seems incompatible with getting ahead.

The Apartment appeared in the same year as another game-changer on the cusp of modern American cinema: Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*. Hitchcock's film is superficially very different from Wilder's, but both draw you into their worlds through close identification with a sympathetic central figure, before a shocking narrative rupture propels an audience into unexpectedly dark places. Both are dealing with the themes of sex and money in an America of grey anonymity. (In Hitchcock it is $40,000 that begins the heroine's drive to oblivion; in Wilder, it is a

$100 bill that tips Fran over the edge.) Both directors are knowingly taking great risks with their reputations, where a false step could lead to accusations of vulgarity and bad taste. Significantly both films had mixed reviews when they first appeared but, to their makers' gratification, turned out to be hugely successful with audiences, who were more appreciative of their audacity. In her book *The Contemporary Cinema* (1963), Penelope Houston spied a connection between Hitchcock and Wilder, seeing them as Hollywood rebels who took a similar pleasure, as she saw it, "in choosing a patch of thin ice, from the point of view of public response, and cutting some expert circles on it." Although they continued to make fine films (particularly so in the case of Wilder), *Psycho* and *The Apartment* were to prove the high-points of their careers. When collecting the second of his three Oscars® for *The Apartment* (he won as producer, director and co-writer), Wilder was somewhat taken aback by the advice of the presenter, playwright Moss Hart, who whispered in his ear: "It's time to stop, Billy."

Hart's comment was no doubt a droll observation that Wilder would find it hard to top this achievement, for he was the first person in Hollywood history to receive three Oscars® for the same film; and certainly his progress up to that point had been one of Hollywood's great success stories. Born in 1906 in Sucha, Austria (now a part of Poland), Wilder had worked as a journalist in Berlin before launching his screen career as a writer on *People on Sunday* (1929), a film now famous for also providing early opportunities for directors Robert Siodmak, Edgar G. Ulmer and Fred Zinnemann and the cameraman Eugene Shuftan, who were all to end up in Hollywood. A blossoming writing career in the early days of German sound cinema was cut short by Hitler's accession to power in 1933, which had convinced Wilder that Germany, in his words, "was not a safe place for a nice Jewish boy to be." Emigrating to America and struggling in Hollywood for a few years, he had the good fortune to be teamed up with the writer Charles Brackett, with whom he was to collaborate on thirteen screenplays, which included classics for Mitchell Leisen (*Midnight*,

1939), Ernst Lubitsch (*Ninotchka*, 1939) and Howard Hawks (*Ball of Fire*, 1941). After falling out with Leisen and actor Charles Boyer over the screenplay for *Hold Back the Dawn* (1941), Wilder had branched into direction, with Brackett as his producer, a partnership that had concluded with the greatest film ever made about Hollywood, *Sunset Boulevard* (1950). With other hard-hitting movies like *Double Indemnity* (1944), *The Lost Weekend* (1945), *Ace in the Hole* (1951) and *Stalag 17* (1953), Wilder had gained a reputation as Hollywood's resident cynic, unafraid to shine a harsh spotlight on unsavoury aspects of American life, but doing so with such verve and panache that audiences and critics were, for the most part, beguiled more than dismayed.
In the late 1950s he had begun a long and happy collaboration with writer I.A.L. Diamond, and they could hardly have ended the decade more resoundingly. *Some like it Hot* (1959) was a notoriously tortured production, with Marilyn Monroe at her most difficult, but the resulting film was not simply a triumph: an American Film Institute poll in the year 2000 was to vote it the best screen comedy of all time. And then came *The Apartment*.

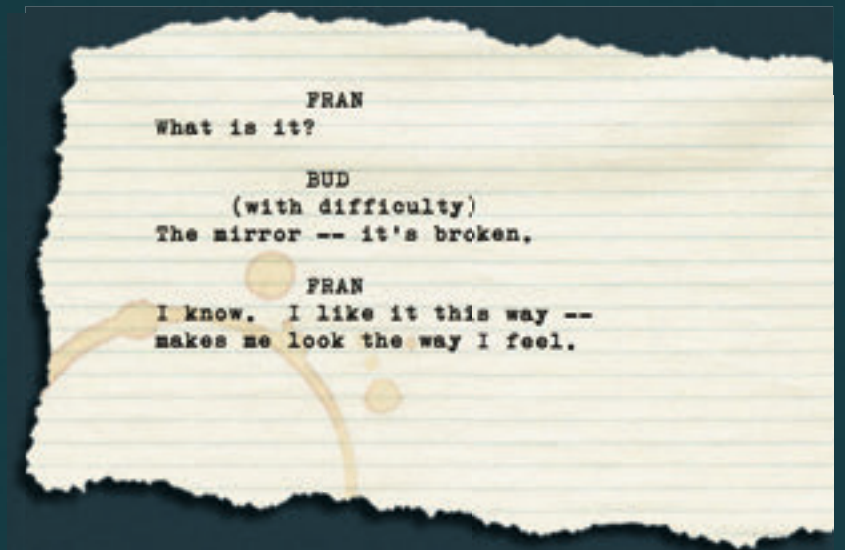
In his later years, Wilder was to reflect ruefully that Moss Hart might have been right: he should have stopped there. The next two decades were to prove immensely difficult. It was as if his very success made him a tempting target for iconoclastic critics out to make their reputations. Thus the up-and-coming Pauline Kael queried Wilder's exalted critical status and lambasted him for "his brazen contempt for people." In his classification of Hollywood directors in his seminal text *The American Cinema* (1968), the guru of auteurist criticism, Andrew Sarris, placed Wilder in his ignominious 'Less Than Meets the Eye' category. Our finest contemporary novelist, Jonathan Coe, who has cited Wilder as his biggest influence, has never forgiven David Thomson for his hostile assessment of Wilder in the first edition of his wide-ranging *A Biographical Dictionary of Cinema* (1975). Two shattering disappointments particularly shook his self-confidence. A brazen comedy that satirised attitudes to marriage, sex, celebrity and success, *Kiss Me, Stupid* (1964), was pilloried for its alleged lewdness and immorality and was a critical and commercial disaster from which Wilder's career never fully recovered. Even worse

for him was the failure of a project dear to his heart, The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes (1970), which was cut by the studio, misunderstood by the critics, and shunned by the public. Wilder devotees like myself tend to place *Sherlock Holmes*, along with his other late masterpieces, *Avanti!* (1972) and *Fedora* (1978), as amongst his finest work, but a new generation of moviegoers found them old-fashioned rather than simply unfashionable. He never again touched the confident peak of *The Apartment*; and, viewed today, one can still sense something daunting and daring about the personality behind it. He had shot the film in 50 days and it was edited in a week. He was completely unfazed by the risky subject-matter and the tricky negotiation of tone. George Bernard Shaw once wrote: "If you want to tell people the truth, you'd better make them laugh or they'll kill you." Wilder seemed to have no doubts about his ability to deliver laughter and truth in equal measure.

Ostensibly a comedy, *The Apartment* is essentially a poignant study of urban loneliness and a stinging critique of office politics where pimping will get you further than principle

in the competitive world of the large corporation. However, Wilder delays the harshness of his social message until he is absolutely ready. Because of the opening friendly narration which concisely sets up character and situation and because of Jack Lemmon's wonderful performance, that can shift between pantomime and pathos with the dexterity of a Chaplin, a sympathy is forged between hero and audience before the dubiousness of his situation is fully felt. This is appropriate because Baxter himself has become embroiled in it (first lending his apartment to a friend who needs somewhere to change into a tuxedo) before he fully appreciates its implications; and he has gone along with it as much out of weakness and eagerness to please as out of ambition. Also, Wilder at first cunningly plays up the comedy. Baxter's neighbour, Dr Dreyfuss (Jack Kruschen) misreads the evidence of his own eyes, leaping to wildly salacious assumptions about Baxter's sexual proclivities that could hardly be further from the truth (which, incidentally, he never does discover). The timetable of arrangements becomes so complicated that, when Baxter catches a cold

and needs an evening for himself in bed, he has to spend twenty minutes on his office phone rearranging the schedule of philandering. This domestic inconvenience is reaping rewards, of course, but everything is leading to that moment of truth in his junior executive office where the roars of Christmas revelry outside shriek discordantly against the dashing of his romantic hopes. The depths of despondency have not yet been reached, for he has still to face the music when his discovery of Fran unconscious in his bedroom abruptly terminates his party with a casual pick-up. Laughter now is only a room away from near-tragedy.



The inspiration for *The Apartment* had come from an unusual source. Wilder had developed a rare rapport with Jack Lemmon during the making of *Some like it Hot*, and was keen to work with him again. His mind had then turned to a minor film character who had always intrigued him, Trevor Howard's friend in David Lean's *Brief Encounter* (1945), whose flat Howard wishes to use for an affair with a married woman (Celia Johnson). In a note Wilder had written to himself, he had asked: "What about the friend who has to crawl back into that warm bed?" Of course, that it is not what actually happens in *Brief Encounter*: indeed, the whole point of Lean's film is that the affair remains unconsummated. Had Wilder misremembered this; or had he let his mind wander to how he might have developed the idea given that dramatic premise? There are other elements of *Brief Encounter* that remain in *The Apartment*, nevertheless, most conspicuously perhaps the moment when the friend, who has discovered evidence of the woman's presence in his flat, insists that Howard returns his key, a demand which accentuates Howard's feelings of shame and


J. D. SHELDRAKE
DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL

humiliation. In *The Apartment*, Baxter's apartment key will also be a crucial object of desire and acquire all kinds of associative weight. It is literally Baxter's key to promotion and the item that provides his route out of that Kafkaesque office on the 19th floor, influenced in its design by the office set of another of Wilder's favourite films, King Vidor's *The Crowd* (1928), and so marvellously reconstructed by his production designer, Alexander Trauner, with his ingenious use of forced perspective to convey uniformity stretching to infinity. Yet the key is abused, bandied about, and exchanged; and Baxter's willingness to lend it out to facilitate his effortless rise signifies a surrendering of self-respect and even of his own manhood (and few screen heroes have been on the receiving end of such a barrage of disparagement in return for favours rendered – "schnook", "punk", "the nurse", "Buddy boy", "Little Lord Fauntleroy", "Max the knife" are only some of the insults tossed in Baxter's direction; he will even wind up with a black eye). The crux will come when Sheldrake asks for the key so as to continue his affair with Fran and Baxter refuses, even

after Sheldrake has spelled out the consequences of that refusal (and, given Sheldrake's firing of Miss Olsen for her Christmas eve indiscretion, one is in no doubt that he would carry out the threat). Instead he returns the executive washroom key, which earlier Mr Dobisch (Ray Walston) has mistakenly left for him instead of the key to his apartment. His dignity is restored, but he is back where he started. On his way out of the building, he completes the process of rejection by placing his executive bowler on the head of a bemused handyman who is cleaning out the cigarette receptacles outside an elevator, which, like the hero, is on its way down.

Another connection with *Brief Encounter*, incidentally, comes from the music. In Lean's film, the heroine's memory of the love affair was accompanied over the soundtrack by Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto to heighten her mood of romantic reverie. Adolph Deutsch's music matches Baxter's professional and personal progress with an adroit blend of military marches and melancholy blues; but for his tormented heroine, although he does not use Rachmaninov

(indeed he parodied its use in *The Seven-Year Itch* [1955]), Wilder has chosen a beautiful piano piece by Charles Williams, "Jealous Lover" (first heard in a forgotten 1949 British film, *The Romantic Age*). This theme accompanies Fran in her most emotionally charged moments: like her entry into the Chinese restaurant for her reunion with Sheldrake and where the pianist, on seeing her, plays it specifically for her as her signature tune; or her suicide attempt; or her rush back to the apartment at the end, where the music gives such a rapturous lift to the tracking shot of her that the German director Volker Schloendorff was to call it one of the most liberating shots he had ever seen. In other respects, *The Apartment* reminds me equally strongly of another great David Lean film: his adaptation of Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1946), which Wilder explicitly alluded to in *Sunset Boulevard*. Both *The Apartment* and *Great Expectations* concern a lowly hero who is given an easy passport to success, but whose rise corresponds with his moral decline and whose redemption is then inexorably linked to his social fall. Both films have an ambiguous

ending whose ostensible optimism is modified by a dash of harsh realism (in Wilder's case) and more than a hint of wish-fulfilment (in Lean's).

Wilder's endings have often proved problematical with critics, who accuse him of "sugaring the pill" of his worldly critiques with calculated cop-out finales. Yet the changes of heart that occur in, say, *Sunset Boulevard*, *Ace in the Hole* and *Sabrina* (1954), as well as *The Apartment*, are not commercial compromises but the essential dramatic crisis to which the whole film has been heading: that is, the point at which it dawns on a duplicitous and/or opportunistic hero that the conspiracies of which he is a part or even initiated have turned irredeemably sour; and where he attempts (not always successfully) to re-join the human race; or, in Dr Dreyfuss's words, "be a *mensch*." The tag-line of *The Fortune Cookie* (1966) caught this nicely. "There are two kinds of people in this world," it ran, "those who will do anything for money, and those who will do *almost* anything for money." Wilder's films are about the "almost" people, who can be deluded or swept along by the prospect of personal or social

gain but who stop just short of a moral abyss, which, in the case of *The Apartment*, is the moment when Baxter stops short of becoming another Sheldrake.

Fran's change of heart at the end is at one with the kind of impulsiveness that prompted her suicide attempt; and we know that Sheldrake is not the first person she has fallen for. Every detail of Shirley MacLaine's exquisite performance testifies to a character whose heart will always rule her head. That ecstatic shot of her running back to the apartment is surely as much a reflection of her romanticism as it is of Wilder's; moreover, it is a surge of emotion that is cut short by what she thinks is a gunshot, and she has every reason to fear the worst. And how well Wilder, the master builder, has set up that final scene for Fran's return without needing a concluding kiss or clinch: the repetition of "Ring-a-Ding-Ding" in her New Year's Eve scene with Sheldrake, which might have brought back cautionary memories of her encounter with Miss Olsen; her telling Sheldrake that "I'd spell it out for you, only I can't spell," which takes us back to her Christmas Day conversation with Baxter in the

apartment; the stroke of midnight and a New Year, which seem to galvanise her into a new resolution and a new start; the bottle of champagne; and the unfinished card-game, which will inspire another of Wilder's famous last lines.

A happy ending? There is a tentative tenderness there, but the ending strikes me as more bittersweet than happy. I love the way Wilder keeps the emotions at arm's length: no final embrace; and still the formality between them of "Mister" Baxter and "Miss" Kubelik. I am intrigued by the way both use the word "I" about their new situation, but neither uses the word "we", as if that stage of commitment has not yet been reached. And we are surely meant to be acutely aware that the possibility of future happiness is modified by their current social precariousness, as Wilder's precise camera takes in not only the smiling couple but the packing cases strewn around the now denuded and gloomy apartment, occupied by two people who are jobless, homeless and with nowhere to go.

When the interviewers of British journal *Cinema* (October 1969) ventured to suggest that *The Apartment* was "a little too sentimental", Wilder's response came over less like a reply than a rebuke. "It was made so as not to be sentimental," he retorted, and went on: "We have a prefabricated loneliness in America… With this loneliness goes the urge to better oneself and rise from the masses… I portray Americans as beasts… I never considered *The Apartment* to be a comedy." Wilder had some cause to feel aggrieved. Only a year or so earlier, he had been described by Andrew Sarris as "too cynical to believe even his own cynicism" (a view Sarris later retracted); now he was being criticised for being too sentimental. Even Sarris had to concede that Wilder's films were enormously enjoyable, and that might have been the problem: he made his unique blend of satire and seriousness, romance and realism, look too easy. (His advice to an aspiring screenwriter was: "Make the subtleties obvious.") Because his dialogue was so good, he was underrated as a visual stylist, though *The Apartment* is replete with memorable imagery and is an object lesson in

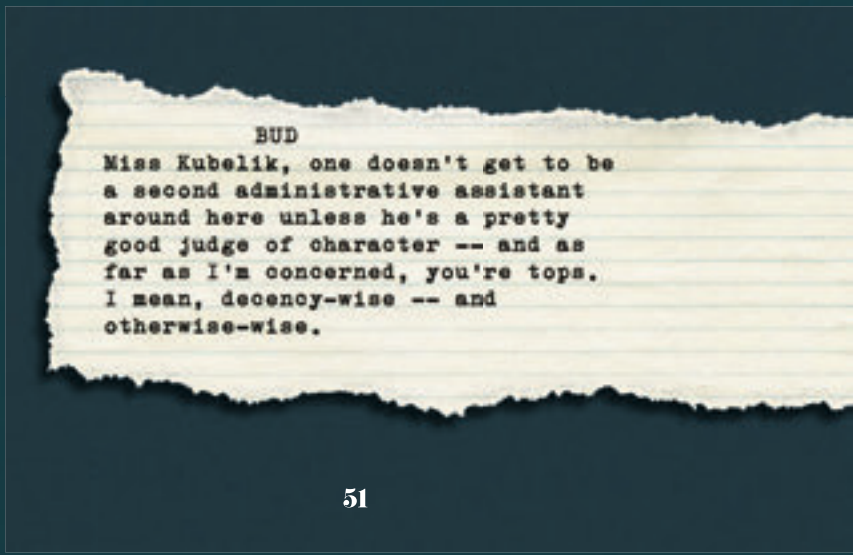
how to use the widescreen to suggest both mass conformity and individual isolation. As a director of actors, he was never spoken of in the same breath as greats such as Wyler, Kazan, Stevens or Cukor, yet the cast in *The Apartment* is flawless. Of the supporting players, think only (out of many) of Ray Walston's weasel-like Mr Dobisch, Joan Shawlee's brassy Sylvia, Edie Adams's vindictive Miss Olsen, and Jack Kruschen's Dr Dreyfuss, one of those "sage" figures in Wilder (like Edward G Robinson's Keyes in *Double Indemnity* or Porter Hall's Boot in *Ace in the Hole*) whose worried advice to the wayward heroes is all the more endearing because they fail to see the full picture. And the three principals are pitch perfect. I have already mentioned Jack Lemmon, whose performance in *The Apartment* as average modern American male in a crisis of conscience and/or circumstance was to define his screen persona for the rest of his career: from *Days of Wine and Roses* (Blake Edwards, 1962), *The Odd Couple* (Gene Saks, 1968) and *The Prisoner of Second Avenue* (Melvin Frank, 1975) to *Save the Tiger* (John G. Avildsen, 1973), *The China Syndrome* (James Bridges, 1979)

and *Glengarry Glen Ross* (James Foley, 1992) We know that Shirley MacLaine could be a great comedienne (as in *Ask Any Girl* [Charles Walters, 1959]) and a great tragedienne (as in *The Children's Hour* [William Wyler, 1961]), but in *The Apartment* she is both. The admirable Fred MacMurray was not Wilder's first choice for Sheldrake (Paul Douglas had been cast but he died of a heart attack shortly before shooting) and, for that matter, nor was he first choice for his other Wilder film, the classic *film noir Double Indemnity*, but being imaginatively cast against type seemed to suit him, because he did nothing finer on film.

In his book *A History of the Cinema* (1976), the critic Eric Rhode had contended that, in *The Apartment,* Wilder "touches on a depth of sadness that in all probability he had not intended." Judging from Wilder's comments in interviews, I think that, in all probability, this was exactly what he intended; but, being Wilder, it was inevitable that the sadness would be leavened with that irrepressible comic spirit that makes the film in the end more exhilarating than depressing. For sheer consistency of witty, intelligent,

immaculately constructed, provocative popular cinema of Hollywood in its heyday, Billy Wilder had few rivals. No film better exemplifies the variety of his genius than *The Apartment*. His greatest film? Quite possibly. And its ranking among the best tragi-comedies of the American screen? For my money, it is unsurpassed, entertainment-wise.

Neil Sinyard is Emeritus Professor of Film Studies at Hull University. He is the author of numerous books and articles on the cinema, including works on directors such as Billy Wilder, William Wyler, Alfred Hitchcock, Steven Spielberg, Fred Zinnemann, Richard Lester and Jack Clayton and on topics such as Disney, film comedy, screen adaptations of literature, representations of childhood on film and silent cinema. He is currently writing a book on the films of George Stevens.



BROKEN MIRRORS: ILLUSION AND DISILLUSION IN BILLY WILDER'S "DIAMOND" COMEDIES

by Kat Ellinger

> I've decided to become a mensch, you know what that means? A human being.
>
> – C.C. Baxter, *The Apartment*

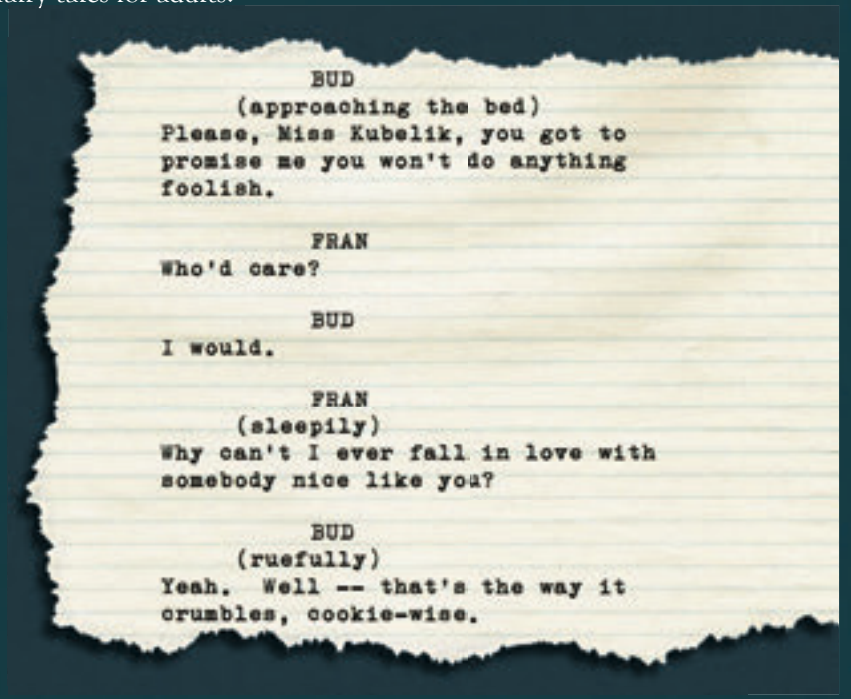
When we first meet C.C. Baxter in *The Apartment*, he isn't exactly one of life's winners, but he wants to be. Just one grey suit, in an endless office full of hundreds of others just like him. He is a man who has dedicated his life to professional advancement, working for a large insurance company. He isn't a bad person. He's accommodating, polite, gracious. He traipses the streets at night in the rain, while allowing men from his office to use the bed in his apartment – you couldn't even properly call it Baxter's, he sees so little of it himself – to have sex with their mistresses.

He offers a sanctuary for the men; a place where their wives won't find out, and their lovers won't complain about the cold. Baxter has to stay out of the way to give them privacy, so he can't even go home after work. If he catches a cold, that's tough, he has bookings for his apartment to fill and no one wants to give up their spot. And yet, despite his attempts to fit in and gain acceptance – ultimately his goal is to make people like him in order to climb the corporate ladder – his agreeable nature carves him out as a loser and weak, which just leads to more disrespect from his associates and peers who take advantage of him every chance they get. The more he gives, the more they take. But, then none of this really matters to C.C. Baxter, because he has a dream. Or at least, he thinks he does. Until he decides it's time to become a mensch. And that's when he realises it's time for a change, because the American Dream he has been chasing tastes shallow, cold and empty; especially if he has to swallow it down without the one thing he wants more than anything else in the world: love.

With the character of C.C. Baxter (as portrayed by Jack Lemmon), and the others like him, director Billy Wilder and his writer I.A.L. Diamond created a new breed of modern hero: a particular type of common man, who was essentially good, but flawed, as well as being prone to temptation and greed. Wilder described *The Apartment* as "a slice of life that seems very naturalistic", explaining: "fluffy comedies about New York working girls who earn sixty dollars a week and wear designer clothes will always be popular; but not with me… I want to go beyond the powder puff school, in favor of the starkest realism."[1] *The Apartment* is anything but fluffy. Charming, yes, but it's a very particular type of charm you get with Billy Wilder. If you have seen enough of his films you will know it immediately. As Glenn Hopp argues: "charm is a useful byword for the career of Billy Wilder. His films often explore the charm of innocence and the charm of corruption, or to put it more precisely, the charm of corruption of the innocent and the

1 - Horton, Robert (2002) *Billy Wilder: Interviews (Conversations with Filmmakers Series)*. University Press of Mississippi, p. 236.

charm of innocence for the corrupt."[2] Hopp, while acknowledging that Wilder made films in every genre, apart from the Western, concludes that if there is one overriding theme to be found in his work, it is that the director made "fairy tales for adults."



BUD
(approaching the bed)
Please, Miss Kubelik, you got to promise me you won't do anything foolish.

FRAN
Who'd care?

BUD
I would.

FRAN
(sleepily)
Why can't I ever fall in love with somebody nice like you?

BUD
(ruefully)
Yeah. Well -- that's the way it crumbles, cookie-wise.

2 - Hopp, Glenn (2016) Billy Wilder: The iconic writer, producer and director (A Pocket Essentials Guide). Kindle Edition. Excerpt cited in chapter: *Billy Wilder: A Certain Amount of Charm*.

While the fairy tale tag may evoke images of sickly sweet Hollywood, something more akin to the powder puff school Wilder rallied against, his films refused to gloss over the nitty gritty. This said, they did come with their own moral messages, and therefore serve, as Hopp quite rightly states, as fairy tales of sorts. In discussing *The Apartment* specifically, Georges-Claude Guilbert states: "Somehow, Wilder managed to insert *in extremis* a traditional happy ending without marring the daring hard-edge realism of this cruel tale." Wilder, Diamond and lead actor Jack Lemmon managed to create something that felt uniquely human and genuine. The hard edges are there because they belong to the human experience, and that's something we can all relate to in one way or another. What makes *The Apartment* so unique for its time and genre is that the director took the pessimism and cynicism found in his earlier noir films, such as *Double Indemnity* (1944) and *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), and mixed them up with elements of romance to craft an altogether new brand of comedy, one which embraced social realism and human corruption, as much as it did sweetness

and light. *The Apartment*, whilst possessing the expected happy ending associated with the genre, and sweet scenes between Lemmon and his love interest Shirley MacLaine, is populated with rotten characters who are eaten up by greed, lust and dishonesty, as well as themes of attempted suicide and infidelity.

Wilder was no stranger to transgressive themes. It can be argued that, for the comedy work he did specifically with Diamond from the late fifties, into the mid-sixties – their partnership lasted into the eighties – each picture comes with its own sting in the tail. Although this aspect wasn't limited to Wilder's association with the writer and can be found throughout the length and breadth of his work, he certainly started to test the limits of the Production Code more when he paired up with Diamond. For instance, *Love in the Afternoon* (1957) places fresh-faced, innocent Audrey Hepburn with an aging Gary Cooper. The large age difference isn't so much of a problem, but the fact that Hepburn's character Ariane Chavasse is drawn to Cooper's Frank Flanagan because he is an American playboy, who

apparently has sex every night with a different woman, gets a little close to the knuckle. While she wrestles for his affection, weaving her own misguided web of deceit in the process, the relationship becomes mired in a game of one-upmanship over who has had the most illicit lovers. Hardly the foundation for a sweet romantic comedy, but for some reason it works. By 1959 the duo had done a little fine tuning to their dynamic and in the process produced one of their most successful pictures, *Some Like It Hot*. Pushing the limitations of the Hays Code, with themes of cross-dressing and homosexuality, as well as risqué scenes involving an underwear clad Marilyn Monroe, and Mafia massacres, *Some Like It Hot* was a controversial film for its day. Meanwhile in *One, Two, Three* (1961) Wilder and Diamond used communism behind the Berlin Wall to make capitalist America the butt-end of more than a few jokes. In *Irma la Douce* (1963) Lemmon and MacLaine were reunited in a story about a prostitute and a cop, who fall in love. After being fired for busting a brothel where the police chief was enjoying an afternoon of passion, Lemmon's character, a

newly assigned police officer, accidentally becomes a pimp, and falls in love with the beautiful Irma (MacLaine), having to engage in a huge plan of deception to make sure he can keep her for himself. Given the subject matter, although never shown, the theme of sex for cash remains the firm focus of many scenes. 1964's *Kiss Me Stupid* was even more outrageous. Featuring the story of pianist and composer, Orville Spooner, and his writing partner Barney (Cliff Osmond), the narrative develops as the two desperate men trick famous singer Dino (Dean Martin) into staying the night – after tampering with his car – in order to convince him to buy one of their songs. The only problem is Orville has a beautiful wife, Zelda, and Dino can't keep his hands to himself. Orville's insane jealousy pushes him to drive Zelda out of the house, so that he may hire a prostitute to pose as her, and set a honey trap for the singer. Wilder said of the film: "With *Kiss Me Stupid* there was a phenomenal outcry. They said it was the dirtiest movie I had ever made. Condemned in *Life* Magazine. Suggestions that my citizenship papers should be taken away."[3]

3 - Horton, Robert (2002) Billy Wilder: Interviews (Conversations with Filmmakers Series). University Press of Mississippi, p. 63.

Some of Wilder's films may have been considered "dirty" during their time, and because of that they weren't always the favourites with critics. This has been rectified over time, with Wilder's work now widely celebrated. Their longevity is down to the fact that they represent something so much more than simply shock value. Wilder's social commentary delves deep into the human condition, especially when it comes to the idea of masculinity and expected gender norms in an American capitalist society. Wilder is quoted as saying: "We have prefabricated loneliness in America – TV dinners and everything. With this loneliness goes the urge to better oneself and rise from the masses… I portray Americans as beasts."[4]

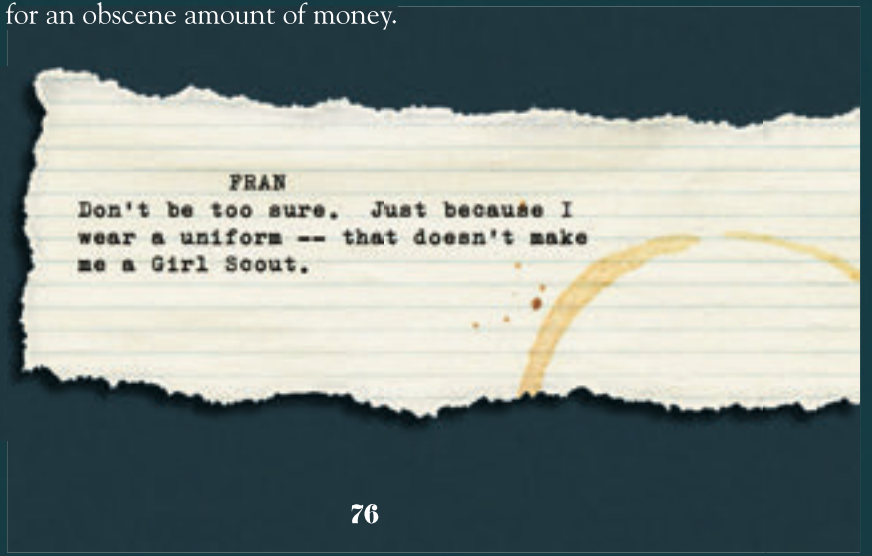
The beast of which Wilder speaks manifests in some of the hypermasculine traits exhibited by the corrupt male characters that litter his work with Diamond. The director portrays America as a society consumed by a dog eat dog attitude. Successful men are domineering alphas, so virile their libidos are out of control. They lie and cheat to get themselves to the top, and are blinded to the needs

4 - Ibid, p. 135.

of others around them because they are eaten up with selfish desire to get ahead. In this realm, traits such as boastfulness, egomania and narcissism are valued as the markers for success. For instance, we see it in Gary Cooper's Frank Flanagan in *Love in the Afternoon*, as he preens and struts and thinks nothing of chatting up a couple of girls, inviting them out for a night of passion, while another sprawls at his feet. Flanagan stands out against the other, more morally balanced characters in the film like Ariane's father Claude (Maurice Chevalier) and her nice guy friend Michel, because he is American, and therefore is prescribed a crass, amoral personality in contrast to the French males in the cast. In *Some Like It Hot*, although both Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon, as the cross-dressing Joe and Jerry, are seen pursuing Sugar Kane (Marilyn Monroe), and Curtis' character, Joe, resorts to a double deceit, neither are particularly seedy or ill-intentioned. The male super ego is represented in this case by the criminal underworld, through Mafia boss Spats and his tribe, who think nothing of putting their enemies against the wall to face a firing squad, in

order to protect their illegal speakeasy racket. For *The Apartment*, although Baxter could be seen as something of an opportunist, and he does what it takes to succeed, even if it means giving up his apartment and privacy, he isn't the beast. It is the men who surround him, his colleagues who leer and jeer, whilst sneeringly calling him "Buddy Boy" or boasting about their sexual affairs and the ignorance of their wives. This trait is most concentrated in Baxter's boss Mr Sheldrake (Fred MacMurray), who has had a string of affairs with women and remains slimy and unrepentant throughout. Finally, in *Kiss Me Stupid*, Orville is fuelled with jealous rage, even accusing his students of sleeping with his wife. But he isn't the real bad guy of the piece. That role falls on Dean Martin's Dino, who plays it up as an ego-driven singer, and a complete letch with an apparent sex addiction. The man will stop at nothing when it comes to treating Orville's wife, or at least the woman he thinks is Zelda, as one of his conquests. He thinks the Spooners are a happy couple, and the pair certainly do a good job at creating that facade for his benefit, and yet, he can't wait

to get the man he thinks has kindly offered him bed and board for the night out of the house, so he can seduce his wife. When this fails, Dino takes himself off to a brothel to flash around his cash, and get what he wants that way. By the time Wilder came to make *The Fortune Cookie* (1966), the last film he made before the Hays Code was abolished in 1968, he had dropped the sex to instead focus entirely on greed. For that particular film the director cast Walter Matthau as an unscrupulous lawyer who convinces his brother-in-law (played by Jack Lemmon) to fake a serious injury so they may sue a successful American football team for an obscene amount of money.



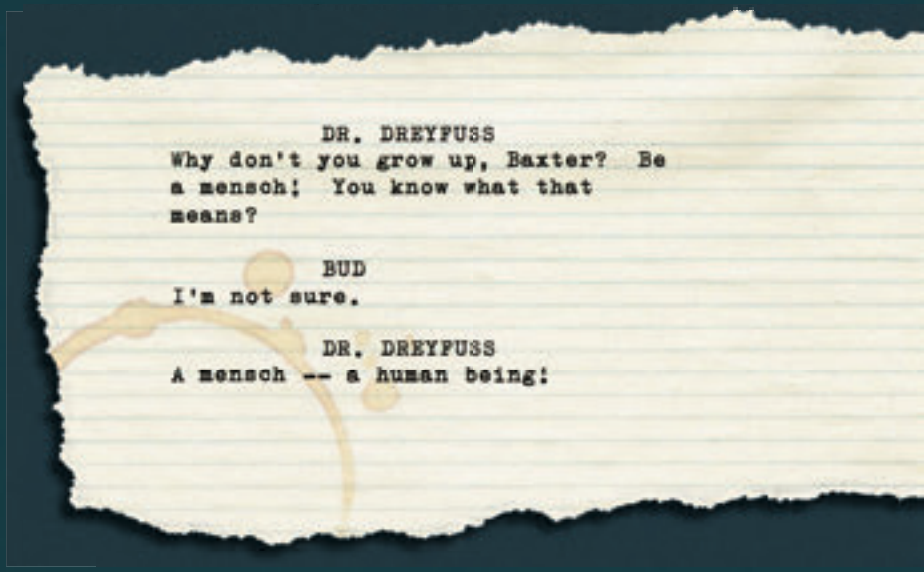
Standing in direct contrast to Wilder and Diamond's cynical view of the successful male in an American capitalist society, their heroes are imbued with a different set of characteristics altogether. What carves them out as somewhat heroic is their ability to climb out of the snake pit and survive with their morality intact. These men, like Baxter, are outsiders looking in. While the alphas are self-aggrandising and macho, the Baxter-type is plagued with self-doubt, and (at least initially) unsuccessful with women. As Karen McNally explains:

> With *The Apartment* Wilder locates the corporation's politics of corruption and domination as symptoms of a larger disease: "traditional manhood" as it is idealized by white capitalist patriarchy. Refreshingly forward thinking and non-nostalgic for a "lost" or buried masculinity, *The Apartment* anticipates new kinds of masculinity, relishing in the spirit of Felix Guattari's much later assertion that "if a man breaks away from the phallic rat race inherent in all power formations, he will become involved in… feminine becoming". And that's a good thing human-wise. Becoming a "human being", or as Doctor Dreyfuss puts it, "a mensch", requires Baxter to first become more feminine, and, later, to embrace that femininity – not to be ashamed of it.[5]

5 - Hoffman, Alison R. "Shame and the Single Girl: Reviving Fran and Falling for Baxter in *The Apartment*." *Billy Wilder, Movie-maker: Critical Essays on the Films*. Ed. Karen McNally. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011, p. 80.

Part of the process of becoming human, or accepting a more sensitive feminised ideal of masculinity, involves a period in which the Wilder/Diamond "hero", unaware of his true path and blinded by temptation, tries to ingratiate himself into a pocket of society where he doesn't really belong. Jack Lemmon's character in The *Fortune Cookie* has the line: "You can fool all of the people some of the time, you can even fool some of the people all of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time!" – which serves not just as a foreshadowing for that particular narrative but as a motto for many of the characters featured in the aforementioned films. And yet, they still try. *The Apartment*'s Baxter becomes a perfect case in point to highlight this aspect, for the way in which he tries to "fool" his colleagues he is one of them, and attempts to adopt their mannerisms and behaviour, rather unsuccessfully. As Gerd Gemunden proposes: "Wilder's scripts and films display a fascination, sometimes even an obsession, with disguise, masquerade and role playing, with switching sexual, social and professional

identities."[6] It is here we see Wilder and his characters absorbed in creating an illusion, lying to themselves and others around them, in order to buy into some kind of unattainable dream of success.



6 - Gemunden, Gerd (2008) *A Foreign Affair: Billy Wilder's American Films*. Berghahn Books, Kindle edition, cited in chapter: "Clothes Make the (Wo)man".

In creating the illusion comes the act of mime, a variation on that old adage "fake it until you make it". In reference to his mid-to-late period comedies, we see this aspect start to emerge prior to the Wilder/Diamond collaborations in *The Seven Year Itch* (1955). Richard Sherman (Tom Ewell) is without his wife and son for the summer, like many of the men around him. The other men, including his apartment caretaker, use their newfound freedom as an excuse for wanton infidelity. Richard, left to his own devices, becomes besotted with his new neighbour (played by Marilyn Monroe and credited as "The Girl") and starts to imagine he is part of the playing field his peers are freely enjoying. Wilder weaves the man's daydreams into the narrative, which depict a complete fantasy world where Richard exists (at least in his own head) as a playboy, irresistible to women. The reality proves to be quite the opposite. It is just an illusion, nothing more. *For Love in the Afternoon*, the illusion is Ariane's multiple partners whom she has invented to make Flanagan jealous. In *Some Like It Hot*, perhaps the best masquerade of them all, Joe and Jerry not only adopt

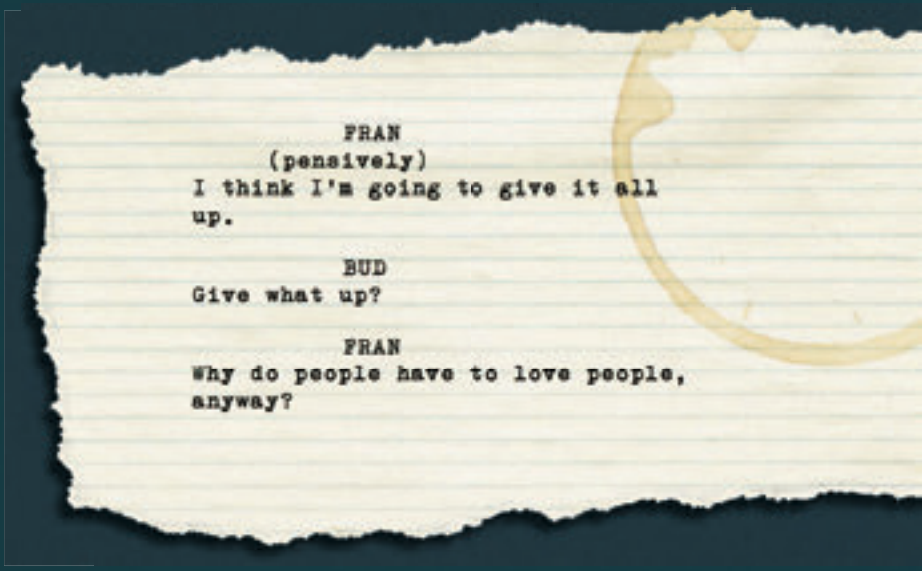
female alter-egos to hide from the Mafia who are chasing them, but Joe then invents a third identity, a millionaire heir, with which to woo Sugar. Baxter, in *The Apartment*, attempts to convince others he is a successful executive, by wearing what he deems the correct uniform – he buys a new bowler hat when he receives his promotion. He also lets his neighbours believe the screams of passion coming from his home are from women he takes there, not the men he lends his apartment to. Although the other tenants disapprove of what they see as his promiscuous behaviour, and his obvious lack of a moral compass, Baxter appears to enjoy the facade that he can have any woman he wants. Yet, the reality of his situation is quite the opposite. Meanwhile in *Irma la Douce*, Nestor Patou (Jack Lemmon), tries to fake it as a pimp, engaging in a ridiculously elaborate plan, where he poses as a rich English lord, in order to keep his love interest, prostitute Irma, off the streets. *Kiss Me Stupid* shows misguided Orville Spooner allowing another working girl into his home to play the part of his wife for the night. However, he gets so wrapped up in the illusion they create

together that she manages to enter his heart as well – something which certainly isn't part of the plan.

With illusion comes the eventual disillusion, as conflict moves towards resolution. It is through this process the Wilder/Diamond hero finds his redemption. The act of masquerade involved in creating these facades usually descends into absolute chaos as the plot develops. Whilst this serves as an excellent basis for comedy to unfold, the energy involved in keeping up appearances becomes a burden too heavy to bear for many of the central characters. Especially when eventually the protagonists, such as Baxter, find they are chasing a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow. It is during this turning point that the realisation comes that the dreams they have been chasing are meaningless and shallow: because all that glitters is not gold. Liberation is found in throwing off the illusion and accepting this.

The director once said:

> The big trick is to find the subject that relates to the human experience. Explain the rules, involve people, and they will do most of the work for you. You say 'this guy is greedy, this guy is something else' – and you let the clashes of the drama unfold. Then you throw them a few curves, and once in a while you feel like you have them by the throat – those conscientious objectors in the audience – and then you let them have it.[7]



7 - Horton, Robert (2002) *Billy Wilder: Interviews (Conversations with Filmmakers Series)*. University Press of Mississippi, p. 54.

Some Like It Hot closes with the perfect line: nobody's perfect. This is certainly true for all the Wilder and Diamond protagonists who find themselves tested and tempted along the way, as they each embark on their own journey of self-discovery. However, it is their imperfection that makes us love them. The fact that the writer and director team invited us to become part of that journey, invest in it, believe in it, feel it, is the biggest trick of all. This is where the true magic of Billy Wilder exists when the illusion melts away and real humanity shines through.

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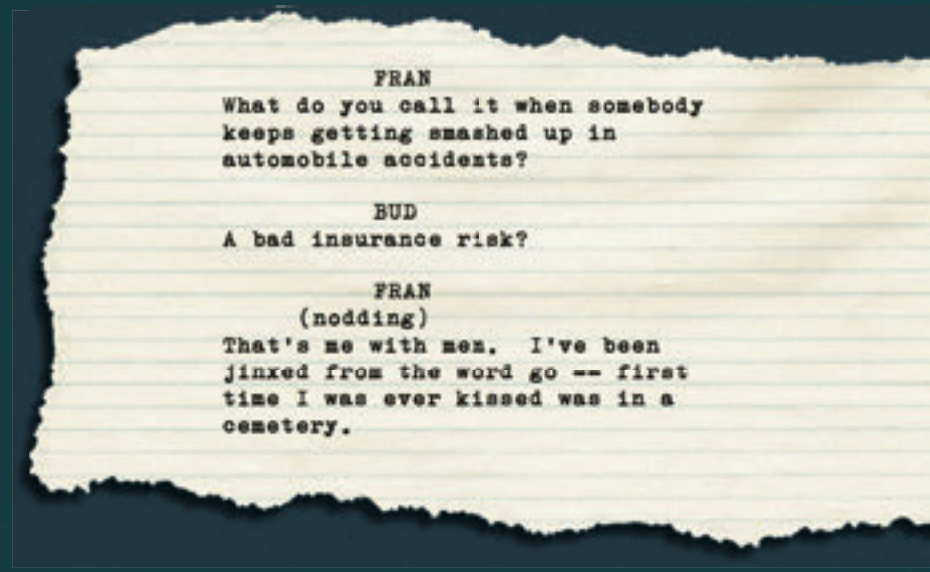
"SHUT UP AND DEAL": THE CHANGING CANDOR OF 1960S HOLLYWOOD CINEMA... MORALITY-WISE

by Travis Crawford and Heather Hyche

Billy Wilder's 1960 hit *The Apartment* is that rare Oscar® winner for Best Picture (Wilder also won for Best Director and the film won Best Original Screenplay for Wilder and his frequent collaborator I.A.L. Diamond) that seems largely beloved by everyone who comes into contact with it – not in the vein of blockbuster Best Picture phenomena like *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939), *Lawrence of Arabia* (David Lean, 1962), or *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997), but rather in the subtler vein of more intimate winners like *Marty* (Delbert Mann, 1955) or *Midnight Cowboy* (John Schlesinger, 1969): poignant and affecting character-driven dramas and comedies that seem to personally connect and strike a chord with viewers who will smile fondly whenever the title is mentioned, recalling

memories of what some consider 'their movie' (there are exceptions: notoriously cantankerous albeit brilliant contemporary critic Jonathan Rosenbaum went so far as to label *The Apartment* "drab, sappy, and overlong"). But for such a generally lauded and fondly remembered American classic, *The Apartment* was also initially greeted with some hostility, a reflection of Hollywood's progression towards dealing with more adult themes throughout the 1960s, sometimes defying the Production Code established by Will Hays in 1930, and eventually necessitating the creation of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) ratings system in 1968 (indeed, influenced by David Lean's *Brief Encounter* [1945], Wilder had originally wanted to make a version of *The Apartment* then, but realized that the Hays Code would never have allowed it at the time). The then-influential *Saturday Review* panned the film as "a dirty fairy tale," and *The Chicago American*'s Ann Marsters confronted Wilder face-to-face to inform him that he had made an obscene picture. In Charlotte Chandler's biography of Wilder, there is a story recounted that actor

Fred MacMurray, portraying Lemmon's boss and the company's head heel (and coming right off the previous year's Disney hit *The Shaggy Dog* [Charles Barton, 1959], and just a few months away from the premiere of his long-running family TV series *My Three Sons*), was repeatedly harassed by women in public who chastised him for starring in a "dirty, filthy movie," with one going so far as to physically assault him.



FRAN
What do you call it when somebody keeps getting smashed up in automobile accidents?

BUD
A bad insurance risk?

FRAN
(nodding)
That's me with men. I've been jinxed from the word go -- first time I was ever kissed was in a cemetery.

Of course, *The Apartment* feels so tame and chaste by 21st century standards that it seems almost unfathomable what all the fuss was about. But in 1960, as evidenced by several films from that year alone, the cinematic climate was changing rapidly to (just barely) allow for the careful treatment of themes that would have been inconceivable just a few years earlier, and Wilder – along with Preminger, Kazan, Hitchcock, and Kubrick – was at the forefront of a group of directors operating within the studio system who intended to test the boundaries of the Code and explore stories that challenged what had been the prevailing conventional Hollywood film morality for decades. With its casual comic treatment of extramarital affairs, interoffice infidelities, an ethically challenged protagonist who emerges as sympathetic largely by contrast to some of the morally bankrupt men with whom he works, workplace sexual harassment before such a term had even been coined, women who engage in fleeting flings and trysts with the same easy-going approach as their male co-workers, and a pill-popping suicide attempt, *The Apartment* was another

indication of Wilder's affinity for candid handling of mature material, and it initiated a decade in which a frankness towards sexual themes would become more pronounced with each passing year. Yet one of the film's many strengths is Wilder's trademark empathy and lack of judgment regarding his morally troubled characters. As Jean Renoir once famously remarked in his own *The Rules of the Game* (*La règle du jeu*, 1939), "The awful thing about life is this: everyone has their reasons."

The Apartment's central plot – low-level Manhattan office drone C.C. Baxter (Jack Lemmon) rises up the corporate ladder by loaning his bachelor pad out to various superiors for their adulterous hook-ups, only to find himself falling in love with elevator operator Fran Kubelik (Shirley MacLaine), his boss' mistress and a visitor to Baxter's apartment for the aforementioned liaisons – could certainly have been enough to raise the eyebrows of the priggish and demure during the twilight of the Eisenhower era, but Wilder's deft subtlety is equally subversive in the way in which some details breeze by before one fully processes just


FRIDEN
C. C. BAXTER

how "dirty, filthy" they are. The horridly retrograde gender politics in the office would give any episode of *Mad Men* a run for its money (not coincidentally, that series' storyline began in the year 1960, the year of *The Apartment*'s release, and also the year the birth control pill was introduced) – although presumably an ad agency was more glamorous than Baxter's insurance company employer – while MacMurray's casting as the lecherous personnel director would seem to be a nod to his role as an insurance agent in Wilder's 1944 *noir Double Indemnity*.[1] Some of the dialogue is open to interpretation: ordering drinks for himself and a newfound lady companion, Baxter asks the bartender for "a Rum Collins and another of these little *mothers*." When Kubelik's angry brother-in-law Karl finds her in Baxter's apartment under the suspicious attendance of Baxter's neighbor Dr. Dreyfuss, Karl asks, "What kind of a doctor are you?" to which Baxter insists, "Not *that* kind!" – an indirect reference to the type of backroom medic that would then have been required to terminate an unwanted pregnancy?

1 - He was actually an eleventh hour replacement for Paul Douglas, who died a few days before shooting began, although when another of *The Apartment*'s cads, Joe Dobisch (Ray Walston), comments that one of his mistresses "looks like Marilyn Monroe," that likely is a direct reference to Wilder's 1950s Monroe comedy smashes, *The Seven Year Itch* (1955) and *Some Like it Hot* (1959).

But it isn't risqué double entendres that lend *The Apartment* its lasting sting, but rather its potent combination of cynicism towards big business and its exploitation of mankind's worst tendencies, with compassion for those that are just trying to survive within that environment. The bitter irony is that Baxter is indirectly "sleeping his way to the top"… without any of the sexual contact or intimacy that might at least function as a fringe benefit of such a deal with the devil. His apartment may indeed be a hotbed of carnal carousing, but Baxter is shut out in the cold (literally – although the weather is blamed for Baxter's virus, one also has to wonder about the hygienic conditions in that particular torrid flat), living a lonely bachelor life of frozen TV dinners and endless channel-surfing. Wilder's film is as much a drama as a comedy (indeed, there was critical confusion at the time of release as to how it should be categorized), and in dealing with some quite somber subjects, it also doesn't prioritize sentimentality – let alone smuttiness – over harsh reality and moral quandaries.

Even as the happy ending draws near, Baxter would still be appallingly flattered that a girl like Kubelik might ever contemplate suicide over a guy like him, and one wonders whether she has entirely gotten over her expressed worldview that "Some people take, some people get took."

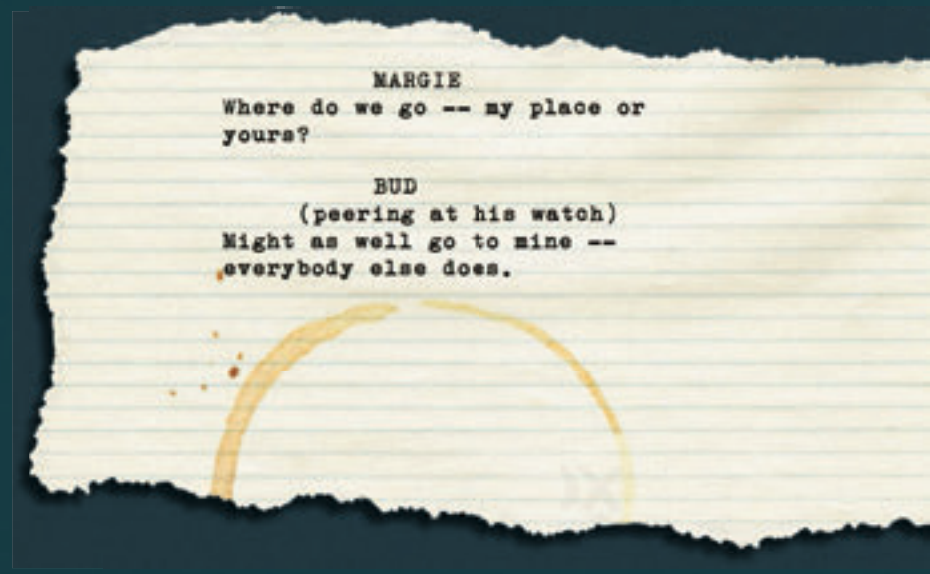
Hollywood's Production Code was already falling into decline during the 1950s – and, again, it ultimately had to be entirely abandoned in favor of a new ratings system towards the end of the turbulent 60s – but there were a handful of controversial films in the late 50s and early 60s that really tested the limits of the Code's content restrictions, and they were neither European imports (those fell outside of the control of the Code) nor outright exploitation films (which unreeled in independently operated theaters and grindhouses, and didn't even bother pursuing Code approval). Wilder had never shied away from handling mature themes in films like *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) and *The Lost Weekend* (1945) (the best Hollywood treatment of alcoholism until Lemmon starred in Blake Edwards' *Days of Wine and Roses* two years after *The*

Apartment), but it was 1959's *Some Like it Hot* – another comedy that seems wholly innocuous by today's standards – that raised the ire of the MPAA (formerly the MPPDA, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America), who refused to grant Wilder's film a certificate of approval… yet *Some Like it Hot* went on to become one of that year's biggest hits anyway, offering further evidence that the Code was not only becoming outdated and constricting, but that its importance in the industry was also receding. Also in 1959, Joseph L. Mankiewicz's adaptation of Tennessee Williams' play *Suddenly, Last Summer* is a film that still packs a punch even by today's standards, with a tawdry treatment of gay pickups, insanity, and even cannibalism that had it denounced by Williams, co-screenwriter Gore Vidal, and ultimately even Mankiewicz himself, though it was a box office success and garnered Oscar® nominations for Elizabeth Taylor (who would star in several of the pre-ratings 60s' most transgressive films) and Katherine Hepburn (Taylor would win Best Actress the following year, for playing a high-priced hooker in *Butterfield 8*, beating out

MacLaine in *The Apartment*). Two upmarket horror films, Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* and Hitchcock's *Psycho*, were among 1960's most controversial productions, although the sight and sound of a flushing toilet in the latter seemed to be as startling in a Hollywood release as the film's violent murder sequences (meanwhile, on a similarly corporeal level, the sounds of MacLaine's induced vomiting in *The Apartment* are rather startlingly blunt). Many were shocked that Kubrick would even attempt to film Nabokov's *Lolita* (1962), and the result was predictably tendentious. Even such acknowledged classroom viewing staples as Robert Mulligan's adaptation of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962) and Elia Kazan's *Splendor in the Grass* (1961), with the former's depiction of racism and rape accusations and the latter's candid exploration of barely repressed teen sexuality and psychological institutionalization, raised some eyebrows at the time of release.[2] And just a few years later, Sidney Lumet's 1964 Holocaust survivor drama

2 - *Splendor* was far from Kazan's most persecuted production of the era, though, as his infamous 1956 film *Baby Doll* – another Williams adaptation – was a cause *célèbre* after its condemnation by the Catholic Legion of Decency, who labeled it "grievously offensive to Christian and traditional standards of morality and decency" and successfully had it banned from many theaters.

The Pawnbroker became the first American studio production to show bare breasts and still receive Production Code approval, although the Legion of Decency was again not in agreement, stating that "a condemnation is necessary in order to put a very definite halt to the effort by producers to introduce nudity into American films."



But while Wilder, Kazan, Kubrick, and others made films that occasionally triggered the ire of the Production Code and/or the Legion of Decency, no other Hollywood director from the period was as direct and consistent in his rejection of attempted censorship as Otto Preminger, beginning with his scandalous 1953 comedy *The Moon is Blue*, a film rejected by the Production Code (for its "unacceptably light attitude towards seduction, illicit sex, chastity, and virginity") and positively reviled by the Legion of Decency. Three states banned the film outright, and many theaters that would book it only did so after insisting on segregating its screenings into "men only" and "women only" alternating showings. Preminger's 1955 drug addiction drama *The Man with the Golden Arm* encountered similar difficulties, with distributor United Artists temporarily resigning from the MPAA after Production Code approval was denied (this is one of the rare instances in this era when the Legion of Decency was actually more lenient, as they did not issue a condemnation, but rather a lesser classification indicating that the movie was "morally objectionable in part

for all"). Preminger would return to controversial themes with 1959's *Anatomy of a Murder*, with its explicit rape trial testimony, and 1962's *Advise & Consent*, which contained a frank gay-themed subplot, but after the prolonged battles over *Moon* and *Golden Arm*, he actually found better favor with these later productions than Wilder encountered in 1964 with his comedy *Kiss Me, Stupid*, a film that was met with the same accusations of vulgarity and crudity that unfairly greeted *The Apartment* four years earlier, although more justified with the considerably more risqué latter film.[3]

Wilder's *Kiss Me, Stupid* was one of the few Hollywood studio productions of the day condemned by the Legion of Decency, whose influence was in even greater decline than the MPAA's antiquated Production Code, and who were largely concentrating their energies instead on European arthouse imports that happened to contain glimpses of nudity or dealt with sexual themes (during the period surrounding the release of *The Apartment*, for

3 - Speaking to this point, Wilder later observed, "I don't know why the film shocked people. It's the most bourgeois film there is… The public accepted it better in *The Apartment* because it was better conceived, better written, better lubricated."


LORD
CALVER

example, the Legion of Decency was more concerned with condemning new films by Fellini, Godard, Antonioni, Bergman, and Truffaut). But the crisis of the Production Code's increasingly ineffectual and archaic nature became harder to ignore with each passing year throughout the 1960s, finally coming to a head in 1966, when the MPAA reduced the restrictions of the Code, before completely abandoning it in 1967 and introducing a new ratings system in 1968. Two 1966 films contributed to the overdue change just as much as the earlier works by directors like Wilder and Preminger: Antonioni's *Blow-up* was both refused Production Code approval *and* condemned by the Legion of Decency (apparently the only 1966 film to receive their condemnation), but in a rare instance of industry defiance, MPAA member studio MGM released it regardless. And even more prominently in 1966, theater wunderkind-turned-debuting film director Mike Nichols worked with Warner Bros. to ensure that his adaptation of Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* would be as faithful to the play as possible, resulting in the

first Hollywood production to be given the "M" rating, indicating "Suggested for Mature Audiences" (that same year, the British comedies *Alfie* [Lewis Gilbert] and *Georgy Girl* [Silvio Narizzano] were also given the "M" certificate upon U.S. Release). Predating the introduction of the full MPAA ratings system, the "M" was later changed to "GP" (General Patronage) in 1969, and shortly thereafter, the still employed "PG" rating (Parental Guidance Suggested) in 1970. *Virginia Woolf* wasn't the only late-60s, pre-ratings shocker to feature Elizabeth Taylor, as she also featured in John Huston's bizarre 1967 hothouse melodrama *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, with male nudity and forthright treatment of repressed homosexual desires that would have been unthinkable earlier in the decade, and she became the first major Hollywood actress to say "shit" the following year, in Joseph Losey's *Boom!* The Production Code – weakened by the successes of directors like Wilder, Preminger, Kazan, et al – had truly been toppled.

The Apartment is obviously neither a "dirty fairy tale" or a "dirty, filthy movie," but in the rapidly transforming Hollywood cinema climate of the 1960s, its candor about carnality was understandably feathers-ruffling at the onset of that decade. Wilder's classic could be one of the few genuinely great American films to carry the designation of "sex comedy," but given the crass, misogynistic movies that would wind up defining that subgenre in the 1970s and 80s, that seems an unfair label with which to tar *The Apartment*… unless one simply means a film that deals with human intimacy and the need for connection, treating its characters with a degree of warmth, wit, and empathy that is rare for films from any category. Coming along during an era when the Production Code's influence was waning, but when mature subject matter still had to be approached carefully, *The Apartment* feels like it couldn't have been made that subtly and elegantly at any other time.

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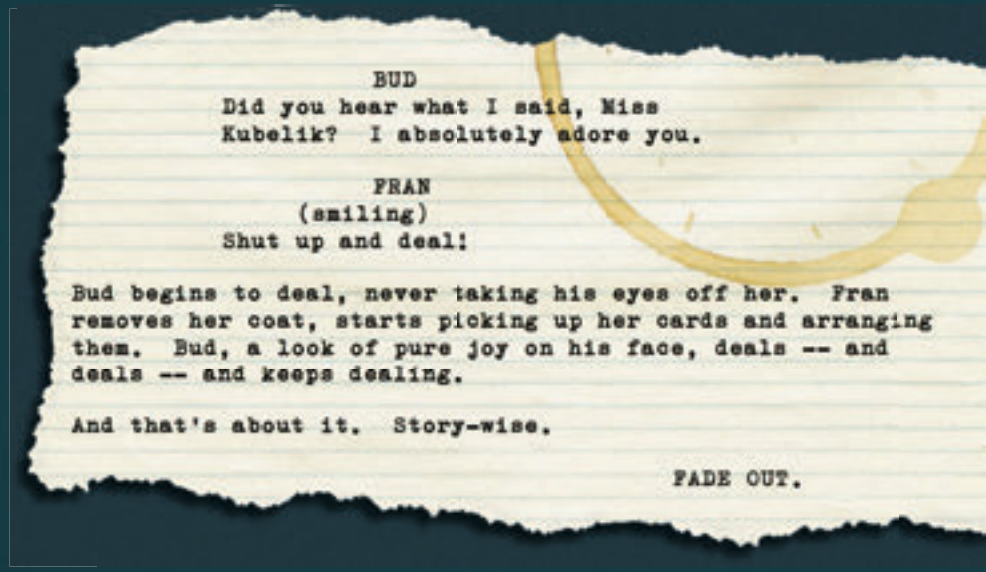
Heather Hyche is an illustrator and writer whose work on cinema has appeared in the publications NuFlesh *and* Diabolique.



BUD
Did you hear what I said, Miss Kubelik? I absolutely adore you.

FRAN
(smiling)
Shut up and deal!

Bud begins to deal, never taking his eyes off her. Fran removes her coat, starts picking up her cards and arranging them. Bud, a look of pure joy on his face, deals -- and deals -- and keeps dealing.

And that's about it. Story-wise.

FADE OUT.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VICEROY


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ABOUT THE RESTORATION

The Apartment was exclusively restored by Arrow Films and is presented in its original aspect ratio of 2.35:1 with the original mono soundtrack and a 5.1 mix.

The original 35mm camera negative was scanned in 4K resolution on a Lasergraphics Director Scanner at EFilm, Burbank. Upon inspection it was discovered that several sections in the original negative had been removed and replaced with a duplicate negative element, resulting in a noticeable shift in quality. These substitutions were not limited to the optical sections, which would have been standard lab practice at the time. Although lab documentation could not be found, these substitutions were likely performed prior to the film's original release, as all subsequent intermediary film elements also exhibit these changes. The trims from the original negative could not be found as these were likely discarded long ago, but a separate 35mm fine grain positive was sourced and compared against the duplicate negative element for these sections. In each of these instances the best source element was selected to ensure the highest quality presentation possible.

The film was graded on the Nucoda grading system at R3store Studios, London. Thousands of instances of dirt, debris, scratches were repaired or removed through a combination of digital restoration tools and techniques. Instances of picture instability, warped sections and damaged frames were also improved.

The original mono soundtrack and 5.1 mix were produced by MGM.

This restoration was supervised by James White, Arrow Films.

The Apartment was restored at R3Store Studios, London.

R3:store studios.com

All materials for this restoration were made available by MGM.

R3Store Studios:
Gerry Gedge, Jo Griffin, Rich Watson, Andrew O'Hagan

EFilm:
Sean Casey, David Morales

MGM:
Scott Grossman, Yvonne Dickens (London)

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and Booklet Produced by Michael Mackenzie
Executive Producers Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni
Technical Producer James White
QC Manager Nora Mehenni
Production Manager Jonathan Meunier
Blu-ray and DVD Mastering David Mackenzie / Fidelity in Motion
Artist Matt Griffin
Design Obviously Creative

SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, David Cairns, Travis Crawford, Elijah Drenner, Kat Ellinger, Matt Griffin, Hope Holiday, Stephen Horne, Heather Hyche, Stephen Jones, Sarah Kelley, Philip Kemp, Sean Phillips, Neil Sinyard, Gillian Wallace Horvat, Nick Wrigley