

Prostitutes in the movies

Film stars shine in these hooker classics

- *Belle de Jour* (1967), France. Director: Luis Buñuel. Starring: Catherine Deneuve, Jean Sorel, Michel Piccoli. Severine (Deneuve) is a beautiful young woman who cannot bring herself to make love with her husband because she is in love with him. She secretly starts working afternoons in a high-class Paris brothel but still remains chaste in her marriage. A strange, metaphoric and erotic masterpiece.
- *Butterfield 8* (1960), U.S.A. Director: Daniel Mann. Starring: Elizabeth Taylor, Laurence Harvey, Eddie Fisher. Gloria (Taylor) is a sophisticated New York call-girl searching for lasting love. She meets Weston (Harvey), a charming lawyer unhappily married into a wealthy family. Gloria is willing to change her life but, just when she needs him most, he turns on her. Taylor's first Academy Award. Based on a novel by John O'Hara.
- *Crimes of Passion* (1984), U.S.A. Director: Ken Russell. Starring: Kathleen Turner, John Laughlin, Anthony Perkins. Bobby Grady (Laughlin) is a private investigator hired to follow Joanna Crane (Turner), a sportswear designer suspected of stealing designs. Instead he discovers that she secretly works nights as the street hooker China Blue. Perkins plays a psycho priest out to free China Blue from her life of sin. A shocking and brutal erotic thriller. Turner's performance is outstanding.
- *Klute* (1971), U.S.A. Director: Alan Pakula. Starring: Jane Fonda, Donald Sutherland, Charles Cioffi. Klute (Sutherland) is a small-town private eye searching for his missing friend. His only lead points him to a Manhattan call girl named Bree Daniels (Fonda), who is being stalked by an obsessed john. Fonda's performance earned her an Academy Award for Best Actress. An intelligent and intriguing suspense thriller.

FROM THE TOP: Catherine Deneuve in *Belle de Jour*, Elizabeth Taylor in *Butterfield 8*, Elisabeth Shue in *Leaving Las Vegas*, Kathleen Turner in *Crimes of Passion*



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- *Leaving Las Vegas* (1995), U.S.A. Director: Mike Figgis. Starring: Nicholas Cage, Elizabeth Shue, Julian Sands. Ben (Cage), is an alcoholic who plans to drink himself to death after being fired from his job. In Las Vegas Ben meets Sera (Shue), a street-wise hooker with a heart of gold. Overlooking each other's faults, the two unexpectedly fall in love. An emotional and spectacular portrayal of some of the realities of prostitution. Cage won an Academy Award for his performance.
- *Never on a Sunday* (1960), Greece. Director: Jules Dassin. Starring: Melina Mercouri, Jules Dassin, George Foundas. Ilya (Mercouri) is a very honest, happy, and selective prostitute. Homer (Dassin), a romantic and naive American tourist, tries to show her "the error of her ways." The local crime boss would like Ilya to be less independent — and under his control, like the rest of the town's prostitutes. Ilya, however, likes her life as it is, and resists. This charming and joyous comedy provides a delightful lesson in humanity. Mercouri eventually became a Minister in the Greek government.
- *Nuts* (1987), U.S.A. Director: Martin Ritt. Starring: Barbara Streisand, Richard Dreyfus, Maureen Stapleton. Claudia (Streisand), a high-class prostitute, is charged with manslaughter for killing a client in self-defence. In an effort to avoid a public trial, her parents try to make her plead guilty by reason of insanity and have her committed. But the strong-willed Claudia resists, so that the truth may surface during the trial. Startling new evidence is revealed about her parents, her psychiatrist, and the public defender assigned to her. Streisand delivers a touching performance in this courtroom thriller, adapted from a 1980 Broadway production.
- *Pretty Baby* (1978), U.S.A. Director: Louis Malle. Starring: Brooke Shields, Keith Carradine, Susan Sarandon. This film — whose release scandalized the respectable — is set in a Storyville, New Orleans bordello in 1917. Raised in a brothel, Violet (Shields) is 12 years old when her virginity is auctioned off. Violet's painful transition from childhood innocence to adult sexuality becomes clearest when she marries the photographer with whom she has been infatuated. An incredibly artful, beautiful and slow film. Both Shields and Sarandon are superb.
- *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* (1982), U.S.A. Director: Colin Higgins. Starring Dolly Parton, Burt Reynolds, Dom DeLuise. Miss Mona (Parton) is the madam of the Chicken Ranch, a 100-year-old Texas brothel that subsidizes the town's hospital and Little League team. Through her innate charm and goodness, Miss Mona makes her profession look like a respectable community service. The local sheriff, Ed (Reynolds), who is romantically involved with Miss Mona, is pressured to shut her house down. This raucous and silly musical comedy was adapted from a popular 1978 Broadway production. Based on a true story by Larry Hill about the 1973 closing of a real-life bordello in LaGrange, Texas, published in *Playboy*.



- *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (1964), Italy. Dubbed in English. Director: Vittorio De Sica. Starring: Sophia Loren, Marcello Mastroianni. Loren plays a different character in each of three short, unrelated tales, always using sex to get what she wants. In the final vignette, she portrays a beautiful high-class prostitute, and performs a breathtaking striptease. Bothered by her conscience when a young seminary student falls in love with her, she is determined to set the young man back on the road to God. Won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film.

Film favourites featuring hustlers

- *Alexander: The Other Side of Dawn* (1977), U.S.A. Director: John Erman. Starring: Leigh J. McCloskey, Eve Plumb. Alexander (McCloskey) is an Oklahoma farm boy who takes to the streets of L.A., where he works as a prostitute. After falling in love with Dawn (Plumb), Alexander strives to escape his dead-end world and begin life anew. A made-for-TV movie devoted to the exploits of a teenaged boy, *Alexander* is a follow-up to *Dawn: Portrait of a Teenage Runaway* (1976), which focused on the sordid descent of a young girl into crime and prostitution.
- *My Own Private Idaho* (1991), U.S.A. Director: Gus Van Sant Jr. Starring: River Phoenix, Keanu Reeves, James Russo. The mayor's rebellious son Scott (Reeves) goes slumming with Mike (Phoenix), a down-and-out hustler whose narcoleptic attacks during times of stress keep him from holding down a job. At an early age Mike was separated from his prostitute mother when she was placed in a mental hospital. Whenever Mike falls unconscious he is transported to his childhood, where he has vague memories of a comforting mother. But each time when he wakes, he keeps finding himself on the same stretch of highway near his boyhood home in Idaho. Very loosely adapted from Shakespeare's *Henry IV*.

FROM THE TOP: River Phoenix in *My Own Private Idaho*, Tygh Runyan and Nick Stahl in *Twist*, Brendan Fehr and Andre Noble in *Sugar*, Dustin Hoffman and Jon Voight in *Midnight Cowboy*



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- *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), U.S.A. Director: John Schlesinger. Starring: Jon Voight, Dustin Hoffman, Sylvia Miles. Joe Buck (Voight) is a good looking Texas cowboy who naively believes he will make his fortune as a high-paid street gigolo in New York. But Buck never finds his well-to-do female clientele. Instead, he becomes a down-and-out drifter. He is befriended by Ratso Rizzo (Hoffman) — a sleazy, small-time con man with big dreams — and the two are bonded in a powerful friendship. The first and only X-rated film to win an Academy Award for Best Picture, it also won awards for Best Director and Best Adapted Screenplay. In addition, both Voight and Hoffman won Academy Awards for Best Actor, and Miles won one for Best Supporting Actress. A poignant and ultra-realistic tragic drama, adapted from a novel by James Herlihy.
- *Twist* (2003), Canada. Director: Jacob Tierney. Starring: Joshua Close, Nick Stahl, Gary Farmer. Dickens's classic *Oliver Twist* is retold by Dodge (Stahl), a veteran street hustler living in a dilapidated rooming house in Toronto. Upon meeting young Oliver (Close), the otherwise misanthropic Dodge takes pity on him and guides him through the underworld of male prostitution, recruiting the beautiful blond boy on the one hand and trying to protect him on the other. Haunted by his traumatic past, Dodge turns violent whenever anyone tries to show him affection, while Oliver is clearly falling for him. A rather grim, gloomy film. 🍁
- *Sugar* (2004), Canada. Director: John Palmer. Starring: Andre Noble, Brendan Fehr, Haylee Wanstall. Cliff (Noble) receives a bottle of booze and a joint for his 18th birthday from his 12-year-old sister (Wanstall), who tells him to go out and lose his virginity. He heads to downtown Toronto, where he finds Butch (Fehr), a sexy and sympathetic hustler. Cliff falls in love. But Butch turns out to be emotionally unstable and addicted to crack, and never loves Nick back. Nick discovers that life on the street is not as alluring as he thought. Noble delivers a heartbreaking performance in this bittersweet coming-of-age story. Adapted from a series of short stories by Bruce La Bruce. 🍁
- *Bad Education* (2004), Spain. Director: Pedro Almodóvar. Starring: Daniel Giménez Cacho, Fele Martínez, Gael García Bernal. Enrique (Martínez) is a successful filmmaker desperate for a story. A grade-school friend, Ignacio (Bernal), shows up with a manuscript recounting the story of their relationship and Ignacio's sexual abuse by Father Manolo (Cacho). Enrique is enthralled, seeing the scenes in his imagination. Ignacio demands to play the role of Zahara, a transsexual prostitute who poses as Ignacio's sister to blackmail Father Manolo with her brother's story. A sinister and ruthless example of *film noir*.

