

## NINE EXHILARATING SEVENTIES MOVIES THAT YOU LIKELY HAVE NOT SEEN

By Todd Berliner

- **THE KING OF MARVIN GARDENS (1972, BOB RAFELSON)**  
A strange, surprising movie that seems, at first, miscast, until the characters played by Jack Nicholson and Bruce Dern deepen and unfold. It starts out heady and becomes increasingly emotional. The movie is audacious, unpredictable.
- **THE LAST OF SHEILA (1973, HERBERT ROSS)**  
A wonderful whodunit and the best of the seventies “genre breakers” (self-conscious genre films that comment on genre convention). The film is about a game and it works like a game. A witty script; Stephen Sondheim and Anthony Perkins wrote it; go figure.
- **MIKEY AND NICKY (1976, ELAINE MAY)**  
Elaine May wrote and directed this small flop that portrays some of the most interesting and insightful interactions among male friends I have seen in cinema. The movie opens up and grows increasingly interesting as it progresses.
- **THE MISSOURI BREAKS (1976, ARTHUR PENN)**  
This notorious flop—weighed down by the egos and salaries of its stars, Marlon Brando and Jack Nicholson—suffers from an undeserved bad reputation. Brando’s performance alone is worth the ticket (Notice how the actor changes his persona and accent every time his character meets a new person).
- **NORTH DALLAS FORTY (1979, TED KOTCHEFF)**  
Director Ted Kotcheff has made a batch of movies that turn out better than their premises (*Joshua Then and Now* [1985] is another to look out for). This comedy about professional football players is unexpectedly rich and intriguing.
- **OPENING NIGHT (1977, JOHN CASSAVETES)**  
Almost no one saw this John Cassavetes film until after his death in 1989. Upon its release, the film ran for two weeks and disappeared. Dense and disorganized, the film grows deeper and more interesting the more you see it. I love this film so much I find it hard even to talk about it. It can’t be blurbed properly—there’s too much going on in it.
- **PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE (1974, BRIAN DE PALMA)**  
The Faust story transferred to rock-and-roll, mixed with *Phantom of the Opera*, music by Paul Williams. It’s better than it sounds.
- **SORCERER (1977, WILLIAM FRIEDKIN)**  
Based on Henri-Georges Clouzot’s *The Wages of Fear*, this film would have been better (and more popular) with a stronger lead actor, but it’s a suspenseful and intelligent remake of the French original.
- **THUNDERBOLT AND LIGHTFOOT (1974, MICHAEL CIMINO)**  
Before *Deer Hunter* and *Heaven’s Gate*, Michael Cimino wrote and directed this heist movie, his first feature, starring Clint Eastwood and Jeff Bridges, that behaves unlike any other in the genre—an astonishing ending.