



King of the Turkeys: Michael Caine in America

Robert Cettl

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Michael Caine is acclaimed as a great actor. He is an international star and two-time Academy Award Winner (for *Hannah and Her Sisters* and *The Cider House Rules*) whose filmmaking career spans over fifty years and many nations. His classic films spring to mind immediately at the mention of his name - *Alfie*, *The Italian Job*, *The Ipcress File*, *The Man Who Would be King*, *Get Carter*, *Hannah and her Sisters*, *Harry Brown*. However, although Caine has immense standing as a serious actor, following his move to the USA in the 1970s he accepted work in terrible Hollywood films simply for the money or fringe benefits, occasionally as a favour to a friend. Some of these “turkeys” are worthy and earnest efforts. Some of them are irredeemable trash cinema. What is astonishing given the reverence accorded Caine is that these indifferent Hollywood flops, which impressed neither critics nor audiences, comprise the bulk of his career between 1972 and 1986: 14 years of Hollywood turkeys and the guy still gets an Academy Award. Two, actually. Indeed, no other internationally acclaimed actor has made as many terrible, indifferent or mediocre movies as Michael Caine. That is not to malign the actor only to point out that some of his career choices were often influenced by factors beyond the merits of the movie itself. To like Caine’s work, therefore, is to have a begrudging, proverbial “soft spot” for the flops and turkeys - redeemed often solely by Caine’s presence and, for which he always works hard - they are, if nothing else, money well earned. On close examination, some of these flops reveal considerable charms and interest: not perhaps enough to warrant a career retrospective of his American film work, but enough to reward discerning viewing (given the pre-emptive warning to lower expectations). This e-book celebrates Caine’s worst American movies, his turkeys, the stinkers that only his die-hard fans either know about or can tolerate: and as is evident, he’s made more of them than most actors would care to remember or include on their CV. But not Caine - with characteristic humour he remembers every one (at least in some part - enough for a small anecdote anyway), its faults, missed opportunities, terrible critical receptions and all. This then is the warts and all e-book of Michael Caine’s American period, where he truly became the King of the Turkeys.

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