

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly Must Be One of the Most Perfect Movies Ever Made

Shôn Ellerton, April 18, 2025

*I've watched thousands of movies, but if I had to choose one perfect movie, I'd say *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* would have to be it.*



I've watch a lot of movies in my life. Probably thousands of them. From mainstream movies most everyone has watched to the most incredibly obscure and underrated films that seemingly no one else has even heard of.

I'm often asked what my favourite movie is. I've probably got around two dozen contestants for the spot, but I find myself coming back to one particular film which warrants, in my opinion, being *the* most perfect film ever made.

And that film is Sergio Leonie's 1966 spaghetti-western classic, [The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly](#).

Let me explain why.

It practically has everything a movie could possibly have in terms of mood, variety, music, content, visuals, drama, storytelling, and exemplary acting. It is a long slow-running movie, which, being in today's potpourri of action-packed material designed to satisfy those with ever-shortening attention spans, seems almost anachronistic.

I first watched this film when I was, perhaps, twelve or thirteen back in the United States. I can't remember except that one of my mother's friends came around and brought a video of the film for us to watch. I explicitly remembered him making

comments about how the cameraman captured the expressions of people's faces so mesmerizingly real and poignant.

The three of us were watching this on, by today's standards, a smallish colour TV with a below-average picture quality. Back in the 80s, that's what most people had. Moreover, we didn't have any fancy sound attachments like many of us do these days. However, the experience of watching this slow-moving film seemed to dwarf the fact that we did not have the technology in our homes to enjoy the big screen and decent sound quality. In those days, most films had to be designed to be enjoyed on a small TV once they became available for the TV networks to air or available on VHS. Some epic films, for example, the sublime classic sci-fi film, [2001: A Space Odyssey](#), is really meant to be enjoyed on the big screen. However, with today's cheap access to relatively huge flatscreen TVs with amazing resolution, this makes going to the cinema practically obsolete.

When I was a kid, I was a sci-fi and horror fan at heart and had absolutely no interest in westerns. And believe me, there were a *lot* of westerns on TV in 1980s USA. *Bonanza*, *Rawhide*, *Gunsmoke*, *The Lone Ranger*, and *Zorro* just to name a few of the regular re-runs. And then there were hundreds of movie westerns, most of them being old and black and white and all being very similar to each other. I had no interest with any of them, so I was curious how this *Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* movie was going to pan out.

And I was most surprised that I watched a movie nearly three hours in length and being utterly engrossed with it, despite it being a western, only to find out that the film ended and I wanted more of it. The only other film I watched longer than this was the 1956 film, [The Ten Commandments](#), with Charlton Heston. A film I certainly enjoyed and hold in high regard, but it could only be endured in one sitting through a rainy afternoon with nothing else to do.

Returning back on topic, the acting in *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* is certainly top-notch but it is almost completely dominated by only three characters. Eastwood, playing Blondie, the 'good' guy. Lee Van Cleef playing Angel Eyes, the 'bad' guy. And Eli Wallach playing Tuco, the 'ugly' guy. I would say, Eli Wallach's acting as Tuco steals the show on so many levels.

Roll up to the present, I had introduced my son to this movie at the early age of eight, and since then, he had re-watched this twice during the next two years. Interestingly, the movie is now deemed rated R, although I was most certain that it used to be PG. However, having watched the movie multiple times, I knew

which parts of the movie to skip for young children, and, in my opinion, there were only three. When Angel Eyes repeatedly strikes a woman on the face for the purpose of extracting information, shoots someone in the face through a pillow, and the scene in which he gets a big burly character to bash Tuco around in a prisoner-of-war camp. That scene was made even more poignant when Angel Eyes ordered a group of prisoner musicians to play a beautiful but very sad piece of music during the bashing up of Tuco so as not to alert the injured and concerned commandant of the camp. I can only think that the film might have been rated this way because of these three short scenes. The director certainly wanted his viewers to be aware of the evil character and villain of the story. As for bad language, there isn't any, and as for nudity, there is none nor is there any sexual activity in the entire movie.

Like me, my son was introduced to that most immortal of actors, Clint Eastwood, who he now idolizes. Apart from his role in the 1972 movie, *The Beguiled*, Eastwood appeals as a hero due to playing roles portraying the strong, silent, stoic, stalwart, and, above all, moral man. The typical lone wolf rather than the alpha male. Even in real life, Eastwood had always seemed to be uninterested in drawing attention and wanting to be popular.

But what makes this movie so perfect?

So much. But first, a brief synopsis from my point of view.

For those wishing to skip this bit, get to the next tilde mark (~) below.

From that initial opening shot. An abandoned and dusty town with the occasional tumbleweed rolling across in the wind while three bandits attempt to shoot, what we later learn to be Tuco in a saloon bar. To the next scene, when Angel Eyes approaches the owner of a lonely farmstead hunting for information. Not one word is exchanged for the best part of twenty minutes and, not only that, the action is very slow and deliberate. Detailed close-ups of facial expressions. Every crease and blemish is revealed. Everything is deliberately slow. And yet, everybody who watches this is spellbound. What's going to happen next?

And then we later learn of Blondie, played by Eastwood, who, when working with outlaw Tuco, play a fun game of sharing bounty money posted by the sheriff's office. Blondie skilfully plays the part of apprehending Tuco for the money. Tuco is then condemned to death by hanging. Blondie shoots the rope of

the noose, and they both run away into the sunset enjoying the spoils of the bounty money.

Their partnership becomes somewhat complicated when Tuco starts angling for more than half of the share. They play tit for tat against each other. Blondie abandons Tuco seventy miles from town. Tuco gets revenge and forces Blondie to walk through a desert no army would venture through.

And then the story transitions seamlessly when they learn of a consignment of gold from a thirst-stricken and dying soldier inside a covered wagon that was ambushed. From the dying man, Tuco knows the name of the cemetery in which the gold is hidden, but Blondie then learns of the name of the grave from the same man when Tuco rushes to retrieve water for him to drink. Tuco and Blondie share one half of the secret each but neither trusts each other.

After Blondie recovers from his plight in the desert in a nearby mission, knowing full well that Tuco would have left him for dead should he had revealed his half of the secret, they are captured by the Union troops and led off to a prisoner-of-war camp. The story gets intriguing when we find out that Angel Eyes is a colonel in the camp who extracts Tuco's secret by force but knowing Blondie would refuse to talk, he gets Blondie to work with him to find the gold.

In an abandoned town bombed out by cannon fire, Blondie removes himself from Angel Eye and his buddies, seeks Tuco, and works with Tuco to kill off the others in a typical classic shootout scene so admired by many other westerns. Apart from Angel Eyes himself, they succeed but end up in the midst of a battle between the Union and the Confederates separated by a river and a bridge.

Neither the Union nor the Confederate captains are permitted to blow up the bridge by their superiors, but Tuco and Blondie, without being seen, rig up the bridge with explosives and destroy it, knowing that the troops on either side will be forced to move leaving them carefree to find the missing gold.

Tuco and Blondie had revealed their half of the secret by this time, but Tuco, being a perpetual and untrustworthy bandit, tried to double-cross Blondie again by getting to the gold before him. Tuco apparently finds the right grave in the cemetery but it was not to be. Blondie had deliberately left out some crucial information. Unbeknownst to both of them, Angel Eyes miraculously appears with a shovel and orders them to start digging.

Blondie, now being the only one who knows where the gold is, plays a game with the other two. A classic triangle shootout with a very interesting outcome, which, at this point, the movie ends.

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The movie, during its entirety, never had any unnecessary dialogue, padding, nor did it have any scene which did not convey any significance to the storyline. At this point, I would stress that the normal theatrical version of the movie is superior to the director's version, in which are included scenes that have no bearing on the plot of the story. In general, I find director's or extended versions of movies inferior because the reason that movies are edited, are usually to remove scenes which aren't good or unnecessary in the first place.

Throughout the movie, there is adventure, action, and first-rate drama. There is also a surprising amount of humour, some of the interchanges between Blondie and Tuco being memorable with great one-liner quotes and quips. There is violence undertaken by the evil Angel Eyes. There is sadness and horror as portrayed by the consequences of those fighting in the civil war.

Good movies like this one should impart something useful to viewers, particularly younger viewers who find taking history lessons tedious and boring. After watching this movie, my son and I watched a documentary about the US Civil War, an extraordinarily brutal and bloodthirsty war which killed nearly a million Americans. The Republicans in the North who remained in the Union and the Democrats in the South who seceded to create its own Confederacy. A war that should never have happened.

The movie, of course, didn't go into too many details about the war, although it did make mention of the notorious Andersonville Camp, a Confederate-run prisoner-of-war camp which was known for its torture and brutality of the prisoners. As for location, those familiar with the terrain of the western United States, will know that this was not shot on location but rather, mostly in Spain and parts of Italy and Mexico. And for realism, the movie is quite fantastical when it comes to the accuracy of nineteenth-century guns. Shooting cords of ropes from one hundred metres away or shooting through the thin sides of planks of woods with a pistol is simply not possible. But it was fun all the same!

On a side point, for a more realistic western of a similar ilk, look no further than the 1968 epic, *Once Upon a Time in the West*, starring Charles Bronson and the

somewhat dark 1992 film, [*Unforgiven*](#), again starring Eastwood, although more advanced in years. They are both remarkable films.

The music of *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* was composed by Ennio Morricone, one of the greatest music composers of this genre who ever lived. Morricone's style is haunting, beautiful, catchy, and even ethereal or spooky. The prevailing song in this movie by Morricone, *A Story of a Soldier*, has to be one of the greatest American pieces of music ever written. It so captures the loss and sadness brought about by the Civil War and no doubt, would bring a tear to many eyes when listening to it. The lyrics are powerful and if not intelligible in the movie, you can find this song with the lyrics on YouTube. And of course, I would assume that almost everybody had listened to the catchy title soundbite so immortalised in this movie in some way or another.

Another aspect that makes this movie perfect is that this movie can be watched over and over, despite its long length, and by so many people. It is so entertaining and involving and captures every essence needed to create the perfect film. There are, indeed, other movies which can be watched over and over. It is personal taste, of course. For example, I probably know every line from, [*What's Up Doc?*](#), [*Caddyshack*](#) and all the Pink Panther movies starring Peter Sellers. They are, of course, very funny movies and I have watched them over and over. And there are other epics I love like *2001: A Space Odyssey*, [*Alien*](#) and Stanley Kubrick's [*The Shining*](#), which firmly sit in the sci-fi and horror camp. Although being long, they are most certainly re-watchable. For action, I would rate [*Terminator 2: Judgement Day*](#) as simply being one of the most of my re-watched movies. However, *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* simply contains more elements than most films, and not only that, it is a movie that can be watched by just about anyone unlike the others.

For me, the contender for being number one as the perfect movie might have been the 1980 comedy musical, [*The Blues Brothers*](#), starring John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd. I have enjoyed this movie so many times. It's funny on all levels, it's got action, great drama as well, the best car chase and pile-up of all time, and of course, great music. Like *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, it has some one-liners which are simply unforgettable. It didn't have the same emotional and intricate level of acting nor did it have quite the same impact, so I had to relegate it to Number 2.

Nevertheless, it was a difficult decision to have to choose one, and so, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* gets the prize.

I think everybody needs to watch *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*.