Peter Yates (24 July 1929, Aldershot, Hampshire, England). Biography from Leonard Maltin's Movie Encyclopedia: "Variety is certainly the spice of life for this British director whose films have covered an extraordinarily wide range of styles, subjects, and budgets. After graduating from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, Yates worked as an actor, stage manager, and director before turning to film in the 1950s as a dubbing assistant and then assistant director for Tony Richardson (on A Taste of Honey), Jose Quintero (on The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone) and J. Lee Thompson (on The Guns of Navarone) all in 1961. With Richardson's encouragement, Yates worked as a stage and TV director and then made his first films, Summer Holiday (1963) and One Way Pendulum (1965). A car chase in his third feature, Robbery (1967), which drew on Yates' past experience as a professional racing driver, caught the attention of Steve McQueen and Yates was asked to direct the detective thriller Bullitt (1968). The film was highlighted by some of the greatest car chases ever put onscreen, and was a smash hit. Yates' next projects, however, were a varied lot: John and Mary (1969), Murphy's War (1971), The Hot Rock (1972), The Friends of Eddie Coyle (1973), For Pete's Sake (1974), Mother, Jugs & Speed (1976), and The Deep (1977). In 1979 he earned his first Oscar nomination for Best Director for the sleeper hit Breaking Away a warm, irresistibly charming portrait of four young men in Bloomington, Indiana. He's continued on the commercial road ever since, earning another Oscar nomination for the delightful adaptation of the stage play The Dresser (1983). OTHER FILMS INCLUDE: 1981: Eyewitness (1981), Krull (1982), Eleni (1985), Suspect (1987): The House on Carroll Street (1988), An Innocent Man (1989), Year of the Comet (1992), Roommates (1995), The Run of the Country (1995) and Curtain Call (1999).


Steve McQueen (24 March 1930, Beech Grove, Indiana—7 November 1980, Juárez, Mexico. Lung cancer.) Biography from Leonard Maltin's Movie Encyclopedia: "One of the first "cool" movie stars, a true icon of the Beatles generation, McQueen drew upon his own background as a reform-school graduate, ex-Marine, and drifter to craft his persona: a brooding, taciturn, fatalistic loner who relied on his own instincts and considerable physical attributes in coping with a hostile environment. After studying at New York's Actors' Studio and making a successful Broadway debut in 'A Hatful of Rain,' McQueen broke into films with a bit part in Somebody Up There Likes Me (1956). He first played a lead in The Blob (1958), earnestly enacting his role in this cult favorite as though it had been written by Shakespeare. That same year he created the character of bounty hunter Josh Randall in the TV series 'Wanted: Dead or Alive' (1958-60), which further boosted his popularity. McQueen played one of the hired gunfighters in The Magnificent Seven (1960), and appeared in The Honeymoon Machine (1961), Hell Is for Heroes and The War Lover (both 1962) before making a strong impression on moviegoers as the daring P.O.W. who attempted to flee his Nazi captors on a motorcycle in The Great Escape (1963). McQueen, whose offscreen passion was racing, did most of his own stunts in the memorable chase sequence. He subsequently starred in Soldier in the Rain, Love With The Proper Stranger (both 1963), Baby The Rain Must Fall, The Cincinnati Kid (both 1965), Nevada Smith (a "prequel" to Harold Robbins' The Carpetbaggers), The Sand Pebbles (both 1966, Oscar-nominated for his work in the latter), and The Thomas Crown Affair (1968) before thrilling moviegoers with another mind-boggling chase sequence, this time in a car flying up and down the hilly streets of San Francisco in Bullitt (also 1968), one of his most successful films. By now at the peak of his popularity, McQueen occasionally eschewed straight action films in favor of character-driven stories such as The Reivers (1969), Junior Bonner (1972), and Papillon (1973)-all of them first-rate. He also participated in Bruce Brown's documentary on his favorite hobby, motorcycling, On Any Sunday (1971). Then he
gave action fans what they craved in *Le Mans* (1971), *The Getaway* (1972, costarrerd with Ali MacGraw, whom he later married), and *The Towering Inferno* (1974). Beset by a variety of personal demons, McQueen was off-screen for several years; when he returned, it was in almost unrecognizable form, under a mane of hair and full beard in a “pet project” rendition of Ibsen’s *An Enemy of the People* (1977) that was seen by few of his fans. Several years later he unexpectedly turned up in a pair of mainstream movies, the Western *Tom Horn* and a contemporary bounty hunter story, *The Hunter* (both 1980). He died later that year of a heart attack following a cancer operation.”

**Jacqueline Bisset** (13 September 1944, Weybridge, Surrey, England, UK) has acted in 74 films, the most recent of which are *The Grooming* (2005), *Domino* (2005), and *Fascination* (2004). *Bio from Leonard Maltin’s Film Encyclopedia:* This quiet brunette beauty went from bit parts to full-fledged stardom over a decade’s time—but got more attention from her exposure in bikinis and wet T-shirts than she ever did for her performances. The former model started her movie career in minor roles in *The Knack,* and *How to Get It* (1965), Roman Polanski’s *Cul-de-Sac* (1966), and *Casino Royale* (1967). She made more of an impact on audiences when she lost her bikini top during a surfside romp in *The Sweet Ride* (1968), and pictures of Bisset sans halter surfaced in just about every magazine shortly thereafter. Suddenly a hot commodity, Bisset toiled in many movies of varying quality, including *Bullitt,* *The Detective* (both 1968), *Airport* and *The Grasshopper* (both 1970). Her striking good looks and sophisticated manner occasionally landed her more significant parts, notably as the female lead in François Truffaut’s Oscar-winning *Day for Night* (1973), playing an actress recovering from a nervous breakdown. Bisset appeared in *The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean* (1972) and *Murder on the Orient Express* (1974) before making a splash, so to speak, as the wet-T-shirt heroine of *The Deep* (1977). She deserved better; although she had by this time become a capable actress, she was mired in unfortunate pictures such as *The Greek Tycoon* (her character modeled after Jackie O.), *Who Is Killing the Great Chefs of Europe?* (both 1978), and *Inchon* (1982). Like many other actresses, she finally decided to try producing her own vehicles, and succeeded with *Rich and Famous* (1981). Bisset’s subsequent films include *Class* (1983) and John Huston’s *Under the Volcano* (1984). Since then she has appeared on-screen sporadically, trying her hand at comedy (in 1989’s *Scenes From the Class Struggle in Beverly Hills* in addition to appearing in the quasi-exploitation film *Wild Orchid* (1990). True to form (and all too typically) her performance as Josephine in a Napoleonic TV miniseries got more attention for her cleavage than for anything else. A 1990 Bisset film, *The Maid* was scarcely released.” She hated the wet t-shirt scene in *The Deep.* She said she hadn’t been told they were going to film her like that and she felt exploited. “After filming *The Deep* (1977), all they talked about was my titts for the next four years. God, if I was going to do a picture like that, I’d have done it a lot sexier. They looked like two fried eggs on a platter”

him as a stunt driver and, according to John Preston (London Times, October 8, 1981), Yates found himself becoming more involved with what was happening on the other side of the fence.

He began his third career in a language studio, dubbing foreign-language films into English, and progressed to the editing of documentaries, in due course becoming a third, second, and first assistant director. By 1960 he was working with such luminaries as Tony Richardson (The Entertainer, A Taste of Honey), Jack Cardiff (Sons and Lovers), and José Quintero (The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone). Yates received the Directors Guild of America award as best assistant director for his work on Sons and Lovers (1960). The same year, as assistant to J. Lee Thompson on The Guns of Navarone, he met and married Virginia Pope, a New Zealander then working as a film publicist.

In 1961, on the recommendation of Tony Richardson, Yates directed two short plays by Edward Albee at the Royal Court Theatre, The Death of Bessie Smith and An American Dream. By then, he says, he had the directing “bug,” and his first movie followed in 1962, the musical Summer Holiday. It stars the pop singer Cliff Richard as a London Transport mechanic who, with three friends, converts a double-decker bus into a mobile hotel and sets off across Europe to Athens. Along the way a number of girls are collected, including an American singer (Lauri Peters) on the run from her agent and her and her avaricious mother. Summer Holiday was soon to be upstaged by the Beatles and Richard Lester, but in 1962 it seemed to Penelope Gilliatt: “the most cheerful and skillful British musical of our generation” and “a real breakthrough,” thanks to the pace of Yates’ direction and the inventive production numbers devised by Herbert Ross.

After a stint in television, working on The Saint and Danger Man, Yates directed his second feature, One Way Pendulum (1964), produced by Michael Deeley for Tony Richardson’s Woodfall Productions. ... Patrick Gibbs called it a “robust contribution to minority cinema,” [absurdist] but most critics thought that Yates had failed to turn the play into a movie. Yates had Michael Deeley as his producer again when he made Robbery (1967), scripted by Edward Boyd, George Markstein, and Yates himself (the only writing credit he has claimed). A fictionalized reconstruction of Britain’s Great Train Robbery of 1963, it has an excellent cast (Stanley Baker, Frank Finlay, James Booth, Barry Foster) to whom the script gives little scope for detailed characterization. The action scenes were generally admired, however—especially a car chase that, as Peter Cowrie writes “was shot with a verve and brutality quite foreign to the British cinema of the sixties.”

The car chase impressed another racing driver, Steve McQueen, who invited Yates to Hollywood to direct his next picture, Bullitt (1968). Adapted from Robert L. Pike’s novel Mute Witness and splendidly photographed on location in San Francisco by William A. Fraker, it was the first of many Yates films edited by Frank P. Keller. McQueen plays Frank Bullitt, a maverick police lieutenant who is entrusted with the safekeeping of a vital state’s witness. The witness is murdered, other deaths follow, and Bullitt finds himself fighting the good fight alone, obstructed by his time-serving superiors, while the ruthless ambitious district attorney (Robert Vaughn) demands his professional castration, and his girl (Jacqueline Bisset) opposes his devotion to so squalid a career.

David Robinson said that the eleven-minute hair-raising car chase through roller-coaster San Francisco streets revived “a kind of physical excitement one had forgotten the cinema could achieve,” and John Russell Taylor thought it “just about the best car-chase ever filmed,” an achievement the director attributes to the fact that he and McQueen (who did his own driving) “care about cars and drivers.” It launched a decade or more of car-chase movies, ranging from Smokey and the Bandit to The French Connection.

Richard Roud described Bullitt as “the best thriller since [John Boorman’s] Point Blank”—another American film by a British director—adding that it gave “a picture of San Francisco that no American eye has managed since [Delmer Daves’] Dark Passage....Yates seems to have pressed into service the whole city....The early morning scenes have just the right feel, and when McQueen slouches into a grocery to pick up six TV dinners, it tells us more about a policeman’s life than all the dialogue in [Don Siegel’s] Madigan.” Tom Milne praised the candid-camera realism of the crowd scenes and an “extraordinary feeling of immediacy, which is more responsible for the almost tangible sense of violence than any lingering on gory details.” (Yates has said that he dislikes putting violence on the screen: “One suggests violence rather than showing it. That’s where the art lies.”)

The public liked the movie as much as the critics did, and more American assignments followed for Yates, beginning with John and Mary (1969), a film far removed from the mayhem of Bullitt....

Resuming his partnership with the producer Michael Deeley, Yates went off to Venezuela to shoot Murphy’s War (1971), starring Peter O’Toole as an Irish mechanic out to revenge himself on the German submarine that had sunk his ship. There are strong echoes of The African Queen.

An expensive array of talent was assembled for Yates’ next movie, The Hot Rock, released by 20th Century-Fox in 1972. A jokey “eaper” movie, it has Robert Redford and Georges Segal leading a virtuoso quartet of thieves in stealing from the Brooklyn Museum a diamond wanted back by its country of origin. Moses Gunn plays the black diplomat who commissions the heist, and Zero Mostel, a consummately crooked lawyer. There is a witty script by William Goldman, adapted from a novel by Donald E. Westlake, and some glossy New York photography by Ed Brown.

Another much more somber thriller followed, The Friends of Eddie Coyle (1973), described by one critic as a variation on the theme of “disenchantment with the old romantic myths of cops and robbers.” Eddie Coyle (Robert Mitchum) is a small-time Boston crook and two-time loser. He is pressured by the police into supplying a little information, then set up for the mob by the real Judas of the piece.

Adapted by its producer, Paul Monash, from the novel by George V. Higgins, the movie was shot by Victor J. Kemper on location in an autumnal Boston. Yates says that Robert Mitchum “taught me more about directing actors than anyone else,” but it was Mitchum’s casting that was most criticized in this often “compulsive” film—as David Robinson says, there is an “inevitable imbalance when a star player of Mitchum’s weight and authority is cast in the unlikely role of a small-time victim.”

Stanley Shapiro and Maurice Richlin, who wrote Pillow Talk, were responsible for “the same sort of antique situation comedy” in Yates’ next script, For Pete’s Sake (1974). Barbra Streisand stars as a hard-up Brooklyn housewife who falls into the clutches of a loan shark and as a result finds herself involved successively with the call-girl racket, the Mafia, and urban cattle rustling. ...

Having filmed in San Francisco, Boston, and two of the boroughs of New York, Yates next added Los Angeles to his gallery of urban portraits. Mother, Jugs and Speed (1976) was...
written by Tom Mankiewicz, who also coproduced with Yates himself. A frenetic face off between two rival ambulance services and starring Bill Cosby, Raquel Welch, and Harvey Keitel, it was widely and unfavorably compared with Robert Altman’s M*A*S*H.

Peter Benchley, the son and grandson of writers, made more money with his first book, *Jaws*, thank his distinguished forebears saw in their combined careers. It was his second bloodcurdler, *The Deep*—a laborious potboiler set in Barbados—which Yates tackled as his next assignment. Jacqueline Bisset and Nick Nolte are vacationing skin divers who discover not only Spanish treasure but a hoard of morphine, thus attracting the attention of the island’s historian (Robert Shaw) and a gang of voodoo-working villains, not to mention sharks and a giant moray eel. “It may have jaws,” John Coleman said of the movie, “but it lacks teeth.” This was the commonest critical view, though the film (about 40 percent of which takes place under water) was recognized as a technical tour de force and had its champions. One of the latter called it “a glorious piece of hokum,” and the public obviously shared that opinion, making it Yates’ greatest commercial success to date: it grossed $31 million.

By that time Yates had been working in the United States for more than a decade and, as John Preston says, had established a reputation as “a big-budget director who could handle temperamental stars and was especially good at action sequences.” But he was anxious not to be typed. “I decided I wanted to make a comedy about class distinctions in America....I also wanted to present an entertaining view of American life without being sentimental or cynical.” ...*Breaking Away* went into production for 20th Century-Fox, with Yates as both producer and director....

By following a string of big-budget movies with a cheapie project without a single star name, John Preston wrote, Yates broke “one of the great unwritten laws of Hollywood.” But *Breaking Away* justified the gamble. It was a great critical success and the box-office sleeper of the year, grossing over $20 million. According to Preston, it revitalized “a career that was in danger of bogging down in a surfeit of grandiose productions and second-rate scripts....Steve Tesich won an Oscar for his script and went on to write Yates’ next film, *Eyewitness* (1981).

*Eyewitness* was followed by *Krull*, a negligible, if expensively budgeted ($27 million), sci-fi film capitalizing on the success of *Star Wars*.

Yates had been looking for years for a story that would take him back to Britain, and finally found one in Ronald Harwood’s play *The Dresser*, which deals with the repertory theatre world of Yates’ youth....David Denby called it “the most exciting filmed play in years.” ...Stanley Kauffmann found Yates’ direction “a pleasant surprise.” “Most of what I’ve seen of his, he commented, “from *Bullitt* to *Eyewitness*, has been consecrated to the ideal of flash, of dazzle. Here he simply places his film...at the service of actors. There’s no trickery, no egotistical director’s attention-grabbing.... If a director hasn’t developed a style through which a film can move to its truth, and Yates hasn’t, his best course is to be invisible, which is what Yates does effectively here.”

*Eleni* (1985), adapted by Steve Tesich from Nicholas Gage’s 1983 internationally bestselling memoir, deals with a New York Times reporter’s search for the man who sentenced his mother to death during Greece’s bloody civil war of 1946-1949. The film was thought by many reviewers to have a compelling documentary power, and the performance of Kate Nelligan as the martyred mother was praised. But for some, Yates’ decision to doubletrack the story, crosscutting between the present-day detective work of Gag and the war-time ordeal of his mother created a jerky, stop-and-go movement, aborting dramatic scenes before they were fully underway. Lawrence O’Toole complained that the two time frames are “never dynamically integrated. Indeed, they almost seem to be two separate movies.” To David Denby, “Yates, and enjoyable and talented craftsman were working on the right kind of subject...doesn’t have the gravity of style for this kind of epic, political subject.”

In 1981 Yates said that as he gets older, “I find it very important to have a hero that one can identify with and not be ashamed of doing so. I tend now to look for stories that have hope.”

*from Second Sight Notes on Some Movies 1965-1970, Richard Schickel, Simon and Schuster NY 1972: Bullitt* is not a sensational movie—at least in the common usage of that term. But it is a movie of sensation, by which I mean that the director, Peter Yates, has aimed at making as palpable as possible those aspects of the physical world encountered by a San Francisco police detective working on a very lively and dangerous case that, logically enough, creates in him a state of consciousness in which he is preternaturally aware of both the menace and the promise (of clues and cues) in familiar surroundings.

You know how it is when you are concentrating very hard on a problem. All your senses are peculiarly alert, you seem to see more—in more detail—and to hear things more acutely, more analytically. That’s the way it is with the title Shamus in this picture, played with unwonted clenched-fist tightness by Steve McQueen, who has not given such a well-disciplined performance in years.

As we gumshoe around the city with him looking for the persons unknown who bumped off an alleged mobster he was supposed to be guarding until he could testify before a Senate crime-investigating committee, director Yates forces us to share the cop’s furious concentration, achieving this remarkable feeling of identification—no, oneness—with the protagonist by daring means. He deliberately avoids that pell-mell pacing that propels us mindlessly through films of this type. Instead, he lingers musingly on environments, probing at them with his camera until, for example, you can almost smell the cheap hotel room where the attempt on the witness’s life was made, so you can feel the tension in the operating room where the surgical team tries to save his life, feel on your flesh the chilly sterility of the autopsy room where at last he rests in absurd death. It is the same with less morbid matters—the examination of some suitcases for clues, even the watchful concentration of the policemen as an electronic gizmo whirls and whirs, receiving and printing out an electronically transmitted photograph of a suspect.

By contrast, action and death come quickly, without warning. A door is opened, the hired killers appear, the shotguns blast and two men are bloodily, grievously wounded before they—or the audience—can quite comprehend the fact. McQueen is riding along in his car, observes that he is being tailed, reverses positions and is suddenly the pursuer in a wild car chase through roller-coaster streets/ Thanks to nothing more complicated than sounds basic movie making (intelligent camera placement and editing), this becomes an action sequence that must be compared with the best in film history. The final run-down, gun-down is almost equally well made and far more original—McQueen and criminal lunging around an airport in the dark, dodging not only...
Kansas Street, and McQueen's Mustang appears in the Charger's rear-view mirror.

3. Russian Hill/North Beach The Charger and Mustang teleport to Filbert Street, heading east with Coit Tower on the horizon. Both cars take a left on Columbus Avenue and take another left past Bimbo's 365 night club.

4. Potrero Hill As the chase suddenly speeds up, both cars make their second trip through Potrero Hill, heading up 20th Street.

5. Russian Hill The Mustang and Charger make their first appearance on Lombard Street, squealing their tires as they dog-leg at high speeds onto Larkin.

6. Russian Hill The cars stay in the same neighborhood, but appear a few blocks away from the last sequence, now heading west on Chestnut.

7. Russian Hill The most exciting part of the chase is also the most frustrating. The Mustang and Charger get airborne on Taylor Street, appearing to pass the same green Volkswagen Bug several times each.

8. Russian Hill/Marina The cars are back on Larkin Street, where the Charger took out a camera (the scene was left in the movie). Soon both cars are on Marina Boulevard, hitting speeds well above 100 miles per hour.

9. Bayview District When we last saw our hero, he was about to get on Golden Gate Bridge. Suddenly McQueen is on the southernmost end of the city, heading toward Daly City.

10. Daly City/Brisbane The chase ends on Guadalupe Canyon Parkway. Stuntman Bud Ekins, who jumped the motorcycle in "The Great Escape," wrecks another bike in the scene. Then McQueen's Mustang bumps the shotgun-toting killers' Charger, leading to an explosive finale.

Peter Hartlaub: Anatomy of the Chase (San Francisco Chronicle):
The chase in "Bullitt" is long and thrilling, but more than a little confusing. In just under 10 minutes of no-dialogue driving, Steve McQueen's Ford Mustang [GT 350] and the bad guys' Dodge Charger jump around to 10 different locations, spanning five San Francisco districts plus two other cities.

1. Bernal Heights The chase starts off at slow speeds, with the Charger creeping behind the Mustang. McQueen makes a U-turn on Army Street and heads uphill on York Street.

2. Potrero Hill The cars materialize several blocks away on Kansas Street, and McQueen's Mustang appears in the Charger's...