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Sam Whiskey



Before there was *Smokey and the Bandit* (1977) and *The Cannonball Run* (1981), there was **Sam Whiskey** (1969), in which Burt Reynolds is a gambler, a ladies man and not one to turn down a proposition from the likes of widow Laura Breckenridge (Angie Dickinson). Even for the mayhem of post-Civil War days, the job she offers him is an odd one. Laura's deceased husband was a bit of a scoundrel and stole a quarter of a million dollars worth of gold bars from the U.S. Mint. But that arrangement didn't sit well with her, and she wants her family name preserved and the gold returned to the mint before the government discovers that it's missing. Only problem, of course, is that the gold is at the bottom of Colorado's Platte River in a sunken steamboat. Mr. Whiskey needs to retrieve the gold, then figure out a way to smuggle it back into the mint. His cut is \$20,000 (plus the likely affections of his female employer), but he can't pull this job off by himself. So, Whiskey teams up with an inscrutable blacksmith (Ossie Davis) who is just the solid partner he needs and O. W. Bandy (Clint Walker), a former war buddy and eccentric inventor. Of course our motley crew can't get away with the perfect crime that easily. An elaborate scheme to retrieve the gold (thanks to an ingenious diving helmet) and smuggle it back into the mint (thanks to a bust of George Washington) is nearly foiled by a band of miscreants who, of course, want the gold for themselves. But we know our semi-heroes will persevere: as the film's tagline says, "Don't mix with Sam Whiskey. It's risky!"

Sam Whiskey is one of Reynolds first leading big-screen roles, though by 1969 he had already established himself as a leading man on television. After *Deliverance* (1972), everything changed. The National Association of Theater Owners named him Number One Box Office Star and Star of the Year five years in a row, and he received the People's Choice Award for Favorite All Around Motion Picture Actor for six years running - feats no other actor has been able to accomplish.

Reynolds and the venerable Ossie Davis would later reunite on the series *Evening Shade* (1990) and recapture some of their playful



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Whoopi Goldberg - 11/1

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A 5-disc set showcasing great actresses in key roles; among them are Susan Hayward as real-life singer Lillian Roth in **I'll Cry Tomorrow** (1955), Candice Bergen & Jacqueline Bisset as best friends and rivals in **Rich and Famous** (1981) and 3 more.

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Roman Polanski's 1974 film noir stars Jack Nicholson as Jake Gittes, the L.A. gumshoe involved in a case of shady business involving a mysterious blonde (Faye Dunaway).

Was: \$19.99

Now: \$12.99

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onscreen chemistry from **Sam Whiskey**, especially evident in their opening scuffle over a bathtub. Angie Dickinson had completed a run of mostly "B" Westerns when she won the part in **Sam Whiskey**. She got her big career break when chosen by Howard Hawks to play the female lead in *Rio Bravo* (1959), the film that had her legs insured by Lloyds of London for publicity purposes.

Well known as a ladies man on and off the screen, Reynolds was delighted to be working with Dickinson on **Sam Whiskey**. Once the film was completed, the actor reportedly took a still from the bedroom scene he had with Dickinson, blew it up and hung it over his bar at home, with a caption reading "An actor's life is pure hell?".

Producer: Arthur Gardner, Jules Levy, Arnold Laven

Director: Arnold Laven

Screenplay: William Norton

Art Direction: Lloyd S. Papez

Cinematography: Robert Moreno

Editing: John M. Woodcock

Music: William Norton, Herschel Burke Gilbert

Cast: Burt Reynolds (Sam Whiskey), Clint Walker (O.W. Bandy),

Ossie Davis (Jedidiah Hooker), Angie Dickinson (Laura Breckenridge), Rick Davis (Fat Henry Hobson).

C-96m.

by Emily Soares



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