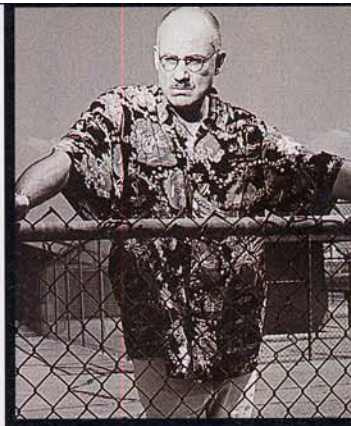


James Ellroy selects his ten favourite crime movies



1 LA CONFIDENTIAL (Curtis Hanson, 1997)

"It's very different from the novel, but it stands as a work of art on its own merits. It's certainly not as harsh as the novel, but my characters were done justice, as was the book. So that's got to be my favourite crime movie of all time. Ed Exley is the strongest of the three characters, in the book and the film as well. I think Guy Pearce's performance is the strongest. He's the man with the most complex, ambiguous fate. He's the only one to come out of that holocaust physically intact, and yet dark things may be awaiting him. The film captures that."



2 THE GODFATHER PART II (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974)

"It's much more finished than Part I. The individual scenes have been expanded. It's a much better-looking movie and they obviously had a lot more money. It's a great epic – and how many epic crime films have there been? I like big symphonic pieces of music, I like large films. Pacino doesn't quite succeed in making that vicious little piece of shit Michael Corleone empathetic but I felt like I understood the man at the end. He did everything for the family and he has destroyed it. There is a great irony in that."



3 THE PROWLER (Joseph Losey, 1951)

"It's a 1951 movie starring Van Heflin and Evelyn Keyes. It's about a grubby, perverted cop on the make and the lonely, horny wife of an all-night DJ. She's much younger than he is and she reports that she's seen a prowler outside her house. I don't want to give away the plot to the people of Britain – they may end up seeing it. They should. It's very plausible plot-wise in a way that very few film noir movies ever are. Van Heflin is great as the lead, patrolman Webb Garwood, a sweaty, trapped creep. He's not quite a psychopath, but he's getting very close to it."



4 CRIME WAVE (André De Toth, 1954)

"It's Sterling Hayden in a great robbery movie set in LA. Gene Nelson is an ex-con linked to a robbery by two former inmates of the same prison. Nelson has gone straight but he's forced to cooperate with these guys to protect his wife, Phyllis Kirk, and their family. Sterling Hayden was a great actor, and he's chilling and very powerful in this as a detective who is convinced that Nelson is guilty. *Crime Wave* has great LA exteriors. Any time I can go back and live in the physical presence of Los Angeles in the 1950s I'm very happy, and this movie takes you there."



5 ODDS AGAINST TOMORROW (Robert Wise, 1959)

"This is almost the very anatomy of noir in that it deals with racism and fucked-up sexuality. It's a film of desperate, twisted guys anxious to make one last score, robbing a small town bank in upstate New York. Of course they're subconsciously self-destructive men and they screw it all up. It's just the best heist-gone-wrong movie ever made. It's also rooting through the psychological and the social issues of the time, which are significant and profound. Robert Ryan is really fuckin' great in this and Harry Belafonte is good too."



6 THE KILLING (Stanley Kubrick, 1956)

"I gotta be honest, I don't really have as many as ten favourite movies – but I do have those five. I like *The Killing* too, it's another great Sterling Hayden film. A good heist-gone-bad movie. Crime movies are the only movies I enjoy. I don't like comedies, I don't like historical dramas, I don't like Westerns, I don't like melodramas, I don't like science fiction. I only like crime movies. They are the only kind of film that I see, and I see precious few of them. And as far as crime movies go, very few are really truthful."



7 PLUNDER ROAD (Hubert Cornfield, 1957)

"When it comes to film noir, I didn't discover these movies until I'd written a few books, even though I was raised in LA, where I was born in '48. I remember being jazzed by a couple of heist-gone-wrong movies when I was about ten, and they were *The Killing* and this. Elisha Cook Jr, Gene Raymond and Wayne Morris are members of a gang who rob a gold bullion train heading for the mint in San Francisco. After the robbery they divide the gold into three different vehicles, but it all fucks up. It's very low-budget and fatalistic."



8 THE LINE-UP (Don Siegel, 1958)

"Great San Francisco locations. Wonderful police procedure scenes and a great psycho performance from Eli Wallach, who plays a hitman called Dancer. His partner, Robert Keith, likes to make a note of their victims' last words before they die. They have to find three packages of heroin that have been smuggled into San Francisco. Of course, the cops are also trying to find the source of the heroin. Though I do like old film noir, there are some crime movies from the '70s with real dirty, ugly bad endings that I like, such as Don Siegel's *Charlie Varrick*."



9 711 OCEAN DRIVE (Joseph M Newman, 1950)

"A really under-appreciated film noir with Edmond O'Brien at his sweaty, desperate, anxious-to-make-it best as a guy in the race wire service racket. These businessmen are impressed with his technical skills and persuade him to create a wire service that connects the racing results from all the tracks on the West Coast. It all goes to his head. It's a wonderful rise-and-fall story and it's only an hour and 40 minutes long. Los Angeles locations, Palm Springs locations, Edmond O'Brien..."



10 VERTIGO (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958)

"I dig this – Hitchcock's great film of obsessive love. I like *Psycho* as well, but *Vertigo* is most definitely my favourite Hitchcock movie. It's a real film noir, even though it's shot in lush colour. Bernard Herrmann's music is a wonderful, wonderful film score. That's the ten, yeah? Alright! Fuckin' A! I've got to get back to work. I'm not revealing the title of my next novel yet and it won't be ready for a couple of years. But I have got a book of collected pieces of journalism coming out called *Crime Wave*. Dig it..."