



# The Thomas Crown Affair

## Viewing Notes

Released in 1968, *The Thomas Crown Affair* directed by **Norman Jewison** stars **Steve McQueen** and **Faye Dunaway** in one of Hollywood's most stylish heist thrillers.

Nominated for two **Academy Awards** and winner of the **1969 Oscar for Best Song** with "*Windmills of Your Mind*," *The Thomas Crown Affair* remains a masterful example of late-60s movie making. A **remake** starring **Pierce Brosnan** and **Rene Russo** was released in 1999.

## Plot

**Thomas Crown** (Steve McQueen), a millionaire businessman and sportsman, pulls off a perfect crime by having five men rob a Boston bank and dump the money -- approximately \$2.6 million -- in a cemetery's trash can. Crown retrieves the money later and deposits it at a bank in Geneva.

**Vicki Anderson** (Faye Dunaway), an independent insurance investigator, is contracted to investigate the heist. She will receive a percentage of the stolen money if she recovers it.

Crown doesn't need the money but is in need of diversions. He plays polo and golf, flies a glider and drives dune-buggies, but is generally bored and welcomes Vicki Anderson's sudden interest in him.

She begins seeing Crown socially, openly admitting she is investigating him. Their relationship evolves into an affair. But it is complicated by Vicki's vow to find the money and help **Detective Eddie Malone** bring the guilty party to justice.

The **original studio tagline** for *The Thomas Crown Affair* was: "He was young, handsome, a millionaire - and he'd just pulled off the perfect crime! She was young, beautiful, a super sleuth - sent to investigate it!"

## Production

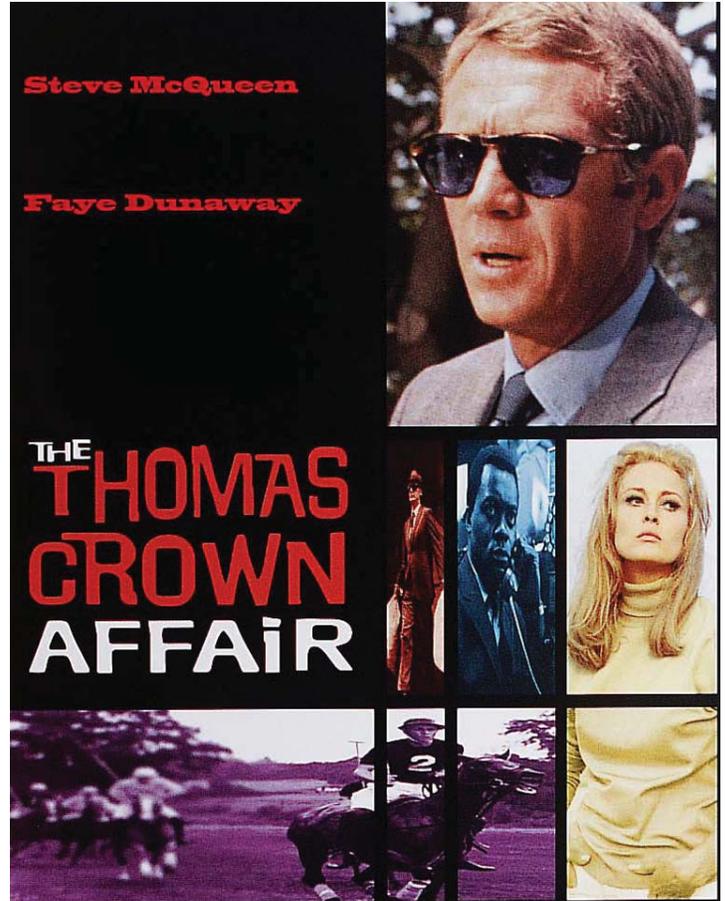
The use of **split screens** to show simultaneous actions was inspired by the breakthrough 1968 Canadian film *In the Labyrinth*.

### FAST FACTS

**Year:** 1968  
**Studio:** The Mirisch Corp/United Artists  
**Length:** 102 minutes  
**Director:** Norman Jewison  
**Screenplay:** Alan Trustman  
**Color:** Color  
**Original Sound Mix:** Mono  
**Genre:** Crime/Thriller/Romance  
**Actors:** Steve McQueen, Faye Dunaway, Paul Burke, Jack Weston  
**Awards:** Winner of 1969 Oscar and Golden Globe for Best Music, Original Song for Michel Legrand's "*Windmills of Your Mind*."

**Budget:** \$6,000,000  
**Box Office Gross:** \$14,000,000

**Alternative Titles:**  
- *The Crown Caper*  
- *Thomas Crown and Company*  
- *L'affaire Thomas Crown (France)*



Original Studio Movie Poster for *The Thomas Crown Affair*

The film also features the now **famous chess scene**. McQueen and Dunaway play a game of chess, **silently flirting with each other**, caressing the chess pieces, using them as **metaphorical sexual objects**.

The photography is unusual for a main-stream Hollywood film, using a **split-screen** mode in a very stylish way. **McQueen does his own stunts** (plays polo) and drives a dune buggy at high speed on the Massachusetts coastline. This is similar to his starring role in the movie *Bullitt* (a DVD copy of which **Urban Optiques** will be giving away tonight), released a few months afterward, in which he drives a **Ford Mustang** through San Francisco at more than 100 mph.

Of all the movies McQueen made during his career, *The Thomas Crown Affair* was reportedly his favorite.

## Reception

The film was only moderately successful at the box office, grossing \$14,000,000 on a \$6,000,000 budget.

Reviews at the time were mixed. The chemistry between McQueen and Dunaway and Norman Jewison's stylish direction were praised, but the plotting and writing were considered rather thin.

**Roger Ebert** gave it **2 1/2 stars out of four** and called it “possibly the most under-plotted, underwritten, over-photographed film of the year. Which is not to say it isn’t great to look at. It is.”

Despite its tepid reaction, however, it has since become a **cult film** and inspired a 1999 remake.

The film won an **Academy Award for Best Song** for “*Windmills of Your Mind*” by **Michel Legrand** (music), Marilyn Bergman and Alan Bergman (lyrics). It was also **nominated for Original Music Score** for Legrand’s soundtrack.

## Cultural References

*The Thomas Crown Affair* continues to influence popular culture decades after its release.

In the **2004 remake of *Alfie*** there is a scene where Alfie (Jude Law) returns to his flat and finds his girlfriend Nikki (Sienna Miller) asleep in front of the television which is **showing the scene where Faye Dunaway and Steve McQueen first kiss**. The same scene is being shown the first time **Peter Sellers and Shirley MacLaine** kiss in the film *Being There*.

*The Thomas Crown Affair* is referenced in countless heist movies. For example, in the 2001 remake of *Ocean’s 11*, Frank Catton asks Livingston Dell “how we doin’?” during the film’s climactic scene, to which Dell responds, “OK”, an **echo of the dialogue between two of the characters in the opening heist scene of *The Thomas Crown Affair***.



The scene where Dunaway and McQueen play chess is **spoofed** in the 1999 movie *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* with **Mike Myers and Kristen Johnston**.

In the 2006 Nelly Furtado single *Promiscuous*, hip-hop star **Timbaland** introduces himself as “Thomas Crown” -- an enduring testament to McQueen’s continued “coolness” even 26 years after his death.

## Costuming & Eyewear

**Eyewear** -- especially **sunglasses** -- make frequent appearances in *The Thomas Crown Affair*.

Throughout the movie, Steve McQueen wears **Persol sunglasses**, and Dunaway is frequently seen in **large round, Jackie-O style sunglass frames**. Indeed, McQueen’s Persol’s from *The Thomas Crown Affair* have achieved nearly iconic status.

## Goofs

- When the robbers are in the bank elevator, **one girl wears a light-blue dress**. Some minutes later, after the robbery, she talks to the police **wearing a light-green dress**.

- During the **infamous chess scene** an overview of the board is shown as **Vicki Anderson moves her bishop forward that shows that Crown has already castled**, but it is not until later in the scene that **he actually performs the move**.



- **The haul from the first bank robbery totals**

\$2,660,527.62, as explained by the police. It is broken down in to 16,240 \$20 bills, 19,871 \$10 bills, 34,465 \$5 bills, and 129,000 \$1 bills. **Added up, that only totals \$824,835.00**, as later detailed by a secretary. **That makes the whole greater than the sum of its parts.**

## Trivia

- The Academy Award-winning song “*The Windmills of Your Mind*” from the movie is sung by actor **Noel Harrison**, son of **Rex Harrison**.

- After working together on *The Russians Are Coming the Russians Are Coming* (1966), director Norman Jewison announced **Eva Marie Saint** for the film but quickly changed his mind when Faye Dunaway became an overnight star after *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967)

- **Sean Connery** had been the original choice for the title role but declined, a decision he later regretted.

- The **one-minute kissing sequence** between the two leads **took eight hours to film** over a number of days.

- The **sailplane** (N9860E) that Steve McQueen flies early in the movie is a **Schweizer SGS 1-23H-15**. It is still in use in New York.

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