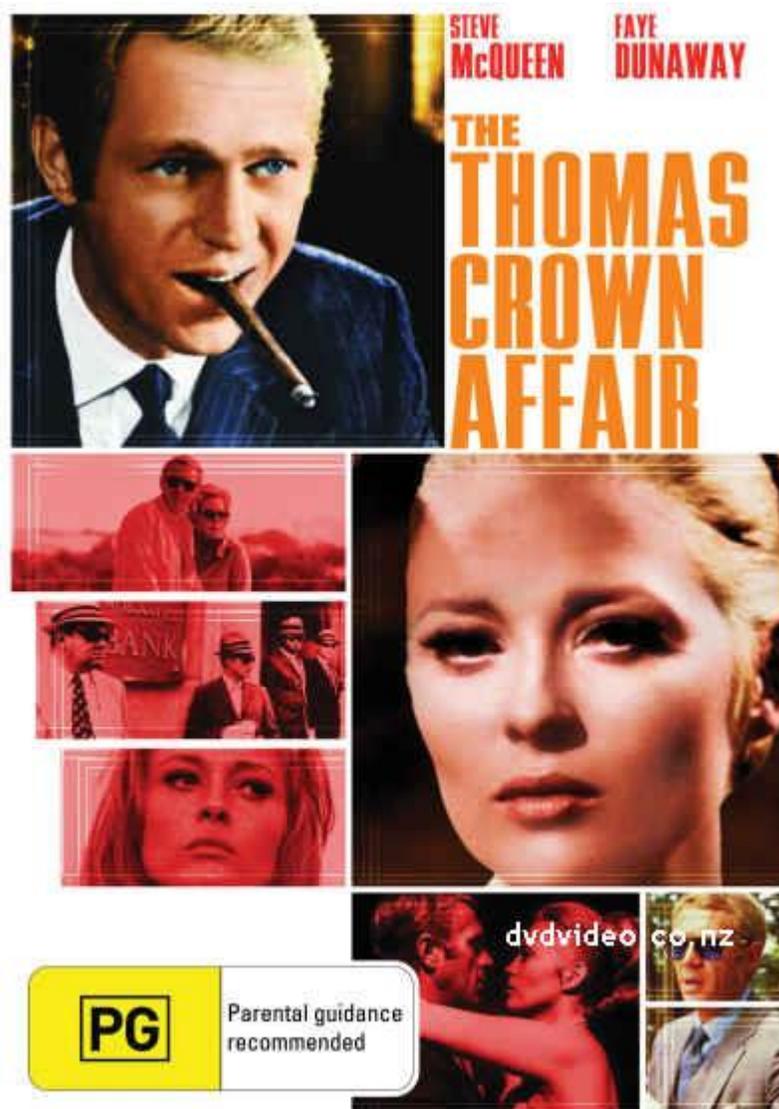


## The Thomas Crown Affair



*Reviewed by Garry Victor Hill*

Produced and directed by Norman Jewison. Associate Producer: Hal Ashby. Screenplay by Alan Trustman. Cinematography by Haskell Wexler. Art Direction by Edward Boyle. Original Music by Michael Legrand. Edited by Hal Ashby, Ralph Winters and Byron Brandt. Key Costumer: Alan Levine.

Cinematic length: 102 minutes. Distributed by United Artists. Production companies: The Mirisch Corporation, Simkoe and Solar Productions. Cinematic release: June 1968. DVD release 20. Check for ratings. Rating 70%.

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## Written Without Prejudice

### Cast

- Steve McQueen as Thomas Crown
- Faye Dunaway as Vicki Anderson
- Paul Bourke as Detective Eddie Malone
- Jack Weston as Erwin Weaver
- Gordon Pinsent as Jamie McDonald
- Biff McGuire as Sandy
- Yaphet Kotto as Carl
- Addison Powell as Abe
- Astrid Heeren as Gwen

### Review

What you think of this film depends on how important plausibility in plots is to you. Toss plausibility and common sense out and you can enjoy this stylish, very photogenic very sixties romp through the world of the rich.

Do not try to make sense out of the motivations of anybody in this film or you will end up as baffled and vexed like the cast's one sensible exception, Detective Eddie Malone (Paul Burke). He starts losing the plot when he gets the task of finding out who committed a major robbery in Boston, then he has to find out why? He never does and neither does the audience for the robbery's mastermind is Thomas Crown (Steve McQueen) a prospering multi-millionaire whose idea of a problem is hitting his golf ball out of a sand trap. Amongst his many assets his bank balance alone makes around twice what he will get for the robbery, so why do it? The closest we come to an explanation as to why a multimillionaire would risk everything for life in a jail cell is that "maybe he did it for kicks." When after the money comes in Crown whoops and laughs and stares smugly into a mirror this seems accurate. After seeing a wounded bystander writhing on the bank floor in agony, people

being gassed and the faces of terrorized hostages, are we supposed to share his glee? Whatever the film makers intended, whatever his abilities with charm, Thomas Crown emerges as an example of one of the most dangerous species on earth, the bored rich kid. After all there should be more to life than golf, polo, dune buggy rides, massive real estate deals, being top buyer at art auctions, sipping champagne in stylish locales, keeping a twenties something French mistress, looping the loop in his hang glider and jetting to Switzerland. The rich too, have a right not to be bored.

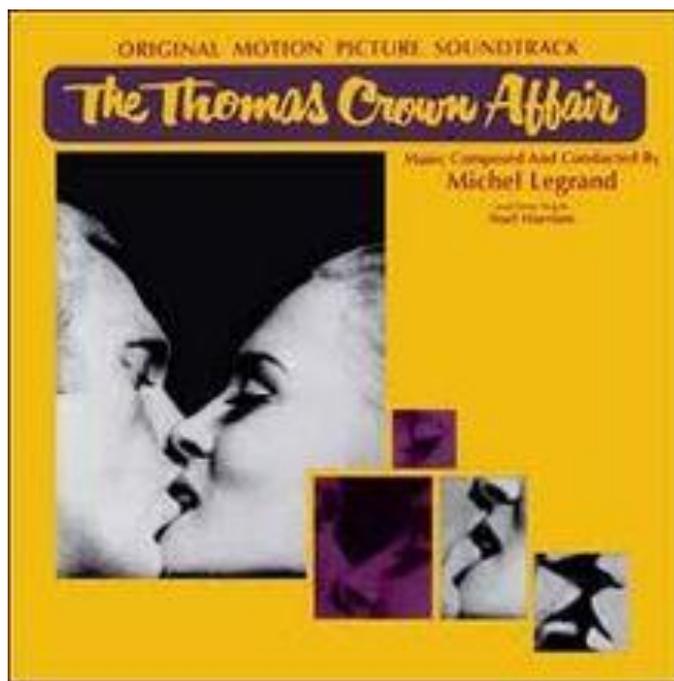


*The polo game scene. Director Norman Jewison uses split screens to speed the action pack more into scenes and show the relationship between characters in more complex ways*

In *The Thomas Crown Affair* implausibilities multiply faster than Crown's compounding interest. We are supposed to believe that he hires five men who although they never met each other before the robbery actually starts, coordinate it perfectly. He insists that the getaway car be a distinctive model with timber decoration. Although we are told that witnesses identified the car, it gets through a police roadblock inspection. Although the amount stolen is in small notes and fits into three medium bags it totals hundreds of thousands. In a crowded Swiss airport with people close by Crown somehow evades inspection with the help of an official and gets the money through, three bags full now fit into one suitcase. We are meant to believe that even the Swiss bankers will just take that massive amount from someone who does not give their name, just a number. So how does the receipt they give him work? "Mister 761543 don't worry about signing a withdrawal form like the rest of the world, here is your cash?" The plot so far has

more holes than a ton of Swiss cheese, but Faye Dunaway supplies a moon of the product – and without stepping into a Swiss bank.

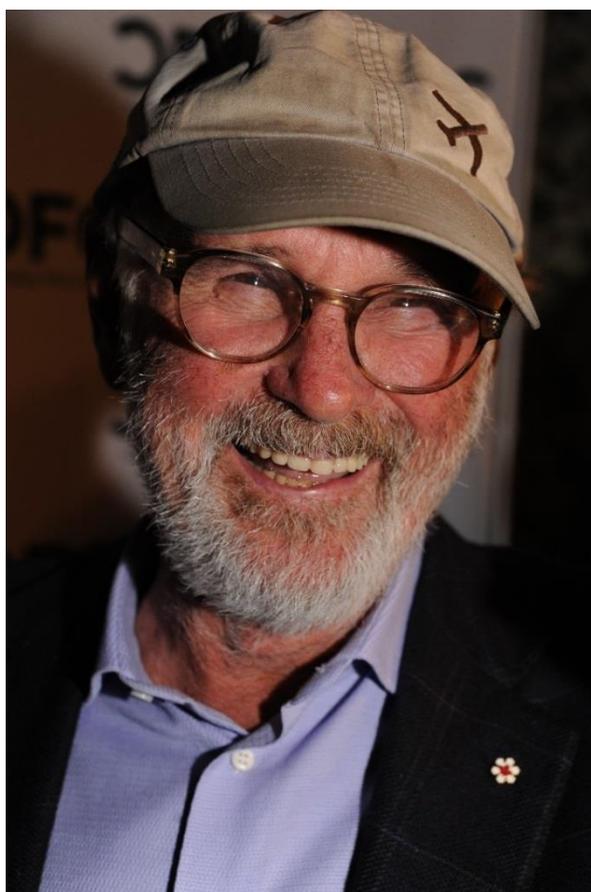
Insurance investigator Vicki Anderson (Faye Dunaway) arrives to work with Malone. Although they have no motive, no description that matches, no knowledge of his Swiss banking or a criminal record and only one possible clue, his recent trip to Switzerland, they suspect on that and how he looks in a photograph. In the rush to solve the case Vicki takes time off to watch Crown play polo. As if by magic after just seeing Crown play a game she just knows he is the robbery's mastermind – and she soon blithely tells him that to his face. She also just apparently knows he will not do what most bank robbers would do in that situation, put a contract out on her life. Soon they are dining together, playing chess together and sleeping together. Vicki, the expert in legalities lets straight arrow Malone know all this and they both know she is consorting with a suspect. She also kidnaps the child of one of the robbers to act as a lure and Malone knows about it. No arrest for Vicki, he merely gives her a verbal blasting. Vicki later rips up crucial evidence of a felony in front of the police and they do nothing. In their attempts to put Crown in a cell Vicki and Malone have broken so many laws that they might find themselves sharing the cell with Crown. The viewer however doesn't get this probability served up to them by the film makers.



Suddenly the film starts making some sense. Vicki says she does her job for money and as she wears different expensive clothes in every scene, her financial need must be desperate and then there are her other needs. The chemistry between Crown and Vicki comes on strong and she actually gets him to try to make a deal with Malone. When Malone rejects it Crown asks her go his way and be part of a second robbery...

Hating endings being revealed I will leave the rest of the plot alone. Yes the film has style. Fine cinema photography, imaginative editing, fine costumes for Faye Dunaway, settings and the memorable music and the now classic title song 'The Windmills of Your Mind' all make it flow nicely. The public loved it, as it brought in over three times its large cost, got two academy award nominations and is still generally considered superior to the 1999 remake.

To enjoy the film just do not think about the plot, or what people in the bank who are not rich feel when being shot, gassed or terrorized so that a bored rich kid can take up bank robbery for fun.



*Norman Jewison*

