# PARKER ADAMS RECOMMENDS HEIST MOVIES

Dear Reader,

My new novel THE LOCK BOX comes partly from my deep love of heist movies. That's why, as I thought about what type of giveaway I could add to my website for this launch, a guide to top heist movies seemed a natural choice.

But let's face it, when it comes to heists, there are certain standbys that basically everyone has seen at this point. I mean, as much as I love *Ocean's 11*–and I think that's just about a perfect movie, by the way, between its snappy script, twisty plot, and bold cinematography—you don't need someone like me to tell you about it. Flip on the TV almost any time of day and you can find it playing on one channel or another. Same thing with *Inception*, another all-time favorite of mine: between Leo and the rest of that cast, Christopher Nolan directing, and all the awards it won, I wouldn't be helping you at all by devoting space to it here.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, though, there are a few movies that are spectacular but they're so hard to find, pointing you at them isn't going to help. For example, *Rififi* is a 1955 film that's an absolute classic, but it's not streaming anywhere, not even on AppleTV for purchase, so you'd have to go out and buy it on disk and watch it that way. Same thing with *Le Circle Rouge*, a 1970 French film that's another noir heist I would recommend to anyone, but after a brief stint on Amazon Prime Video, I can't find it anywhere anymore.

So, I'm going to try and thread the needle here and identify some older or lesser-known movies that you may not have heard of or not seen, but only ones that I know you can reliably find. That way, hopefully you'll have something fresh to watch the next time you've got a free night at home (or a long airline flight!).



Parker (aka Joe)

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**The Asphalt Jungle (1950)**: A gritty, black-and-white noir film from legendary director John Huston, this one is old enough that you may not have heard of it despite the acclaim it received at the time (including four Academy Award nominations). Thankfully, its pedigree and cast—including Marilyn Monroe in her first speaking role—keeps it around and relatively easy to find. The plot is a straight up bank heist, including an electric eye beam as part of the security system that will seem incredibly blasé by today's standards but must have seemed incredibly futuristic back then. There's a host of subplots and double-crosses that I don't want to give away but make this worth watching.

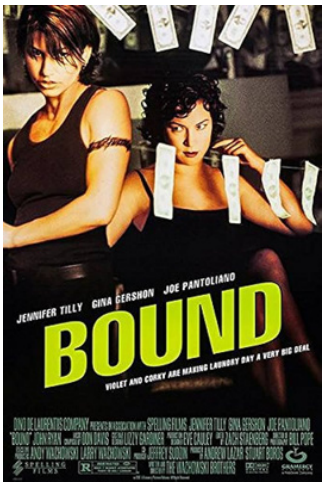



**The Sting (1973)**: I feel like this movie—which was so beloved and well-known when I was growing up—has now slipped off the radar a bit. And that's a shame, because this film won seven Oscars including Best Movie, Best Director, and Best Screenplay. In fact, The Sting is probably the closest analogue to the modern Ocean's 11 that there could be. The two hottest actors of the time as the leads (George Clooney/Brad Pitt; Paul Newman/Robert Redford)? Check. An established character actor as the merciless villain (Andy Garcia; Robert Shaw)? Check. A twisty-turny plot that requires a re-watch for clue-spotting? Check. While the heist in The Sting is actually a con game rather than something more straightforward like breaking into a safe, if you haven't seen The Sting—or even if you just haven't seen it recently—go rectify that ASAP.




**Thief (1981):** Before the television show Miami Vice, before Al Pacino and Robert DeNiro faced off across a diner table in Heat, this movie was Michael Mann's directorial debut. But all the pieces you'll recognize are there—the rain-dappled nightscapes, the electronica music in the background, the dark and gritty characters. James Caan called this his best acting performance, and I wouldn't disagree. As a high-end thief seeking a couple of big scores to set up a normal life after an extended stint in prison, Caan is alternately tough and sensitive, angry and brooding. The details of the crime definitely don't overwhelm the character elements, so if you care more about the "how'd he do it" than the "why'd he do it," you might not like this one as much, say, as Ocean's 11. But if you like—or love—Mann's later, better-known work, definitely give this little movie a try.

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**Bound (1996):** The violence and sex in this one seem much tamer today than they did when this movie first released in the mid-1990s. And that's a good thing, since it lets you focus in closer on the relationships between the three lead characters. There's tons of tension here, both in terms of the moment-by-moment plotting as well as the sense that any character might be about to flip and double-cross another. I'll be honest, there isn't a complex safe to break into here, or other high-tech obstacles; the crime is relatively straightforward. But the acting performances are worth watching and if the visual style of daring camera angles strikes you as familiar, that's because this was an early writing and directing effort from the Wachowskis, the same pair who brought you the Matrix movies.




**The Bank Job (2008):** This is the most recent movie on the list, and I hesitated to include it for that reason, but it was just such a pleasant surprise. Going into this one when it first released, I remember being extremely skeptical. I think of Jason Statham as a physical action hero, more likely to beat up all the guards inside the bank than to sneak underneath it. (And we'll set my former-shark-scientist thoughts on The Meg movies aside for another day.) But Statham is wonderfully understated as the blue-collar mastermind of a ring of thieves in this fictionalized version of the Lloyds Bank heist from 1971. They included many of the details of the real-life robbery and that, together with some engaging performances, make this flick absolutely worth your time. I'll note that the plot includes several 1970s-era political threads that might go over the heads of anyone younger than Gen X, and the movie includes some gratuitous nudity that might fit with the free-love times but feels overdone today.Nevertheless, if those two issues don't bother you, this one is still a great addition to the heist canon.

Looking for more heist stories?
Don't forget to check out THE LOCK BOX!

