

# Annie Hall (1977)

## TOMATOMETER

All Critics

# 98

Average Rating: 8.9/10 Reviews Counted: 57 Fresh: 56 | Rotten: 1

Filled with poignant performances and devastating humor, Annie Hall represents a quantum leap for Woody Allen and remains an American classic.

## AUDIENCE

# 92

liked it Average Rating: 3.9/5 User Ratings: 140,936

## MOVIE INFO

Woody Allen's romantic comedy of the Me Decade follows the up and down relationship of two mismatched New York neurotics. Jewish comedy writer Alvy Singer (Allen) ponders the modern quest for love and his past romance with tightly-wound WASP singer Annie Hall (Diane Keaton, née Diane Hall). The twice-divorced Alvy knows that it's not easy to find a mate when the options include pretentious New York intellectuals and lifestyle-obsessed Rolling Stone writers, but la-di-dah-ing Annie seems different. Along the rocky road of their coupling, Allen/Alvy weigh in on such topics as endless therapy, movies vs. TV, the absurdity of dating rituals, anti-Semitism, drugs, and, in one of the best set pieces, repressed Midwestern WASP insanity vs. crazy Brooklyn Jewish boisterousness. Annie wants to move to Los Angeles to find that fame that finally does in the relationship -- but not before Alvy gets in a few digs at vacuous, mantra-fixated California. Originally entitled Anhedonia (the inability to

enjoy oneself), Annie Hall blended the slapstick and fantasy from such earlier Allen films as Sleeper (1973) and Bananas (1971) with the more autobiographical musings of his stand-up and written comedy, using an array of such movie techniques as talking heads, splitscreens, and subtitles. Within these gleeful formal experiments and sight gags, Allen and co-writer Marshall Brickman skewered 1970s solipsism, reversing the happy marriage of opposites found in classic screwball comedies. Hailed as Allen's most mature and personal film, Annie Hall beat out Star Wars for Best Picture and also won Oscars for Allen as director and writer and for Keaton as Best Actress; audiences enthusiastically responded to Allen's take on contemporary love and turned Keaton's rumpled menswear into a fashion trend. ~ Lucia Bozzola, Rovi

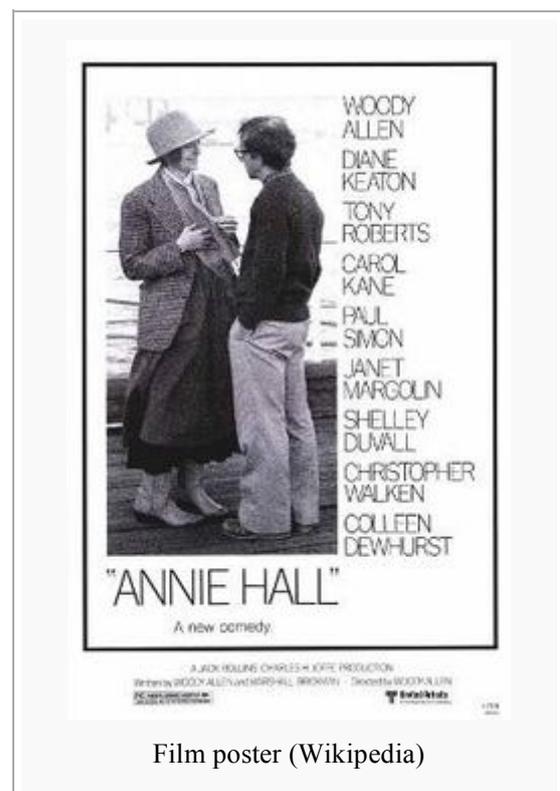
PG, 1 hr. 33 min.

Comedy, Romance

Directed By: Woody Allen

United Artists

[<http://www.rottentomatoes.com>]



Film poster (Wikipedia)

## Background

**Annie Hall** (1977), from director-actor-co-writer Woody Allen, is a quintessential masterpiece of priceless, witty and quotable one-liners within a matured, focused and thoughtful film. It is a bittersweet romantic comedy of modern contemporary love and urban relationships (a great successor to classic Hollywood films such as *The Awful Truth* (1937) and *The Philadelphia Story* (1940)), that explores the interaction of past and present, and the rise and fall of Allen's own challenging, ambivalent New York romance with his opposite - an equally-insecure, shy, flighty Midwestern WASP female (who blossoms out in a Pygmalion-like story).

*Annie Hall* clearly has semi-autobiographical elements - it is the free-wheeling, stream-of-consciousness story of an inept, angst-ridden, pessimistic, Brooklyn-born and Jewish stand-up comedian - much like Allen himself (who started out as a joke writer for *The Tonight Show*) - who experiences crises related to his relationships and family. His unstable love affair with aspiring singer Annie Hall begins to disintegrate when she moves to Los Angeles and discovers herself - and a new life.

[A real-life relationship and breakup did occur in early 1970 between Allen and co-star Keaton. Keaton's birth name was Diane Hall, her nickname was Annie, and she did have a Grammy Hall. And Woody Allen played a similar role as mentor to Diane Keaton (about New York life, politics, philosophy, and books), as did best friend Tony Roberts to Allen.]

This breakthrough film came after Allen's five earlier light-hearted comedies (from 1969-1975) that were take-offs of various film genres or books, often similar to episodic Marx Brothers' films:

Allen's Previous Films	Genre/Work Satirized
<i>Take the Money and Run</i> (1969)	Mockumentary of Crime/Prison or Gangster Films
<i>Bananas</i> (1971)	War or 'South of the Border' Films
<i>Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex * (* But Were Afraid to Ask)</i> (1972)	Self-Help Books
<i>Sleeper</i> (1973)	Science-Fiction or Futuristic Films
<i>Love and Death</i> (1975)	Classic Russian Literature, Culture, and History, the Napoleonic Wars

Allen's previous films might be characterized as a series of irreverent comic sketches with frequent instances of absurdist humor and slapstick. In contrast, this urban dramatic comedy, his best-loved work, marked a major transition. It was his most successful, deepest, self-reflexive, most elaborate and unified work to that time. However, the film could have been a disaster if it hadn't been edited down from its initial length of well over two hours to about 95 minutes by editor Ralph Rosenblum. Many scenes that were shot were eliminated, and others were severely truncated. And the film was originally a murder mystery, and might have been titled *Anhedonia* (a state of acute melancholia with an inability to experience pleasure and enjoy oneself), *A Roller Coaster Named Desire*, or even *It Had to Be Jew* if one of its alternative titles had been chosen. [Allen later directed murder mysteries to satisfy that impulse: *Shadows and Fog* (1992), and *Manhattan Murder Mystery* (1993) - retooled from this script.] In addition to Allen's *Hannah and Her Sisters* (1986), this was one of his most commercially-successful films (at a budget of \$4 million, it brought in a box-office of \$40 million).

*Annie Hall* capitalized on many of the ingredients that had been the content of his earlier films - the subjects of anti-Semitism, life, romantic angst, drugs and death, his obsessive love of New York, his dislike of California (mostly L.A.) fads and intellectual pomposity, his introspective neuroses and

pessimism, his requisite jokes and psychosexual frustration about sex, numerous put-downs of his own appearance and personality, and distorted memories of his childhood. The film's more sensitive and realistic (still-comical) yet serious-minded tone about an intimate and emotional relationship appealed to all film-goers, not just Woody Allen cultists.

With five nominations, the film was a four-time Academy Award winner: Best Actress (Diane Keaton with her sole Oscar win), Best Picture (Charles H. Joffe, producer), Best Director (Woody Allen), and Best Original Screenplay (Woody Allen and Marshall Brickman). It defeated the science-fiction blockbuster *Star Wars* (1977) for Best Picture. It was the *first* comedy since *Tom Jones* (1963) to take the Best Picture Oscar - and before that Frank Capra's *It Happened One Night* (1934). A fifth nomination was for Woody Allen for Best Actor, who lost to Richard Dreyfuss for *The Goodbye Girl* (1977) - in another NY-based light romantic comedy. It was quite a feat that Allen was nominated for directing, writing, and acting for the same film - and won two of the three awards. [It was only the *second* time in Academy history, up to that time, that one person was simultaneously nominated for three Oscars, Best Actor, Best Director, and Best Original Screenplay - Orson Welles had received a previous similar honor for *Citizen Kane* (1941).]

The film influenced fashion designers (with the masculine, androgynous "Annie Hall" look) and made Diane Keaton a new leading lady. [The "look" was a mis-matched, eclectic conglomeration of men's costuming: 30's style baggy light brown chino pants, an oversized man's white shirt, a dark grey, wide necktie with shiny polka-dot spots, a black waistcoat vest, and a floppy bowler hat. Despite the film's influence on fashion in New York and elsewhere (Ruth Morley worked with Ralph Lauren, who designed Annie's outfit), there was no Best Costume Design nomination.]

And there are quick cameo glimpses of future stars (Shelley Hack, Beverly D'Angelo, John Glover, Sigourney Weaver, Christopher Walken, and Jeff Goldblum) and current celebrities (Dick Cavett, Truman Capote, Paul Simon, and Marshall McLuhan). Two later romantic comedies, director Rob Reiner's *When Harry Met Sally...* (1989) and Billy Crystal's *Forget Paris* (1995), paid homage to this film with a similar theme. Allen's own black comedy *Deconstructing Harry* (1997) twenty years later has been considered the 'dark' side of this film. Keaton's next film in the same year, *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* (1977), was a radical departure from this film, in which she took on the role of a promiscuous Catholic girl who ended up murdered - the victim of the singles bar scene.

The major theme of the film is that there are severe limitations in life (death and loss are the two most prevalent), but that art forms (such as the printed word, films, and plays) have the power to reshape reality and provide some measure of control, thereby compensating for life's limitations.

There are a variety of innovative strategies and narrative techniques in the kaleidoscopic film that support the contention that Woody Allen is functioning as a self-conscious artist who evaluates his entire life (including romances) and uses the film medium to achieve greater control over reality. The stylistic strategies and cinematic techniques that support the fragmented nature of the film include:

Cinematic Technique	Comment
direct addresses to the camera	Reminiscent of Ingmar Bergman films, and films such as <i>Strange Interlude</i> (1932), or <i>Alfie</i> (1966) with Michael Caine
memory-flashbacks and other flashbacks	Influenced, in part, by <i>Citizen Kane</i> (1941)
adult time-travel back to childhood	Reminiscent of Bergman's <i>Wild Strawberries</i> (1957)
interjections into the scene (unseen by others)	Reminiscent of Bergman's <i>Persona</i> (1960)
vignettes	
the sudden production of a real-life character ("Boy, if life were only like this")	Author Marshall McLuhan appears, to conveniently settle an argument
split screens, and conversations across the two screens	The dual psychiatrist scene, and the conversation between the two families
transformations	Alvy becomes a bearded Hasidic Jew while visiting Annie's anti-Semitic family
double-exposed action	Annie's ghost scene

subtitles that contradict the action	The famous balcony scene
voice-over commentary and asides to the camera or to complete strangers about the events of the film	
dialogue between two introspective voice-overs	
animation	The <i>Snow White</i> cartoon
fantasy	

[<http://www.filmsite.org/allfilms.html>]

## Description [from Freebase]

*Annie Hall* is a 1977 American romantic comedy directed by Woody Allen from a screenplay co-written with Marshall Brickman and co-starring Diane Keaton. Allen has described the film as "a major turning point", as it introduced a level of seriousness to his films that was not found in the farces and comedies that were his work to that point. Critical reaction to the film is generally positive. It won four Academy Awards, including Best Picture. Film critic Roger Ebert described it as "just about everyone's favorite Woody Allen movie". The comedian Alvy Singer is trying to understand why his relationship with Annie Hall ended a year ago. Growing up in New York, he vexed his mother with impossible questions about the emptiness of existence, but he was precocious about his innocent sexual curiosity. Annie and Alvy are in line to see a Bergman film and another man loudly misinterprets the work of Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan himself steps in to correct the mistake. That night, Annie isn't interested in having sex with him; instead they discuss Alvy's first wife, Allison, with whom there was little sexual pleasure.

Directed by: Woody Allen

Produced by: Charles H Joffe Jack Rollins

- Cast: Carol Kane Christopher Walken Colleen Dewhurst Diane Keaton Donald Symington Helen Ludlam Janet Margolin Jeff Goldblum Joan Newman John Glover Mordecai Lawner Paul Simon Quinn Cummings Shelley Duvall Shelley Hack Sigourney Weaver Tony Roberts Woody Allen

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## Review

The Woodman's finest hour, in this bittersweet love story between a die-hard New Yorker and a midwestern ditz, about what it really takes to make a relationship (or two or three) work. Woody Allen is at his best as an actor, and Diane Keaton has never had a better role. What makes *Annie Hall* so much fun, though, is the cameos -- from Paul Simon to Jeff Goldblum's one liner (On the phone: 'I forgot my mantra!'), it's a complete send-up of the 70s. Best is Christopher Walken as Annie's psychotic brother. Utterly hilarious, yet it rings absolutely true. A true, and rare, must-see.

by **Christopher Null**, [Filmcritic.com](http://www.filmcritic.com)

[<http://movies.amctv.com/movie-guide>]