

# Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (1958)

## TOMATOMETER

All Critics

**97**

Average Rating: 7.7/10 Reviews Counted: 32 Fresh: 31 | Rotten: 1

Top Critics

**100**

Average Rating: 7.6/10 Critic Reviews: 5 Fresh: 5 | Rotten: 0

No consensus yet.

## AUDIENCE

**90**

liked it Average Rating: 4/5 User Ratings: 30,96



Theatrical release poster by Reynold Brown

(Wikipedia)

## Movie Info

This dynamic and commanding adaptation of Tennessee Williams' Pulitzer Prize-winning play focuses on a troubled Southern family and the discord over their dying father's millions. Wealthy plantation owner Big Daddy Pollitt (Burl Ives), celebrating his 65th birthday, is visited by his sons, Brick (Paul Newman) and Gooper (Jack Carson). He has cancer, but a doctor has deliberately and falsely declared it in remission. Seemingly perfect son Gooper and his wife, Mae (Madeleine Sherwood), have several children and are anxiously expecting to inherit Daddy's millions. By contrast, Big Daddy's "favorite," Brick, is a has-been football star who's taken to drinking his days away since the suicide of his "best friend" a year earlier. He resents his wife, Maggie (Elizabeth Taylor), because he believes that she had an affair with his deceased friend. As a result, he refuses to sleep with her, although she remains devoted to him. Since Brick and Maggie have failed to produce any grandchildren, Big Daddy is inclined to leave his estate to Gooper, but Maggie attempts to prevent that by telling him that she is pregnant. Big Daddy knows better, yet he recognizes that Maggie loves Brick so much that she would be willing to do anything for him. Although Brick is self-destructive and resentful, unable to come to terms with his losses, it takes Big Daddy's recognition of his own mortality to make Brick change his perspective. Brick's struggle with his sexual identity, and the nature of his relationship with his "friend," had to be toned down for mass consumption, although this intelligently written and acted film covers such topics as infertility, adultery, and alcoholism that were still considered taboo in the 1950s. Newman brings depth and feeling to the role as Brick, while Taylor succeeds brilliantly in portraying Maggie as a passionate and understanding woman despite her own real-life emotional turmoil over the death of her husband at the time, producer Mike Todd. ~ Don Kaye, Rovi

PG, 1 hr. 48 min.

[Drama](#), [Classics](#)

Directed By: [Richard Brooks \(VI\)](#), [Richard Brooks I](#)

Written By: [James Poe](#), [Richard Brooks](#)

In Theaters: Sep 20, 1958 Wide

On DVD: Sep 23, 1997

MGM Home Entertainment

[[www.rottentomatoes.com](http://www.rottentomatoes.com)]

# Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (film)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

***Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*** is a 1958 American drama film directed by Richard Brooks. It is based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning play of the same name by Tennessee Williams adapted by Richard Brooks and James Poe. One of the top-ten box office hits of 1958, the film stars Elizabeth Taylor, Paul Newman and Burl Ives.

## 1958 version

### Plot



Paul Newman (Brick) and Elizabeth Taylor (Maggie) in an early scene from the film

Late one night, a drunken Brick Pollitt (Paul Newman) is out trying to recapture his glory days of high school sports by leaping hurdles on a track field, dreaming about his moments as a youthful athlete.

Unexpectedly, he falls, leaving him dependent on a crutch. Brick, along with his wife, Maggie "the Cat" (Elizabeth Taylor), are seen the next day visiting his family in Mississippi, waiting to celebrate Big Daddy's (Burl Ives) 65th birthday.

Depressed, Brick decides to spend his days inside drinking while resisting the affections of his wife, who taunts him about the inheritance of Big Daddy's wealth. Numerous allusions are made as to their tempestuous marriage – the most haunting of these are speculations as to why Maggie does not yet have children, while Brick's brother Gooper (Jack Carson) and his wife Mae (Madeleine Sherwood) have a whole clan, many of which run around the "plantation" (as Big Daddy's estate is called) unsupervised and singing obnoxiously.

Big Daddy and Big Mama (Judith Anderson) arrive home from the hospital and are greeted by Gooper

and his wife, along with Maggie. Despite the efforts of Mae, Gooper and their kids to draw his attention to them, Big Daddy has eyes only for Maggie. The news is that Big Daddy is not dying from cancer. However, the doctor later meets privately with Brick and Gooper and divulges that it is a deception, but the family wants him to remain happy. Maggie begs Brick to put care into getting his father's wealth, but Brick stubbornly refuses. When Big Daddy is fed up with his alcoholic son's behavior, he demands to know why he is so stubborn. Brick angrily refuses to answer.

Big Daddy forces the issue, dragging Maggie into the conversation and the revealing moment ensues when Maggie tells what happened the night Brick's friend Skipper committed suicide. Maggie reveals she was jealous of Skipper because he had more of Brick's time. She claimed she wanted to ruin their relationship "by any means necessary". She intended to seduce Skipper and put the lie to his relationship with her husband. She got scared and ran away without going through with it. Brick claimed to blame Maggie for Skipper's death, but it is revealed that he actually blames himself for not helping Skipper when he called Brick in a hysterical state.

Big Daddy learns that he will die from cancer and that this birthday will be his last. Shaken, he retreats to the basement. Meanwhile, Gooper, his wife, Maggie, and Brick argue over Big Daddy's will. Finally, Brick descends into the basement, a labyrinth of antiques and family possessions hidden away. Once he finds his father, Brick and Big Daddy confront each other before a large cut-out of Brick in his glory days as an athlete. The rest of the family begins to crumble under pressure, with Big Mama stepping up as a strong figure. Maggie says that she'd like to give Big Daddy her birthday present: the announcement of her being pregnant. After Mae calls Maggie a liar, Big Daddy and Brick defend her lie, even though they know it to be untrue. Even Gooper finds himself admitting "That girl's got life in her, alright." In the end, she and Brick reconcile, and the film ends with the two kissing with the implication that they will make love.

### Cast

- Elizabeth Taylor as Margaret "Maggie/Maggie the Cat" Pollitt
- Paul Newman as Brick Pollitt
- Burl Ives as Harvey "Big Daddy" Pollitt
- Judith Anderson as Ida "Big Momma" Pollitt
- Jack Carson as Cooper "Gooper" Pollitt
- Madeleine Sherwood as Mae Flynn Pollitt
- Larry Gates as Dr. Baugh
- Vaughn Taylor as Deacon Davis

## Production notes

The original stage production of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* opened on Broadway March 24, 1955, with Ives and Sherwood in the roles they subsequently played in the movie. Ben Gazzara played Brick in the stage production and rejected the film role as did Elvis Presley. Athlete turned film star Floyd Simmons also tested for the role.

Lana Turner and Grace Kelly were both considered for the part of Maggie before the role went to Taylor.

Production began on March 12, 1958, and by March 19, Taylor had contracted a virus which kept her off the shoot. On March 21, she canceled plans to fly with her husband Mike Todd to New York, where he was to be honored the following day by the New York Friars' Club. The plane crashed, and all passengers were killed. Beset with grief, Taylor remained off the film until April 14, 1958, at which time she returned to the set in a much thinner and weaker condition.

## Academy Awards

Tennessee Williams was reportedly unhappy with the screenplay, which removed almost all of the homosexual themes and revised the third act section to include a lengthy scene of reconciliation between Brick and Big Daddy. Paul Newman, the film's star, had also stated his disappointment with the adaptation. The Hays Code limited Brick's portrayal of sexual desire for Skipper, and diminished the original play's critique of homophobia and sexism. Williams so disliked the toned-down film adaptation of his play that he told people in the queue, "This movie will set the industry back 50 years. Go home!"

Despite this, the film was highly acclaimed and though it did not win any Academy Awards, it received several nominations including Best Picture, Best Actor (Newman), Best Actress (Taylor), and Best Director (Brooks). The film also received nominations for Best Cinematography, Color (William Daniels), and Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium. *Cat* may have been too controversial for the Academy voters; the film won no Oscars, and the Best Picture award went to *Gigi* that year.

The movie earned an estimated \$6.1 million in rentals at the North American box office during its initial theatrical release.

## 1984 version

In 1984 a television version was produced by American Playhouse, starring Jessica Lange, Tommy Lee Jones, Rip Torn, Kim Stanley, David Dukes, and Penny Fuller. This adaptation revived the sexual innuendos which had been muted in the 1958 film. Both Stanley and Fuller were nominated for the Emmy Award for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Miniseries or Special, and Stanley went on to win. It was a reunion of sorts for Stanley and Lange, who received Oscar nominations for playing mother and daughter in 1982's *Frances*.

