

## The Graduate [15] 1967|USA|106 min

UK release date **15<sup>th</sup> September 1968, Re-released 2017**

Director **Mike Nichols**

Screenplay **Calder Willingham, Buck Henry**

Cinematographer **Robert Surtees**

Cast **Anne Bancroft** (Mrs Robinson); **Dustin Hoffman** (Ben Bradshaw); **Katharine Ross** (Elaine Robinson); **William Daniels** (Mr Bradshaw); **Murray Hamilton** (Mrs Bradshaw); **Brian Avery** (Carl Smith); **Buck Henry** (Room Clerk)

"One word: plastics." "Are you here for an affair?" These lines and others became cultural touchstones, as 1960s youth rebellion seeped into the California upper middle-class in Mike Nichols' landmark hit. Mentally adrift the summer after graduating from college, suburbanite Benjamin Braddock (Dustin Hoffman) would rather float in his parents' pool than follow adult advice about his future. But the exhortation of family friend Mr. Robinson (Murray Hamilton) to seize every possible opportunity inspires Ben to accept an offer of sex from icily feline Mrs. Robinson (Anne Bancroft).

The affair and the pool are all well and good until Ben is pushed to go out with the Robinsons' daughter Elaine (Katharine Ross) and he falls in love with her. Mrs. Robinson sabotages the relationship and an understandably disgusted Elaine runs back to college. Determined not to let Elaine get away, Ben follows her to school and then disrupts her family-sanctioned wedding. None too happy about her pre-determined destiny, Elaine flees with Ben -- but to what?

Directing his second feature film after *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Nichols matched the story's satire of suffocating middle-class shallowness with an anti-Hollywood style influenced by the then-voguish French New Wave. Using odd angles, jittery editing, and evocative widescreen photography, Nichols welded a hip New Wave style and a generation-gap theme to a fairly traditional screwball comedy script by Buck Henry and Calder Willingham from Charles Webb's novel.

Adding to the European art film sensibility, the movie offers an unsettling and ambiguous ending with no firm closure. And rather than Robert Redford, Nichols

opted for a less glamorous unknown for the pivotal role of Ben, turning Hoffman into a star and opening the door for unconventional leading men throughout the 1970s.

With a pop-song score written by Paul Simon and performed by Simon & Garfunkel bolstering its contemporary appeal, *The Graduate* opened to rave reviews in December 1967 and surpassed all commercial expectations. It became the top-grossing film of 1968 and was nominated for seven Oscars, including Best Picture, Actor, and Actress, with Nichols winning Best Director. Together with *Bonnie and Clyde*, it stands as one of the most influential films of the late '60s, as its mordant dissection of the generation gap helped lead the way to the youth-oriented Hollywood artistic "renaissance" of the early '70s.

Lucia Bozzola, Rovi

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