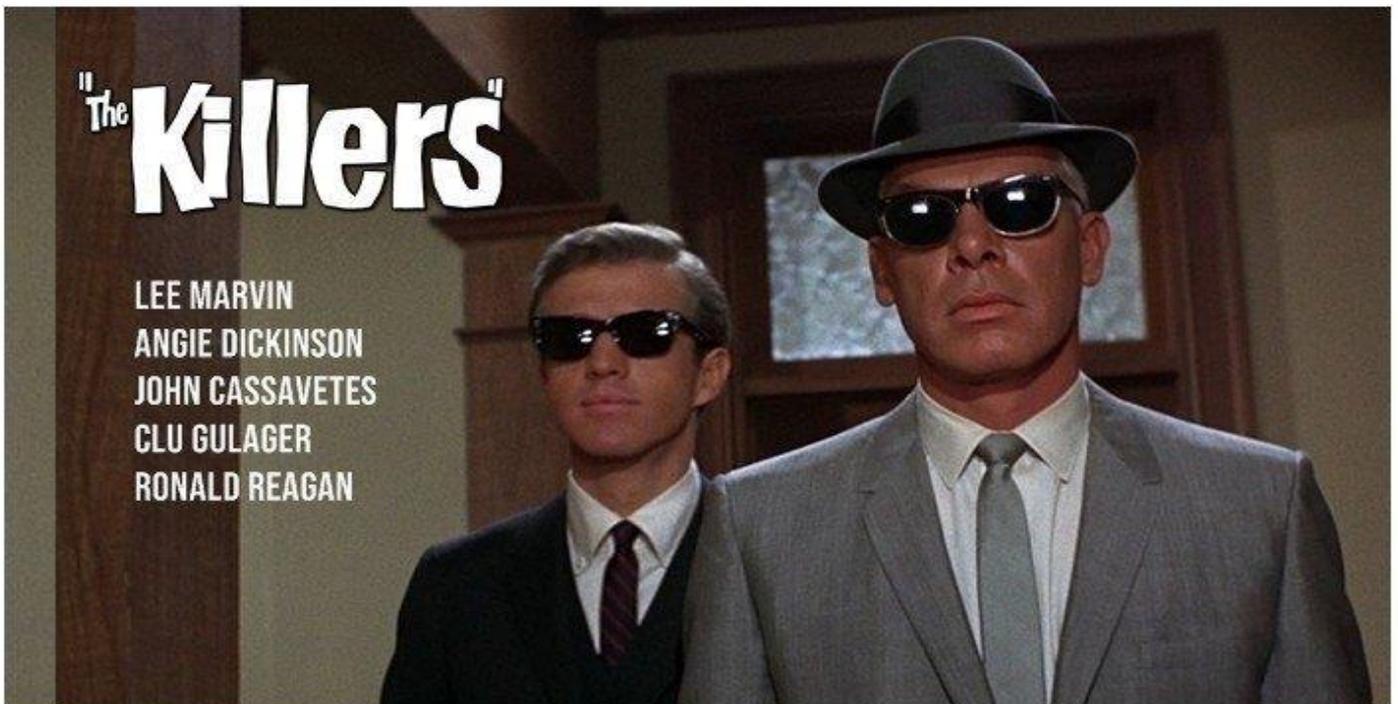


From Billy Wilder into a Film Noir Season

Monday 02 September **Double Indemnity (Billy Wilder) (1944)**
Monday 16 September **The Killers (Robert Siodmak) (1946)**
Monday 30 September **Criss Cross (Robert Siodmak) (1949)**
Monday 14 October **The Killers (Don Siegel) (1964)**
Eden Court, Playhouse Cinema, at 20:15



The door of the Playhouse cinema opens and two men come in, are given some notes to read and a slip to tear and then sit down in their numbered seats.

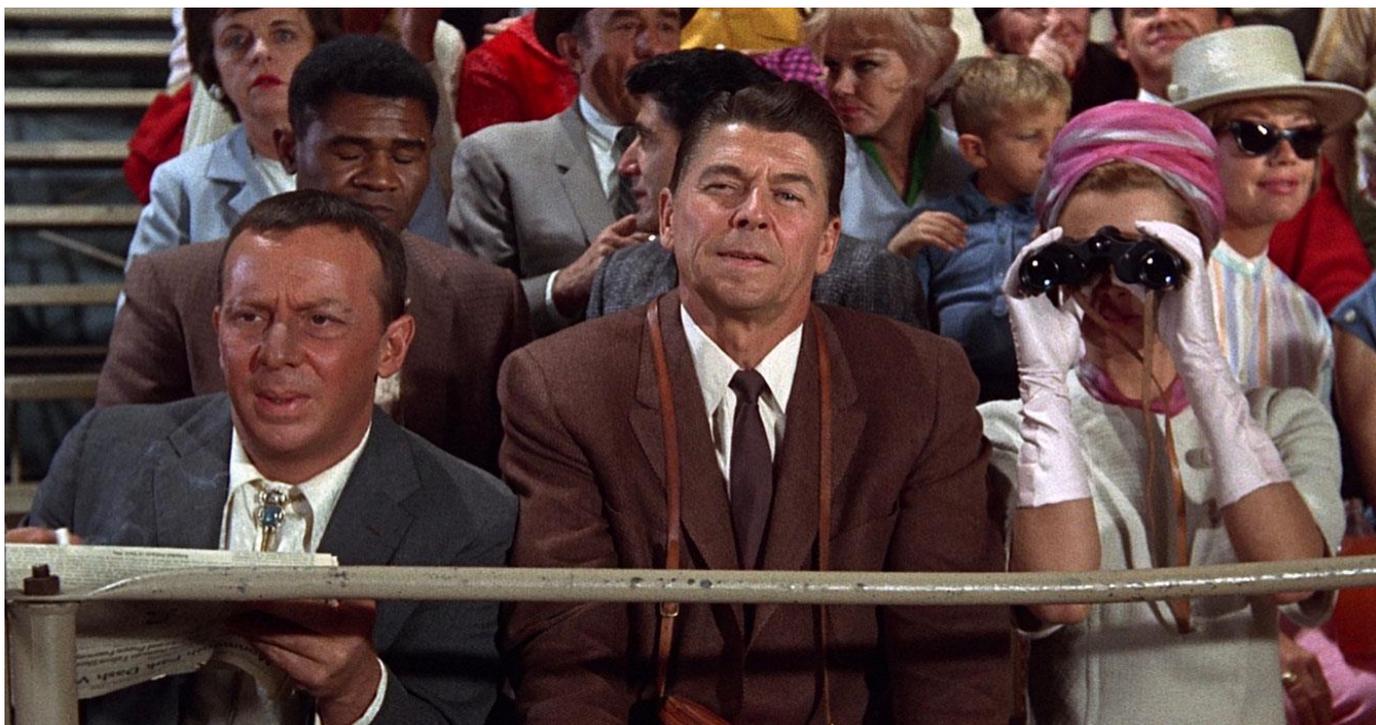
“As usual a lot of bright boys and girls turn up for these InFiFa screenings,” the first and older man states. “[What’s the movie?](#)” the second man asks. “It’s based on a story that is less than 3000 words, and had a huge influence on some bright writers,” the first man replies. “[Didn’t we see that one before? The title is familiar.](#)” “Sort of, this one is different though.” “[How so?](#)” the younger man inquires. “This one is made 18 years after the one we saw last month; it honours the title of the story so much more. If you have a title called **The Killers**, a bright director really should foreground that more.” “[I remember now. Last month’s movie was more *The Victim* than **The Killers**.](#)” “Exactly! That is what the earlier one fails to do, to give prime spot to the latter. In that one from 1946 they appear at the beginning and then only briefly again much later. When that bright boy Don Siegel remade it he realised the story is really about those two killers, and not their target.” “[Isn’t their victim played by John Cassavetes? He looks like a bright, shifty boy who is capable of selling his child to the devil so he can be successful in the movies.](#)” “Yeah, you are right, it was that

bright Polish boy who convinced him to do so a few years later. You should be a critic, or a casting director.” “Those bright boys behind the shades... Aren't they Lee Marvin and Clu Gulager, master and pupil?” “Ain't you a bright boy!? Marvin plays the ageing, chilling hitman Charlie Strom and Gulager is his adulating, psychopathic assistant. They are an unpyting, brutal, yet compelling pair. Old Charlie is rather keen to find out why Cassavetes' character Johnny North didn't make any attempts to escape his fate.” “He probably knew when he saw that duo there was no point in escaping.” “Yeah, they don't come much more cold and utterly composed than Marvin. Siegel said that he wanted Gulager to be like an opposite, totally irresponsible and quite crazy.” “I like Siegel. He never judges his characters' actions but this does not mean he approves of them.” “Exactly, bright boy! There's nothing of that moral posturing in relation to the often sordid, violent material and Siegel's people react to an unpleasant world with actions rather than words. Often they destroy themselves in the process.” “They rarely survive with dignity.” “Well, they are caught between violent inclination and a calculated need for restraint.” “Sometimes you talk silly, you know?” “Don't mistake me for a thinker, but the movies are just fine for bright boys like us. But I recognize a kindred spirit in those two.” “You mean, they are a bit like us?” “Yeah, they are like creatures in search of an ark, as a bright boy once said. They are riffing on the banalities of their chosen lives and professions like many of us. Like any teetering twosome in movies, plays, novels and whatever constitutes for real life, they are tied to each other and cannot exist separately, they are like halves of a single personality.”



“Laurel and Hardy, Abbott and Costello, the Two Ronnies, fool and sage, instinct and intellect, or Dumb and Dumber?” “Bright boy! Didn't know you had it in you. Something of me must have rubbed off. Marvin and Gulager can be seen as an underworld version of Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon.” “In Genesis it says that it is not good for a man to be alone.” “Ah, we come to that now. There is, of course, a femme fatale.” “I had the hots for Angie ever since I seen her seducing John Wayne in Rio Bravo. Nobody else really seduced the Duke the way she did, waving those cherry-red frilly knickers in front of his nose!” “Now, now, bright boy, don't get too excited. Although, I have to admit she is tantalizingly

alluring in anything she appears in.” “[Stanwyck, Gardner, De Carlo, Dickinson. Whoever programmes these films certainly knows his dames!](#)” “Yeah, but these ladies also prefigure that it never ends well for those who try to conquer them. And the bright boy who plays the sleazy gangster and the duo’s big wig, is none other than Ronald Reagan. Fuelled by a huge ambition, yet aware of his liability, this was his only role as a villain. And he is chillingly brilliant.” “[A mighty Bonzo preparing for his biggest role ever, as a ruler of the Western World, charming crusty Soviets and the pants off an iron lady?](#)” “He reluctantly played the villain; it was Siegel who persuaded him to take the part. It was Reagan’s last movie. It was his dame, Nancy, who persuaded him that a bigger part would suit him much better.



A Hollywood farewell when the bigger stage in Washington beckoned.” “[Wasn't it made for the small screen?](#)” “Yeah, but in the wake of the Kennedy assassination the producers decided to release **The Killers** in cinemas where it would be seen by fewer people than on television. Now the irony is that one of its stars would become president and survive an assassination attempt by a not so bright boy who was obsessed by a film star.” “[The horror that lurks beneath?](#)” “This movie genuinely conveys a view of the world that is pretty terrifying, thanks to Siegel’s taut direction.” “[Reagan might have shipped off to the White House fleeing the Don, but it transferred Marvin straight onto the A-list of the acting world, didn't it?](#)” “He would become one of cinema’s greatest wintry heroes. Under all that sterile posturing and remorseless destruction hides a romantic identity about to erupt, even in the most forbidding circumstances.” “[Cat Ballou, Point Blank, Hell in the Pacific, The Big Red One, movies that keep us amused.](#)” “That’s right, bright boy.” “[There’s a bright boy going up front. Is he gonna talk?](#)” “I think the film is about to start as soon as he stops talking.” “[He won't talk much, will he?](#)” “If he’s a bright boy, he won’t.” “[Better be a bright boy then.](#)” “He better. If a bright boy knows what’s good for him.”

Next... Monday 28 October: Music in Film Season. The first of five.
Preston Sturges' *Unfaithfully Yours*.

Eden Court, Playhouse Cinema, at 20:15

