

IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT (1967)

Written By: Stirling Silliphant
Directed by Norman Jewison

Cast

Sidney Poitier (Virgil Tibbs)
Rod Steiger (Gillespie)
Warren Oates (Sam Woods)
Lee Grant (Mrs. Colbert)

Awards

Oscar Win: Best Actor (Rod Steiger)
Oscar Win: Best Sound (Samuel Goldwyn)
Oscar Win: Best Picture (Walter Mirisch)
Oscar Win: Best Writing (Stirling Silliphant)
Oscar Win: Best Film Editing (Hal Ashby)

Oscar Nomination: Best Director (Norman Jewison)

Oscar Nomination: Best Effects (James Richard)

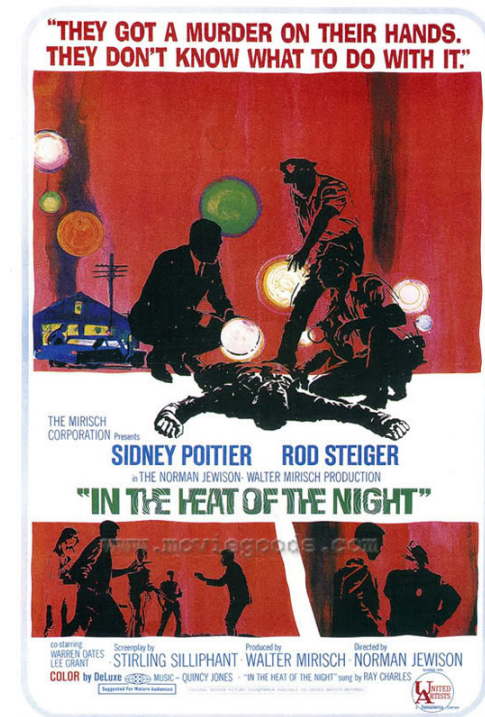
Genre - Crime

Plot Synopsis

Detective Virgil Tibbs is caught up in the racial tension of the US South when he is arrested after the murder of a prominent businessman. Tibbs was simply waiting for his next train at the station in Sparta, Mississippi and the confusion is soon resolved but when local police chief Gillespie learns that Tibbs is the Philadelphia PD's number one homicide expert, he reluctantly asks for his assistance. The murdered man, Mr. Colbert, had come to Sparta from the North to build a new factory and his wife and business associates immediately point the finger at Endicott, the most powerful man in the county and the one who had the most to lose if a major new employer comes to the area. Tibbs' life is clearly in danger but he perseveres in a highly charged and racially explosive environment until the killer is found.

Tidbits and Trivia

- Rod Steiger was asked by director Norman Jewison to chew gum when playing the part. He resisted at first but then grew to love the idea, and eventually went through 263 packs of gum during the shooting of the film.
- Mississippi was eventually ruled out as a location due to the existing political conditions. Sparta, Illinois, was selected as the location, and the town's name in the story was changed to Sparta so that local signs would not need to be changed.
- The scene that took place at the sheriff's house featured dialog that came out of improvisations between Sidney Poitier and Rod Steiger.



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- Sidney Poitier insisted that the movie be filmed in the north because of troubles that other productions filmed in the south had had when using black actors
- Due to the assassination of civil rights activist Martin Luther King (April 4, 1968), the presentation of the Best Picture Oscar for this film was postponed for two days from Monday April 8th to Wednesday April 10, 1968.
- The first times in any major motion picture where a black man reacted to provocation from a white man in such a way. (referring to the scene where Tibbs slaps Endicott)
- At the very end of the film, as Poitier is boarding a train to leave the town, the last lines are uttered by Steiger, and sum the growth of their relationship, yet maintaining the standard of the South. He said, "You take care now, Virgil," words to give support to the budding civil rights movement, exemplifying that, with effort, racial divisions are capable of being overcome.
- In 1999 Jewison's work was recognized by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences when he was given the prestigious Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award for lifetime achievement.