

Not logged on My Town?

[LOG ON now »](#)

[CREATE AN ACCOUNT for free »](#)

A black banner advertisement for the Dirty Harry film collection. On the left, there is a small image of a Dirty Harry DVD cover. To its right, the text "OWN ALL 5 DIRTY HARRY FILMS" is written in large, bold, white and red letters. On the far right, the words "BUY NOW" are written in red.

[Home](#)[News](#)[Movie Database](#)[Movie Reviews](#)[Message Board](#)[My Town](#)[Blu-ray and HD](#)[About](#)  
[Main](#)[Last 100 added](#)[All Reviews](#)[DVD Reviews](#)[HD DVD Reviews](#)[Blu-ray Reviews](#)[Theatrical](#)  
[Reviews](#)[Hardware Reviews](#)

Search Movie Database:

## Dirty Harry (Film Collections) [Ultimate Collector's Edition]

Blu-ray/APPROX. 533 MINS./1971/US R

- [Release Details](#)
- [Review](#)
- Easter Eggs
- [Cover Art](#)
- Menu Screens
- Screenshots
- Video
- [Comments\[0\]](#)



Eastwood created a genuine American folk hero in Harry Callahan, and whether you like him and his Neanderthal ways or not, he's around to stay.

Page 1 of 2

- [1](#)
- [2](#)

Blu-ray REVIEW

By [John J. Puccio](#)

FIRST PUBLISHED Jun 3, 2008

---

**Tools:**

 [Send to a friend »](#)

Digg 

---

Everybody has turning points. For Clint Eastwood, TV's "Rawhide" gained him recognition, "The Man With No Name" Spaghetti Westerns made him a star, and the "Dirty Harry" films established him as an icon. To promote the latter series, the folks at Warner Home Video released all five of the "Dirty Harry" movies to DVD several years ago, and now they have remastered them yet again, making them available in the Blu-ray "Ultimate Collector's Edition" box set reviewed here (also available in standard-definition DVD), or on separate discs in standard definition, or in the case of the original "Dirty Harry" on a separate Blu-ray disc as well. While the "Dirty Harry" films may not appeal to all viewers, for their legions of devoted fans these new editions and their new extra features are surely attractive.

Harry struck a chord with audiences of the day fed up with what they perceived as the leniency of the law. What they wanted was a tough cop who shot first and asked questions later, a modern-day Wyatt Earp who wasn't afraid to clean up a town. Maybe it was a conservative backlash against in the early seventies against the peace-and-love movement, against Vietnam War protesters, against rising crime, or whatever. Or maybe viewers have always relished the sight of good guys blowing away bad guys, which existed in films since "The Great Train Robbery" in 1903. Who knows. In any case, the films worked, and Harry, for good or bad, became a legend.

Believe it or not, Eastwood was not the first choice to play San Francisco Police Inspector Harry Callahan. Frank Sinatra, Paul Newman, Steve McQueen, and even John Wayne were among the top contenders, but they all turned down the role. Nor did the filmmakers even spell the name of the main character with two l's in the first movie. The closing credits for "Dirty Harry" list Eastwood's character simply as "Harry." The second movie lists him as "Harry Calahan," and from the third movie on he was "Callahan" with two l's. The fact is, when they were making the first movie, nobody was thinking of sequels, so I suppose the name didn't matter. By the time the third, fourth, and fifth installments rolled around, the filmmakers probably figured they ought to settle on a single spelling.

### "DIRTY HARRY"

"Dirty Harry" (1971) is not only the first movie in the series, it's still the best. Fans will, of course, have their own personal favorites, but if I were buying the movies singly instead of in the box and I were unsure of which one to start with, it would be at the beginning. It's in "Dirty Harry" that we learn the most about Harry's personality and about his past. In subsequent films the writers toned him down considerably. For instance, why do people call the character "Dirty" Harry? Well, initially the film tells us it's because he's a bigoted, racist SOB who hates everybody, even to calling his new partner a derogatory name. Later, it says he got his trademark because he always got assigned the dirtiest jobs in the department. Or because he he's a peeping Tom. Take your pick.

Harry is a widower, his wife having been killed in an auto accident. That's not unusual for Harry: Everybody around him--wives, girlfriends, partners--eventually dies, usually a violent death, or gets seriously maimed. Harry is also a prototype loner and a hard-core maverick cop, a fellow who takes it upon himself to rid the world of criminal scum in any manner he deems reasonable, inside or outside the strict application of the law, and his superiors are constantly criticizing him for his extreme use of vigilante force. In other words, in many ways he is just as wrong as the villains he puts away.

I mean, here's the thing: I lived in San Francisco for about five years back in the mid 1960s, and I visited the City on a weekly basis for many years thereafter. I walked and drove the City streets on end, and in all

that time I never once saw anything improper or untoward happen. Harry, on the other hand, can walk or drive down any street in the City at any time of the day or night, and he will run into a murder or a robbery in progress, necessitating his shooting at least three to five people. Only in the movies.

The movie begins, as most of these movies do, with Harry breaking up a crime totally unrelated to the ensuing plot, in this case a bank robbery in which he shoots three of the perpetrators. Then the real story begins as the Mayor (John Vernon) receives an extortion threat from a psycho who calls himself "Scorpio" (Andy Robinson, an actor who in real life was a pacifist and had never shot a gun) and who threatens to kill a citizen a day if he's not given \$100,000 (with inflation, today he'd ask for a million). The writers based the Scorpio character on the real-life killer who called himself "Zodiac" and terrorized the San Francisco Bay Area in the late sixties and seventies. It is, in fact, the presence of this strong, focused villain that gives "Dirty Harry" an edge over the following episodes, which tend to have more diluted opponents for Harry to handle. In all, director Don Siegel's ("Invasion of the Body Snatchers") "Dirty Harry" comes off as a taut, well-paced cop thriller with two solid adversaries in conflict. Harry doesn't do so much actual detecting in the story as he does run around a lot, but this no-nonsense, blood-and-guts approach to police non-procedurals was a first of its kind. And, of course, "Harry" spawned a score of Hollywood imitators.

*Trivia:* At the time of making "Dirty Harry," real-life San Francisco Police Inspector Dave Toschi had already achieved a measure of fame when Steve McQueen announced that he had copied Toschi's style of wearing his gun for his own character of Frank Bullitt. Likewise, there's a bit of Toschi in Dirty Harry because it was Toschi who investigated the original Zodiac case, which in turn inspired Scorpio. So Toschi was to some small degree an inspiration for two of the most famous fictional San Francisco cops in movie history.

"I know what you're thinking. Did he fire six shots or only five? Well, to tell you the truth, in all this excitement I've kind of lost track myself. But being's this is a .44 Magnum, the most powerful handgun in the world and would blow your head clean off, you've got to ask yourself one question: 'Do I feel lucky?' Well, do you, punk?"

#### **Video and Audio:**

As I've said, Warner Bros. present all of the "Dirty Harry" films in remastered picture and sound. This one is in a 2.35:1 widescreen ratio, its original Panavision theatrical dimensions, transferred to Blu-ray via VC-1/1080p. Colors are brighter, richer, and often deeper than in regular definition, and, of course, delineation is better all the way around. Still, the higher definition also brings out more of the minor grain present on the original prints, particularly noticeable in outdoor locations shots, and it tends to make the picture look a little rough.

The audio engineers have done up the sound in Dolby TrueHD 5.1 and Dolby Digital 5.1, both of which have a fairly wide front-channel stereo spread and a few good rear-channel effects, like the occasional helicopter flyover, with the TrueHD lending a stronger presence in the clarity and smoothness departments. The TrueHD soundtrack is especially effective in rendering gunshots strongly and realistically as well as in conveying Lalo Schifrin's subtly jazz-inflected musical score.

#### **Extras:**

On Blu-ray "Dirty Harry" comes in a special-edition disc that contains everything on the standard-definition two-disc set and more. First, there is a new commentary by film critic and Eastwood biographer Richard Schickel. Next, there's the 2008 documentary "The Long Shadow of Dirty Harry," twenty-five minutes long and again featuring comments from practically everybody in his "Harry" films. After that is the documentary "Clint Eastwood: Out of the Shadows," an eighty-six-minute biography of Eastwood covering his life from childhood through the year 2000, when Rhapsody Films, American Masters, and BBC Arena made it. The film is in widescreen and includes twenty-three chapters and again features comments from just about everybody the man has ever worked with. In addition, there's the 1993 documentary, "Clint Eastwood: The Man from Malpaso," fifty-eight minutes long, and the featurette "Dirty Harry: The Original" (2001), thirty minutes long and including interviews with the filmmakers of many of the "Harry" movies, like Eastwood, John Milius, Hal Holbrook, Ted Post and even Arnold Schwarzenegger commenting on how Eastwood's character was one of his inspirations. Then, there's the promotional short "Dirty Harry's Way," seven minutes.

In addition to all of that, there's an interview gallery with Patricia Clarkson, Joel Cox, Clint Eastwood, Hal Holbrook, Evan Kim, John Milius, Ted Post, Andy Robinson, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Robert Urich,

twenty-seven minutes total. And there's a trailer gallery for all five "Dirty Harry" films in widescreen. Rounding out the bonuses are thirty-one scene selections; English, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Castilian, and Portuguese spoken languages; English, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Dutch, Portuguese, Danish, Norsk, Suomi and Swedish subtitles, with English, German, and Italian captions for the hearing impaired

### "MAGNUM FORCE"

The second entry in the series, "Magnum Force" (1973), I found one of the weakest links in the chain. Calahan (later spelled Callahan) has lost some of his edge by this time, the action seems more awkwardly outlandish, and the villain is practically anonymous.

In this one, somebody is taking the law into his own hands (a nice contrast, given that Harry does almost the same thing) by killing some of San Francisco's top gangsters. There may even be an illegal "death squad" in the works. Hal Holbrook plays Lt. Briggs, Harry's new superior, who doesn't like Harry or his methods very much. Unfortunately, aside from him there are few people in the film to hiss. The movie struck a chord with audiences fed up with the hoodlums having more rights than the good guys, so in essence the film gives us two sets of mavericks: vigilante cops and Harry. But instead of making us cheer for Harry, the story--mainly a series of brutal killings--seems too long and too wayward to catch our attention, and not even Lalo Schiffrin's musical score can do much to help the situation.

"A man's always got to know his limitations."

### Video and Audio:

The screen size, picture quality, and audio are a little better than in the first movie, with the high-definition picture (again a 2.35:1 ratio widescreen) being a trifle cleaner and the Dolby TrueHD 5.1 sound having a bit more dynamic impact. The color shows up well enough, quite deep in this VC-1/1080p transfer, although I noticed that while close-ups looked fine, many of the medium and long shots seemed somewhat soft. In TrueHD the surrounds provide some vigorous effects with bullets and an airplane flyover. The slight constriction of sound in dialogue I heard during the standard-definition presentation didn't make itself known as much, either.

---

Ads by Google

## [New Adobe Media Player](#)

The New Adobe Media Player lets you  
Watch TV Shows Online and Offline

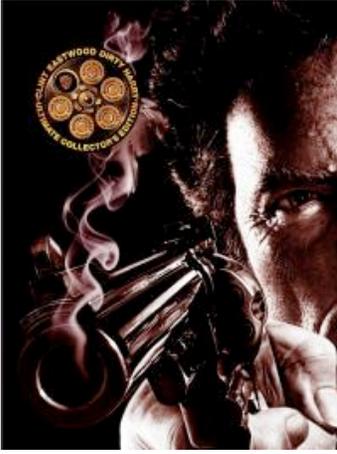
[www.Adobe.com](http://www.Adobe.com)

---

[Continued on page 2 »](#)

Page 1 of 2

- [1](#)
- [2](#)



**Average user rating (1-5):**

*Not yet rated.*

- [Add to My Collection](#)
- [Add to My Wish List](#)
- [LIVE From Amazon.com](#)  
[New Price from: \\$85.79](#)

*[Usually ships in 1-2 business days](#)*

## **Advertisement:**

[BACK TO TOPFEEDBACK](#)

[Terms of Use](#), [Copyright](#), and [Privacy Policy](#) © 1997-2008 DVDTOWN.com - © 2002-2008 HDDVD.org - © 2008 DVDTOWN ApS

[Home:](#)   [News:](#)   [Movie Database:](#)   [Reviews:](#)   [Easter Eggs:](#)   [Message Board:](#)   [My Town:](#)   [About:](#)

[Main](#)

[All Reviews](#)

[DVD Reviews](#)

[HD DVD Reviews](#)

[Blu-ray Reviews](#)

[Theatrical Reviews](#)

[Hardware Reviews](#)

[Main](#)

[Advertise](#)

[Terms of use](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Privacy policy](#)

[Meet the staff](#)

[Main](#)

[Blu-ray and HD DVD](#)

[Main](#)

[Release Calendar](#)

[Main](#)

[All Easter Eggs](#)

[Main](#)

[Main](#)

[Log on](#)

[Main](#)