# KLUTE YOUR ENTHUSIASM (20)

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*One of 25 installments in a* [*series of enthusiastic posts*](http://hilobrow.com/tag/klute-enthusiasm/) *analyzing and celebrating a few of our favorite neo-noir movies from the Sixties (1964–1973).*

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**BADLANDS | d. TERRENCE MALICK | 1973**



Say you killed someone, and felt like you might as well head off on a bloody road trip until you go out in a blaze. Say you want a pal along for the glory of the ride. You’ve got to choose well. Choose someone willing to take the impulse all the way out to the other side. In *Badlands*, Kit (Martin Sheen) kills for Holly (Sissy Spacek) and they head off into destiny.

One wonders: Did Kit pick the wrong girl?

Much has been made of the sexualized male gaze in film, and its more ethereal compatriot the female gaze. *Badlands* has both, perhaps. The camera watches Holly as she watches Kit. Kit watches himself. The narration is the female gaze, and at that an unreliable one.

But the gaze that interest me in *Badlands* is the “are you still with me, go for broke, it’s all unraveling so let’s toss caution to the wind and die together” look that precedes the climax. The “in it to the death” gaze. A look also contained in the first glance; predestined before the journey even begins.

That gaze heralds the climax of classic “buddy” crime films — Thelma looks to Louise, Butch Cassidy glances at the Sundance Kid, Bonnie’s eyes turn to Clyde, and the implicit “You ready?” is answered by “Hell, yeah!” The complicit death-wish gaze.

Before the climax of *Badlands*, Kit turns to Holly, yearning for her to return that look, knowing she won’t. She breaks the unspoken pact of the death-wish crime-buddy road film. He looks to her, and her look says “nope.”

While other buddy crime teams chase money, freedom or liberation, Holly is, as she says, “Just goin’ along.” Her father (Warren Oates) recognizes Kit’s type. His look says: How sharp is this blade pointed at my daughter? When Holly defies her father, he shoots her dog, and Kit shoots him. Holly exhibits signs of shock, yet she was a bit dissociated when we first met her, in her white shorts, twirling her baton.

There is no joy or glory in the murders Kit commits, nor in Holly’s blank response to them. Each death is as banal as a yanked tooth, each diminishing the smile of their romance. Holly’s interior hyper-romantic narration sours as things deteriorate. Is it a hindsight reminisce, to give herself plausible deniability?

Thelma and Louise’s car lifts over a canyon, the film stops before the car plummets. Butch and Sundance are frozen in a leap, a second before the rain of lead. Bonnie and Clyde are not given this gentle mythic treatment; instead we see the bullet-pocked corpses in a staccato loop. Near the end of *Badlands*, Holly is lifted in a helicopter, to go on to her fate — she is acquitted, her boyfriend Kit electrocuted, and she marries the son of her defense attorney, a happy ending she seems to have written for herself.

While Kit was busy writing his eulogy with each kill, Holly was busy spelling out “entire sentences with my tongue on the roof of my mouth, where nobody could read them.”

Did Kit choose the wrong girl? Or the right witness?

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LULU](http://hilobrow.com/2019/01/02/seriocomic-1/) | [VIZ](http://hilobrow.com/2019/01/30/seriocomic-5/) | [MARSUPILAMI](http://www.hilobrow.com/2019/03/13/seriocomic-11/) | [ERNIE POOK’S COMEEK](http://www.hilobrow.com/2019/04/10/seriocomic-15/) | [HELLBOY](http://hilobrow.com/2019/02/20/seriocomic-8/) | [& dozens of other comics.](http://hilobrow.com/tag/seriocomic/) **TUBE YOUR ENTHUSIASM (2018):** [LOONEY TUNES](http://hilobrow.com/2018/08/01/tube-your-enthusiasm-1/) | [THREE STOOGES](http://hilobrow.com/2018/08/02/tube-your-enthusiasm-2/) | [THE AVENGERS](http://hilobrow.com/2018/08/19/tube-your-enthusiasm-19/) | [ROCKY & BULLWINKLE](http://hilobrow.com/2018/08/04/tube-your-enthusiasm-4/) | [THE TWILIGHT ZONE](http://hilobrow.com/2018/08/05/tube-your-enthusiasm-5/) | [& 20 other Fifties (1954–1963) TV shows](http://hilobrow.com/tag/tube-enthusiasm/). **WOWEE ZOWEE (2018 weekly):** [UNISEX](http://hilobrow.com/2018/01/03/wowee-zowee-1/) | [UNDER THE PINK](http://hilobrow.com/2018/01/10/wowee-zowee-2/) | [DUMMY](http://hilobrow.com/2018/01/17/wowee-zowee-3/) | [AMOR PROHIBIDO](http://hilobrow.com/2018/01/24/wowee-zowee-4/) | [HIPS AND MAKERS](http://hilobrow.com/2018/01/24/wowee-zowee-4/) | [& dozens of other Nineties (1994–2003) albums](http://hilobrow.com/tag/wowee-zowee/). **KLUTE YOUR ENTHUSIASM (2017):** [THE KILLERS](http://hilobrow.com/2017/08/01/klute-your-enthusiasm-1/) | [BANDE À PART (BAND OF OUTSIDERS)](http://hilobrow.com/2017/08/02/klute-your-enthusiasm-2/) | [ALPHAVILLE](http://hilobrow.com/2017/08/03/klute-your-enthusiasm-3/) | [HARPER](http://hilobrow.com/2017/08/04/klute-your-enthusiasm-4/) | [BLOW-UP](http://hilobrow.com/2017/08/05/klute-your-enthusiasm-5/) | [& 20 other Sixties (1964–1973) neo-noir movies](http://hilobrow.com/tag/klute-enthusiasm/). **#SQUADGOALS (2017 weekly):** [THE WILD BUNCH](http://hilobrow.com/2017/01/04/squadgoals-1/) | [BOWIE’S BAND](http://hilobrow.com/2017/01/18/squadgoals-3/) | [THE BLOOMSBURY GROUP](http://hilobrow.com/2017/02/15/squadgoals-7/) | [THE HONG KONG CAVALIERS](http://hilobrow.com/2017/02/22/squadgoals-8/) | [VI ÄR BÄST!](http://hilobrow.com/2017/03/29/squadgoals-13/) & [dozens of other squads](http://hilobrow.com/tag/squadgoals/). **GROK MY ENTHUSIASM (2016 weekly):** [THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF LUNCH](http://hilobrow.com/2016/01/13/grok-my-enthusiasm-1/) | [WEEKEND](http://hilobrow.com/2016/01/20/grok-my-enthusiasm-2/) | [MILLION YEAR PICNIC](http://hilobrow.com/2016/01/27/grok-my-enthusiasm-3/) | [LA BARONNE EMILE D’ERLANGER](http://hilobrow.com/2016/02/03/grok-my-enthusiasm-4/) | [THE SURVIVAL SAMPLER](http://hilobrow.com/2016/02/10/grok-my-enthusiasm-5/) | [& dozens more one-off enthusiasms](http://hilobrow.com/tag/grok-enthusiasm/). **QUIRK YOUR ENTHUSIASM (2016):** [“Tainted Love”](http://hilobrow.com/2016/08/01/quirk-your-enthusiasm-1/) | [“Metal”](http://hilobrow.com/2016/08/02/quirk-your-enthusiasm-2/) | [“Frankie Teardrop”](http://hilobrow.com/2016/08/03/quirk-your-enthusiasm-3/) | [“Savoir Faire”](http://hilobrow.com/2016/08/04/quirk-your-enthusiasm-4/) | [“Broken English”](http://hilobrow.com/2016/08/05/quirk-your-enthusiasm-5/) | [& 20 other Seventies (1974–1983) new wave singles](http://hilobrow.com/tag/quirk-enthusiasm/). **CROM YOUR ENTHUSIASM (2015):** [DARKER THAN YOU THINK](http://hilobrow.com/2015/08/03/crom-your-enthusiasm-1/) | [THE SWORD IN THE STONE](http://hilobrow.com/2015/08/04/crom-your-enthusiasm-2/) | [OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET](http://hilobrow.com/2015/08/05/crom-your-enthusiasm-3/) | [THIEVES’ HOUSE](http://hilobrow.com/2015/08/06/crom-your-enthusiasm-4/) | [QUEEN OF THE BLACK COAST](http://hilobrow.com/2015/08/07/crom-your-enthusiasm-5/) | [& 20 other Thirties (1934–1943) fantasy novels](http://hilobrow.com/tag/crom-enthusiasm/). **KERN YOUR ENTHUSIASM (2014):** [ALDINE ITALIC](http://hilobrow.com/2014/08/01/kern-your-enthusiasm-1/) | [DATA 70](http://hilobrow.com/2014/08/02/kern-your-enthusiasm-2/) | [TORONTO SUBWAY](http://hilobrow.com/2014/08/03/kern-your-enthusiasm-3/) | [JOHNSTON’S “HAMLET”](http://hilobrow.com/2014/08/04/kern-your-enthusiasm-4/) | [TODD KLONE](http://hilobrow.com/2014/08/05/kern-your-enthusiasm-5/) | [& 20 other typefaces](http://hilobrow.com/tag/kern-enthusiasm/). **HERC YOUR ENTHUSIASM (2013):** [“Spoonin’ Rap”](http://hilobrow.com/2013/07/29/herc-1/) | [“Rapper’s Delight”](http://hilobrow.com/2013/07/30/herc-2/) | [“Rappin’ Blow”](http://hilobrow.com/2013/07/31/herc-3/) | [“The Incredible Fulk”](http://hilobrow.com/2013/08/01/herc-4/) | [“The Adventures of Super Rhyme”](http://hilobrow.com/2013/08/02/herc-5/) | [& 20 other Seventies (1974–1983) hip-hop songs](http://hilobrow.com/tag/herc-enthusiasm/). **KIRK YOUR ENTHUSIASM (2012):** [Justice or vengeance?](http://hilobrow.com/2012/07/30/kirk-your-enthusiasm-1/) | [Kirk teaches his drill thrall to kiss](http://hilobrow.com/2012/07/31/kirk-your-enthusiasm-2/) | [“KHAAAAAN!”](http://hilobrow.com/2012/08/01/kirk-your-enthusiasm-3/) | [“No kill I”](http://hilobrow.com/2012/08/02/kirk-your-enthusiasm-4/) | [Kirk browbeats NOMAD](http://hilobrow.com/2012/08/03/kirk-your-enthusiasm-5/) | [& 20 other Captain Kirk scenes](http://hilobrow.com/tag/kirk-enthusiasm/). **KIRB YOUR ENTHUSIASM (2011):** [THE ETERNALS](http://hilobrow.com/2011/02/21/kirb-your-enthusiasm-1/) | [BLACK MAGIC](http://hilobrow.com/2011/02/21/kirb-your-enthusiasm-2/) | [DEMON](http://hilobrow.com/2011/02/22/kirb-your-enthusiasm-3/) | [OMAC](http://hilobrow.com/2011/02/22/kirb-your-enthusiasm-4/) | [CAPTAIN AMERICA](http://hilobrow.com/2011/02/23/kirb-your-enthusiasm-5/) | [& 20 other Jack Kirby panels](http://hilobrow.com/tag/kirb-enthusiasm/).