

Top 100 Actors – As voted by Channel 4

100- Michael Douglas Kirk's son was born in New Jersey in 1944. He learnt about film while visiting his father on set, and studied drama at the University of California. He appeared in a number of films and on TV but first hit it big when he persuaded his dad to sell him the rights to *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Douglas produced the Oscar-winning smash and went on to set up his own production company. On the acting front he has been a leading man for over 20 years, often playing distinctly dislikeable men in films which border on the reactionary.

99- Halle Berry Halle Berry was born in Ohio in 1968 and developed an interest in showbusiness after appearing in a number of beauty pageants, including Miss USA. After becoming a model, Berry got her first acting job in the TV series *Living Dolls*, before Spike Lee gave Halle her big break in *Jungle Fever*, in which she played a crack addict. She then appeared in a number of films, including *Boomerang*, *The Flintstones* and *Losing Isaiah* in 1995 opposite Jessica Lange. Berry received critical acclaim for her performance in Warren Beatty's political satire *Bulworth*, before taking the role of Storm in Bryan Singer's hit *X-Men*. This has been a huge year for Halle Berry, she made Oscar history by winning the Best Actress Award for *Monster's Ball*; the first African American to do so.

98- Jane Fonda Born in 1937 in New York, the daughter of screen legend Henry Fonda, Jane Fonda was always destined for Hollywood. Originally uninterested in acting, she was persuaded to appear in a theatre production of *Country Girl* in 1954. Fonda's screen debut came in 1960 in the film *Tall Story*. A successful career followed, including two Oscars for *Klute* and *Coming Home*. She famously appeared in the risqué *Barbarella* for then husband Roger Vadim before courting controversy in the 70s for her anti-war opinions. Currently married to broadcasting czar Ted Turner.

97- Burt Reynolds The son of the Palm Beach police chief, Burt Reynolds ran away from home at 14 but came back to win a footballing scholarship to Florida State University. He was a talented halfback until a car accident forced him to switch to acting. Moving to New York he appeared in various forgettable TV shows, often as half-Indian characters (his grandmother was a Cherokee). After gaining some exposure as a witty talk show guest, he exposed himself further as *Cosmopolitan's* first nude male centrefold. A prolific movie career embraced both commercial success and critical acclaim with notable performances including *Deliverance* (1972), *Smokey & The Bandit* (1977) and *The Cannonball Run* (1981). Reynolds' career slid in the 80s before his comeback in *Boogie Nights*, for which he won an Oscar nomination.

96- Wesley Snipes Born in Florida in 1962, Wesley Snipes grew up in the Bronx and attended the High School for the Performing Arts. He was spotted by an agent in a talent competition and got his debut movie role in the American Football comedy *Wildcats* in 1986. Thereafter, he has appeared in many action films such as *New Jack City*, *Passenger 57*, *Boiling Point*, and *US Marshals*. However, Snipes is also an impressive actor and gave great performances in films such as Spike Lee's *Jungle Fever*, *White Men Can't Jump* and *Rising Sun* alongside Sean Connery. One film role that stands out is that of the "daywalker" vampire hunter *Blade* and Snipes also appeared in the sequel *Blade II* in 2002.

95- Uma Thurman Uma Thurman was born in Boston in 1970, and grew up on campus at Amherst College, where her father is a noted professor of Buddhist Studies. She blew out college to start a film career and made her debut at 17. *Kiss Daddy Goodnight* was panned but Thurman soon made an impression as a deflowered virgin in *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988). Her steamy performance in *Henry & June* led to some unwelcome attention from fans, which knocked her confidence until *Pulp Fiction* rescued her in 1993. Although she's appeared in some great films (*Beautiful Girls*, *Gattaca*), she has been missing a big hit since, a problem which should be rectified with the release of Tarantino's forthcoming *Kill Bill*, in which she stars.

94- Leonardo DiCaprio Born in LA in 1974, Leonardo was a TV actor (including, early on, milk commercials) and bit-part player in movies before hitting his stride with *This Boy's Life*, *What's Eating Gilbert Grape?* and *The Basketball Diaries*, all tricky roles sensitively handled. The more palatable *Romeo & Juliet* led to his casting in the unsinkable *Titanic*, for which he was about the only thing not to be nominated for an Oscar. Since then he has been lined up to feature in both *American Psycho* and a *Godfather* prequel, opting instead for Scorsese's *Gangs Of New York*.

93- Kevin Costner An actor with a reputation for never giving up, Kevin Costner was born in California in 1955. After embarking on a job in marketing, Costner's life changed after a chance meeting with screen legend Richard Burton who told him to commit to acting fully if that was what he wanted to do. Costner quit his job and moved to Hollywood. Fame came a time later in Lawrence Kadan's *Silverado*. After the success of his films *Robin Hood*, *The Bodyguard* and the multi-Oscar winner *Dances with Wolves*, Costner was the biggest star on the planet. In recent times, hits have been harder to come by for Kevin Costner, but he continues to fight to make good films, such as the critical success *Thirteen Days*.

92- Amitabh Bachchan In the 1970s, Bollywood was a one man industry and Amitabh Bachchan was its king. The Shahenshah of Bollywood, Bachchan was born in India in 1942, son of the well-known poet Harivansh Rai Bachchan. After graduating from Delhi University, he travelled to Bombay to be an actor, but struggled initially because at 6'3" he was considered too tall by many film-makers. Bachchan did not find fame until his thirteenth film, Zanjeer, in which he played a strict police officer, but after that he would achieve near deity in India. He appeared in Deewaar, Sharaabi and Hum throughout the 70s, 80s and 90s and each time his career was declared over he returned with bigger and better successes. He also presented India's version of Who Wants To Be A Millionaire. Voted superstar of the Millennium in an online poll, over Sir Laurence Olivier and Chaplin, he is so popular that once, when he was injured during the filming of Coolie in 1983, all of India offered prayers at temples and mosques for him to recover.

91- Julie Christie Born in 1941 in Assam, India, Julie Christie grew up on her father's tea plantation. She was educated in England and Europe and planned to become an artist or a linguist before enrolling at the London's Central School of Music and Drama. She made her professional debut on stage with the Frinton Repertory of Essex and appeared in the TV series A For Andromeda. Her third film role, where she played Billy Liar's girlfriend and escape route, catapulted her to more than stardom: she became a 60s icon, winning the Best Actress Oscar for Darling. She spent the 70s in America, largely with Warren Beatty, and on her return to England in the 80s her film choices were primarily determined by her ardent political beliefs.

90- Gerard Depardieu Born in Chateauroux, France, in 1948, Depardieu is one of his country's best-loved cinematic exports, even achieving sex symbol status despite Mother Nature having stacked the odds against him. A juvenile delinquent, the young Gerard was advised to take up acting by a prison psychologist. He first made an impression as a wandering criminal in the hilariously immoral Les Valseuses in 1974, before exploring S&M in Maitresse (1976). Depardieu is still a big star in France and admired all over the world, thanks to excellent turns in Jean de Florette and Cyrano de Bergerac, among others.

89- Gwyneth Paltrow Gwyneth Paltrow was born to award-winning actress Blythe Danner and film director Bruce Paltrow in Los Angeles in 1972. She acted alongside her mother and, after some good reviews, quit her history of art degree. While driving to see Silence of the Lambs with Steven Spielberg he offered her the part of Wendy in Hook, and her film career was launched. Her finest hour to date was her performance as Shakespeare's muse in 1998's multi-award winning Shakespeare In Love and she is best known to some for her weepy acceptance speech on winning the Best Actress Oscar for her part in that film.

88- Juliette Binoche Born in Paris in 1964, Juliette Binoche first attracted attention in Jean-Luc Godard's Hail Mary, a modern reworking of the immaculate conception which was personally condemned by the Pope. Since then she has starred in numerous arthouse hits (The Unbearable Lightness Of Being, Three Colours: Blue, Les Amants du Pont-Neuf), bedded Jeremy Irons in Damage, and won an Oscar for The English Patient. Everyone had expected the best supporting actress gong to go to Lauren Bacall – Binoche, accepting the award, admitted that she hadn't bothered preparing a speech.

87- Winona Ryder Timothy Leary's god-daughter was born Winona Horowitz in 1971 and spent part of her childhood on a hippy commune. She dyed her blonde hair black for Lucas (1986) and never went back, boosting her profile with the superb Heathers in 1989 before suffering premature burn-out the following year – appearing in three films in 12 months, including Mermaids and Edward Scissorhands, meant she had to pull out of The Godfather Part III when she physically could not get out of bed. Unfortunately given her early potential, she has become less in demand as she has got older. When she and Johnny Depp split, he reportedly altered his famous tattoo simply by removing the "ona" from "Winona forever".

86- Grace Kelly The daughter of a model and a wealthy industrialist, and the niece of a Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, Grace Kelly was born in Philadelphia in 1928. After modelling in New York and appearing on Broadway, Kelly debuted in a bit part in Fourteen Hours (1951) before starring opposite Gary Cooper in High Noon. She was a favourite of Alfred Hitchcock, making three films with him – on the set of the last, To Catch A Thief, she met Prince Rainier of Monaco. She married him in 1956 and became – fittingly for someone with her regal, icy beauty – Princess Grace of Monaco, retiring from the screen at the height of her fame. She famously died in a car crash in 1982.

85- Daniel Day-Lewis -->Daniel Day-Lewis was born in London in 1957, son of the English Poet Laureate Cecil Day-Lewis, and studied acting at the Bristol Old Vic School. After his debut film performance in Sunday Bloody Sunday in 1971, Day-Lewis would return to the stage before gaining international recognition for My Beautiful Laundrette in 1985. A true chameleon, Day-Lewis followed it with A Room With A View, in which he played the wonderfully priggish Cecil Vyse. He won a Best Actor Oscar for his realistic portrayal of the quadriplegic Irish artist Christy Brown in the 1989 film My Left Foot, and enjoyed box office success in Michael Mann's Last Of The Mohicans in 1992, before appearing in The Name Of The Father and The Crucible. He will next be seen in Martin Scorsese's epic Gangs Of New York.

84- Doris Day Born in Cincinnati in 1924, Doris Day was one of America's most prolific actresses. She had first wanted to become a dancer, but this dream was ended by an automobile accident. Day turned to singing and was soon signed by Warner Brothers after being talked into screen-testing for them by her agent. She appeared in such films as *It's A Great Feeling*, *Calamity Jane* and *Please Don't Eat The Daisies* before moving onto *The Doris Day Show* in 1968 which was a huge TV hit. Today at 75, Day runs the Doris Day Animal League in California which campaigns for the proper care of household pets.

83- Ralph Fiennes Born in Suffolk in 1962, the son of a photographer and a novelist who encouraged all six of their children to be creative (his siblings now include a director, a producer, a musician, and Joseph Fiennes). Ralph (it is, of course, pronounced "Rafe", and indeed the original spelling, Raph, is sometimes still used) trained at RADA and was an excellent Shakespearean actor on stage before appearing with Juliette Binoche in *Wuthering Heights*. International stardom followed with *Schindler's List*, and since then he has thoughtfully applied his smouldering charisma to various serious, meaty roles, his only blip being *The Avengers* in 1998. Was married to ER's Alex Kingston.

82- Judy Garland Born Frances Gumm in Minnesota, 1922, Garland and her sisters changed their name in an effort to boost their Gumm Sisters Kiddie Act. A year later, aged nine, Frances changed her first name to Judy. When one sister married, Judy, pushed on by her mother whom she later described as "the real-life wicked witch of the west", went solo and was hired by MGM. She sang to a photo of Clark Gable in *Broadway Melody* before achieving immortality in 1939's *The Wizard Of Oz*. The wheels fell off when she developed a weight problem aged 21, which led to an addiction to various pills. She had success with *A Star Is Born* (1954) and *Judgement At Nuremberg* (1961), before dying of an overdose in 1969.

81- Fred Astaire Born Frederick Austerlitz in Omaha, 1899. Fred and his sister Adele started dancing on stage together at the age of seven, and were stars of vaudeville the world over in the 20s. The partnership was broken in 1931 when Adele married – Fred then pursued a stellar Hollywood career. A magical dancer, Astaire insisted on being filmed full-figure, rather than using the camera tricks employed by his rivals – however he did reputedly have to curl his fingers to disguise his scarily big hands. Astaire's dance routines were always imaginative and innovative – he dances on the ceiling of a hotel room in 1951's *Royal Wedding*, predating Lionel Richie by a full 35 years.

80- Dennis Hopper Born in Dodge City, Kansas, in 1936, Dennis Hopper was discovered as a teenager and signed by Warner Bros. His first role was in *Rebel Without a Cause* in 1955. Hopper left Tinseltown in 1958 to work as a photographer in New York, where he studied with method guru Lee Strasberg before, depending on who you believe, he wrote and directed all, most, some or none of *Easy Rider*. David Lynch rescued him from cult obscurity with *Blue Velvet*, in which he gave the world the willies as an oxygen mask-wearing, Tourette's Syndrome-suffering psycho. Hopper is a big collector of modern art.

79- Vivien Leigh Born in India in 1913, Vivien Leigh would achieve stardom in one of Hollywood's most famous ever films. Having appeared on the English stage and fallen in love with Laurence Olivier, filming *Fire Over England* in 1937, she would follow him to America. Leigh happened to meet the Selznick brothers who asked her to audition for the coveted role of Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind* and the rest is part of film history. She would win an Oscar for her role in the film and another in 1951 for her part in *A Streetcar Named Desire* alongside Marlon Brando. She appeared in few other films, before she died aged 53 of tuberculosis.

78- Oliver Reed Legendary drinker and rabble-rouser, Oliver Reed was born in London in 1938. He first caught the public's attention in a 1961 Hammer horror film *Curse Of The Werewolf*, but he refused to be typecast. Reed appeared in many good films during the 1960s, including *These Are The Damned*, the Oscar winning *Oliver!* and Ken Russell's groundbreaking hit *Women In Love*, in which he famously wrestled nude with Alan Bates. Thereafter, he starred in *The Three Musketeers* and *Tommy*, as well as a series of more trashy films like *The Brood*. Reed died in 2000 during the filming of *Gladiator*, having turned in a wonderful, reflective performance as an ageing former star of the amphitheatre.

77- Elizabeth Taylor Born in London, 1932 to American art-dealing parents. At the onset of war they returned to LA and a family friend suggested that Liz take a film test. Signed by Universal Studios and later by MGM, her illustrious acting career, which garnered four Oscar nominations and one award, has been overshadowed by her private life. Married eight times, most famously twice to Richard Burton, she has also undergone surgery over 40 times. Most famous now for her tireless fund-raising and AIDS awareness campaigning.

76- Richard Gere Born in Philadelphia in 1949, Gere was a keen musician as a child, playing various instruments at high school. He won a gymnastics scholarship to the University of Massachusetts, but switched back to music after his studies, playing bluegrass and trying to start a rock band. But he was also an actor, starring in Grease on Broadway. After a brief sojourn in Tibet, he became a sex symbol in American Gigolo, before his talent for looking good in uniform propelled him to stardom in An Officer And A Gentleman (1982). Since then he has shone in the blockbuster, Pretty Woman.

75- Meg Ryan Born in 1961, the daughter of a casting agent (always helpful), Meg Ryan first made an impression in the soap opera As The World Turns, which she appeared on for two years in the early 80s. After showing up in Top Gun (she briefly dated co-star Anthony Edwards before dropping him for Dennis Quaid) she almost literally came to prominence in When Harry Met Sally, and has proven herself to be built for light romantic comedy. However she has also portrayed a drug addict in The Doors and an alcoholic in When A Man Loves A Woman. Her name, uninterestingly, is an anagram of "Germany".

74- Angelina Jolie The daughter of Jon Voight, Angelina Jolie was born in LA in 1975. After meeting Jonny Lee Miller on the set of Hackers, she married him with his name written across her back in her own blood. Such behaviour was not out of character for Jolie, who won an Oscar for Girl, Interrupted, a film set in a mental institution. After divorcing Lee Miller just as he disappeared off the celebrity radar, she appeared in the deeply pointless Gone In 60 Seconds but gave an uplifting performance in Tomb Raider.

73- Hugh Grant Born in London in 1960, Hugh Grant became famous for his floppy hair, stumbling speech and posh girlfriend Liz Hurley. The star of the 1994 "Brit Hit", Four Weddings And A Funeral, playing a bumbling Englishman chasing an American, Grant had a tougher time in Hollywood. After appearing in a series of star vehicles such as Nine Months, Extreme Measures and Mickey Blue Eyes, he achieved real fame in America when he was arrested for lewd conduct in the Divine Brown incident. Grant re-established himself in the 1999 hit, Notting Hill, playing a bumbling Englishman chasing an American, this time alongside Julia Roberts, and has now decided that British success is best after starring in Bridget Jones' Diary and About a Boy.

72- George Clooney Born in Lexington, Kentucky in 1961. His father had his own chat show and his aunt was famed 50s singer Rosemary Clooney. George's first love was baseball, and it was only when his trials for the Cincinnati Reds failed that he turned to acting. He moved to LA in 1982 and appeared in numerous failed TV pilots and films such as Return of the Killer Tomatoes. He finally hit paydirt playing Dr Ross in the TV medical drama ER and quickly became a confirmed leading man. Famed for refusing to marry and for living with his pet pig, Max, he has found success in Three Kings and O Brother, Where Art Thou?.

71- Woody Allen Born Allen Konigsberg in Brooklyn in 1935. After flunking out of the motion picture production course at NYU after one term, Allen spent years as a TV writer and stand-up, only making his film acting debut at the age of 30 with What's New, Pussycat?. Since then he has become one of cinema's most respected auteurs, responsible for many of the funniest films ever made, and for several lesser-known flops. However he may be unaware of this, as he claims never to watch any of his work or listen to critics. In 1995, a UK magazine rather improbably voted him the 89th sexiest film star of all time.

70- Richard Burton Born Richard Walter Jenkins in Pontrhydyfen, South Wales in 1925. Jenkins, the 12th child of a coal miner, won a scholarship to Oxford thanks to his tutor Philip Burton, who also gave him his stage name. Initially Burton split himself between stage and screen, making his film debut in 1948 in The Last Days Of Dolwyn, and blowing John Gielgud off stage a year later in The Lady's Not For Burning. He hit the headlines when he married Cleopatra co-star Elizabeth Taylor in 1963. By the time of his sudden death in 1984 he had been nominated for Oscars seven times.

69- River Phoenix River Phoenix was a hugely talented, seriously cool actor, who proved the phrase "only the good die young". Born in California to religious parents, who encouraged their children into acting, Phoenix was performing in television by the time he was ten. He made his film debut in the kids fantasy adventure Explorers in 1985, before getting rave reviews and box office success in Stand By Me, The Mosquito Coast and Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade. Phoenix also earned an Oscar nomination for his performance as Danny Pope in Running On Empty in 1988. His best work however, came in Gus Van Sant's My Own Private Idaho in 1991. Phoenix was excellent in the film, playing a narcoleptic rent boy searching for the mother who abandoned him. Phoenix died aged 23 of a drug overdose outside Johnny Depp's LA club The Viper Room.

68- Ingrid Bergman Born in Stockholm in 1915, Ingrid Bergman was orphaned at 12 and took up acting to escape her loneliness and shyness. After leaving drama school she quickly became Sweden's leading film star, transferred to Hollywood, and starred in such classics as *Casablanca*, *For Whom The Bell Tolls* and *Gaslight*. Bergman had a strong, wholesome, radiant image – an image which disappeared in 1949 when she dumped her husband and ran off with director Roberto Rossellini. They married and had three children, including Isabella Rossellini, but Bergman's public disapproval and didn't go to see the experimental films they made together. Eventually America forgave her, awarding her Oscars for *Anastasia* and *Murder on the Orient Express*.

67- Eddie Murphy Eddie Murphy was born in Brooklyn in 1961 and by 15 was writing and performing his own stand-up routines in bars. He shot to stardom after winning a part on *Saturday Night Live* and was soon cashing in on his smart-ass persona in film, on comedy records and even on pop albums. His most famous role, that of Axel Foley, had originally been intended for either Sly Stallone or Clint Eastwood. He was called upon by Spike Lee and others to help break down the barriers that were preventing Afro-Americans being hired by studios. After a run of dire movies in the early 90s he bounced back, literally, in *The Nutty Professor* and its sequel.

66- Gene Kelly Born in Pittsburgh in 1912, Gene Kelly was a dance instructor and appeared in the hit Broadway Musical *Pal Joey*. While Fred Astaire was dancing in a top hat and tails, Gene Kelly would don the work clothes of the everyman to match his more physical style. His Hollywood debut was the 1942 musical *For Me And My Girl*, followed by a long series of musicals in which he was often the co-director and choreographer, such as *An American In Paris* and *Singin' In The Rain*. Gene Kelly received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Film Institute in 1985.

65- Cameron Diaz Born in San Diego in 1972 Diaz, a striking natural blonde, travelled the world as a model before suddenly being cast in *The Mask* opposite Jim Carrey. The film was an enormous success and Diaz, who had no previous acting experience, jumped at the opportunity to join the major league. Honing her skills in a clutch of smaller films, she boosted her profile again in *My Best Friend's Wedding* and *A Life Less Ordinary* (both 1997). Since then she has shown an admirable tendency to shun cushy roles in favour of darker, kookier or more obscure pictures, such as *Very Bad Things* and *Being John Malkovich*, for which she received a BAFTA nomination.

64- James Dean James Dean became a screen icon, despite only appearing in three films, after he died in a car crash in September 1955. Born in Indiana in 1931, his first starring role came in *East Of Eden*, but his image was fixed forever in cinema history in *Rebel Without A Cause*. His portrayal of the red-coated rebel Jim Stark would strike a cord with American culture and propel him to superstardom across the world. Dean died shortly after finishing work on *Giant* behind the wheel of his Porsche Spyder. He was the first actor to be nominated posthumously for the Best Actor Oscar for his performance in *East Of Eden*.

63- Clark Gable Adolf Hitler's favourite actor was born in Cadiz, Ohio in 1901. Gable abandoned his oil-driller father at the age of 21 and sought his fortune in the theatre. It took him ten years, during which he married and divorced a drama teacher and was rejected by studios for having big ears, to land a decent Hollywood role, in *The Painted Desert*. But in 1931 he shot 12 films and by the end of the year he was a rising star. Frank Capra's surprise hit *It Happened One Night* won Gable an Oscar, and in 1939 he starred in a little film called *Gone With The Wind*. Never the same after serving in the Second World War, he died in 1960.

62- Robert Downey Jr One of America's finest actors, Robert Downey Jr. has always had to fight personal demons as complex as many of the characters he plays on-screen. Born in 1965, Greenwich Village, in New York, he is the son of famous filmmaker Robert Downey Sr. His first part in a movie came in his father's own film *Pound*, when he was only five years old. Thereafter, he got his big break alongside Molly Ringwald in James Toback's 1987 film *The Pick Up Artist* before playing a drug addict in *Less Than Zero*. Downey Jr. earned an Oscar nomination in 1992, for his portrayal of legendary screen icon Charlie Chaplin in Richard Attenborough's *Chaplin*. Unfortunately, his recent well-publicised battle against drug addiction has meant that, apart from *Natural Born Killers*, we have been denied his undoubted talent onscreen for some time.

61- Robert Redford -->Charles Robert Redford Jr was born in Santa Monica in 1937. After attending the University of Colorado on a baseball scholarship, Redford travelled around Europe trying to make a living as a painter before settling in New York. He studied art at the Brooklyn Pratt Institute and simultaneously underwent acting training at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. After Broadway roles of steadily increasing stature, he debuted in *War Hunt* (1962) and found fame with *Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid* (1969). He won the best director Oscar at the first attempt with *Ordinary People* in 1980 and impressed again with *Quiz Show* (1995). He owns a large portion of Utah.

60- Jude Law Jude Law was born in London in 1972, and began his stage career in 1993, in Pygmalion. Having appeared in productions of The Snow Orchid and Death Of A Salesman, Law played the lead in a short film called The Crane and made his feature film debut in Channel 4's Shopping. Jude Law then played someone who is genetically perfect in Gattaca alongside Ethan Hawke, starred in Clint Eastwood's film Midnight In The Garden Of Eden, Existenz and won an Oscar nomination for his portrayal of a spoiled rich kid in The Talented Mr Ripley. He recently appeared in Steven Spielberg's Kubrick homage A.I. and The Road To Perdition.

59- John Malkovich Born in Illinois in 1953 Malkovich, nicknamed 'mad dog' by his siblings, was more interested in playing the tuba than acting while at high school. After quitting university he travelled to Chicago to meet Gary Sinise and they helped form the Steppenwolf Ensemble. In 1982 he and Sinise experienced their first off-Broadway success with True West and two years later Malkovich made his film debut in The Killing Fields. In the same year he was Oscar nominated for Places in the Heart, but after Dangerous Liaisons his career dipped before getting back on track with In The Line Of Fire in 1994, and Being John Malkovich.

58- Meryl Streep Born in New Jersey in 1949, Streep wanted to be an actress from an early age and after leaving school studied drama at Vassar, Dartmouth and Yale. Broadway beckoned before she gained the first of 12 Oscar nominations (equalling Katherine Hepburn's record) for only her second movie, The Deer Hunter. Any excitement was overshadowed by the death of her fiancé and co-star John Cazale before the film was released. In 1979 she won the Oscar for her performance in Kramer vs. Kramer and although she left the statue in the toilets, it wasn't long before the next came along. Was due to have starred in Thelma And Louise alongside Goldie Hawn before scheduling difficulties meant they both dropped out.

57- Peter Sellers Peter Sellers (1925-80) won his first break by ringing a BBC producer and impersonating two stars. He came to fame with the Goons but, wanting more money, repeatedly threatened to walk out. After bewitching Kubrick in Dr Strangelove, for which he won an Oscar nomination, he continued to play multiple parts in many of his films. Will always be remembered with affection for his unforgettable roles in comedy classics The Party (1968) and The Pink Panther series of movies, without which no Christmas TV schedule would be complete.

56- John Wayne John Wayne (1907-79) was born Marion Morrison to parents with a sense of humour in Winterset, Iowa. He earned his nickname Duke from a pet dog, and went to university on a football scholarship. He entered Hollywood as a prop man and after befriending director John Ford won a series of bit parts before becoming a major star in the 40s. He missed out on serving in WW2 due to an ear infection, but helped form the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals, which took pleasure in outing commies.

55- Kate Winslet Kate Winslet was destined to be an actress. Born in Reading in 1975, her parents were both stage actors and her grandparents ran a theatre company. Winslet's first acting role was in a Sugar Puffs advert aged only 11 and she then worked in television. Her first film role, in Peter Jackson's Heavenly Creatures, won her critical acclaim and Winslet followed it with appearances in Sense And Sensibility, Jude and Hamlet. International fame came in 1997 thanks to Titanic, in which she played the upper class Rose Dewitt alongside Leonardo DiCaprio. Always at home in British film, Winslet recently appeared in Enigma, about code breaking in World War II, and Iris, about the writer Iris Murdoch.

54- Arnold Schwarzenegger Born in Graz, Austria, in 1947. Arnie defied his father, who wanted him to be a footballer, to take up bodybuilding and by 1968 had won the sinister-sounding Junior Mr Europe title. In America he won numerous contests including Mr World, Mr Universe and Mr Olympia before giving up bodybuilding to star in a film about bodybuilding, Pumping Iron (1977). From there he played the lead in two Conan films and followed them with The Terminator (1984). Somehow, Arnie then became the world's biggest movie star, and he proceeded to make a series of hugely successful blockbusters, mixing in light comedies in the 90s. A staunch Republican, it has been suggested that he might one day run for office.

53- Harvey Keitel Born in Brooklyn in 1939, Keitel had a difficult childhood. He stuttered, was thrown out of school for truancy, joined the Marines at 16 and when he quit, sold shoes to earn a crust. He studied The Method with Lee Strasberg and at 26 answered an ad placed by student director Martin Scorsese for the latter's Who's That Knocking At My Door? He went on to appear in Marty's first three films and was famously replaced by Martin Sheen on Coppola's Apocalypse Now. As befits someone of Keitel's intensity and passion, his favourite film is The Sound Of Music. Oscar nominated for his role in Bugsy (1991).

52- Sidney Poitier Possibly no one man had such a powerful effect on Hollywood as Sidney Poitier. The first black leading man, he blazed a trail that opened up the American movie industry to black actors. Born in Miami, but raised in the Bahamas, Poitier grew up in poverty, before coming to America as a teenager, taking a series of bad jobs and joining the army. Having joined the American Negro Theatre and appeared on Broadway in *Anna Lucasta* in 1948, he got his screen break in *No Way Out* in 1950 as a hospital intern who deals with racist punks. Poitier then appeared in several films in the lead role, at a time when America was racially divided, and won an Oscar for his performance in *Lilies Of The Field* in 1963. His defining role came as the police detective Virgil Tibbs in *In The Heat Of The Night* alongside Rod Steiger's redneck cop. Poitier's achievements were recognised at the Oscars in 2002, where Denzel Washington presented him with a Life-Time Achievement Award.

51- Will Smith Born in Philadelphia in 1968, Smith began his entertainment career as part of DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince, transferring his Fresh Prince alter ego in 1990 to a sitcom that seemed to run forever on NBC and BBC2. He became a movie star with *Bad Boys* (1995) and the mega-hits *Independence Day* and *Men In Black*. After achieving fame as an actor he resumed his music career with a popular brand of commercial hip-hop, seemingly in a bid to take over the world (he even tried to make the year 2000 known as the "Willennium"). He flopped by his standards in *Wild Wild West* and *The Legend Of Bagger Vance* before landing the title role in Michael Mann's immense Muhammad Ali biopic.

50- Charlie Chaplin Born in London in 1889 to music hall entertainers who split when he was a year old. After spells in orphanages and boarding schools he joined Fred Karno's troupe at 17, and on a trip to America impressed Keystone boss Mack Sennet. He made his movie debut in 1914 and made 35 films in that year alone. In 1918 he signed the first million-dollar contract with First National to direct eight films. He formed United Artists Studios in 1919 with Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks and DW Griffiths and made his first talkie in 1940 (*The Great Dictator*). He only made four more films but won an honorary Oscar in 1972 and was knighted in 1975. He died in 1977.

49- Bruce Lee Bruce Lee (1940-73) grew up in Hong Kong and appeared in over 20 movies as a child. An accomplished cha cha dancer as well as a kung fu expert, he left for San Francisco after a couple of run-ins with the police. After studying philosophy at university he appeared as Kato on TV's *The Green Hornet*, winning the role because he was the only person who could pronounce the star's name (Britt Reid). He gave karate lessons to stars such as James Coburn and Steve McQueen but died – from swelling of the brain caused either by an allergic reaction to a pain killer or (more controversially) from steroid abuse – before he became a major star.

48- John Cusack Chicago born and bred, Cusack had appeared on radio and in commercials by the time he was 12. He made his movie debut at 17 in the comedy *Class* (1983) and appeared in a succession of teen movies before his first 'adult' role in *The Grifters*. He had been offered a part in *Platoon*, but his mum wouldn't let him go. His anti-Hollywood stance saw him turn down *Indecent Proposal* and *Apollo 13*, forming instead his own production company, New Crime Productions. The intention was to produce more offbeat films such as *Grosse Pointe Blank*, which Cusack starred in, produced and co-wrote. He has since taken the corporate dollar for *Con Air* but has continued along a largely independent path.

47- Jim Carrey Born January 1962 in Ontario, Canada, Carrey was a fearlessly extrovert child who honed his comic skills by doing impersonations of his alcoholic grandparents. His stage debut was as Santa Claus aged eight. After dropping out of school he performed at *The Comedy Store* in L.A. and briefly starred in an unsuccessful sitcom (*The Duck Factory*) before trying his hand at films. Bit parts followed before fellow *Earth Girls Are Easy* star Damon Wayans recommended him for the comedy show *In Living Color*. That led to him being chosen for *Ace Ventura* and after two more big successes in the same year (1994) he trousered the then highest ever salary of 20 million dollars for *The Cable Guy*.

46- John Travolta To lose one movie career might be regarded as a misfortune – to lose two looks like carelessness. John Travolta was born to a drama teacher and tyre salesman in New Jersey, 1954. He made pop albums, and appeared on Broadway and TV before his role in 1976's *Carrie*. He hit the big time as Tony Manero in *Saturday Night Fever*, but after *Grease* turned down *American Gigolo* and *An Officer and a Gentleman*. Richard Gere said thanks, Travolta's career tanked, but when Tarantino persuaded him to take on the role of Vincent Vega in *Pulp Fiction* he was back in the big time. Trousering 20 million a movie, he has tried to jack it all in again with *Battlefield Earth*.

45- Bette Davis Born in Massachusetts in 1908, Davis became "the first lady of the American screen" despite a difficult journey to the top. After failing numerous auditions and screen tests, Davis made her screen debut in 1931's *The Bad Sister*, thereafter starring in a number of Warner Brothers productions of dubious quality. Despite winning an Oscar in 1935 for *Dangerous* (she was nominated a record ten times) Warners kept giving her bum roles, and she tried unsuccessfully to break out of her contract. After winning another Oscar in 1938 for *Jezebel*, she seemed all washed up by 1962's *Whatever Happened To Baby Jane?*. But she triumphed again. She died in 1989 – her preferred epitaph was "She did it the hard way".

44- Michael Caine Maurice Micklewhite was born in 1933 in, of course, London. After serving in the Korean War, he got a job as an assistant stage manager at Horsham Repertory Company, and began playing small roles on stage and television. His film debut was 1956's *A Hill In Korea*, with his name change inspired by the 1954 Bogart movie, *The Caine Mutiny*. Since making his name in *Zulu*, *The Ipcress File* and *Alfie*, he has belied his talent with a slightly haphazard choice of roles (*Beyond The Poseidon Adventure*, anyone?). He is currently as successful as ever, partially as a result of British cinema's late-90s obsession with wily, loveable Cockneys.

43- Jack Lemmon Born John Uhler Lemmon III in Boston, 1925. After becoming involved in amateur dramatics at Harvard, Lemmon endured a slow rise to fame, not featuring in a film until 1954. However, the next year he gave an Oscar-winning performance in *Mister Roberts*. In a long, varied and extremely auspicious career he was best known for comedies, often working with actor Walter Matthau or director Billy Wilder. He agreed to appear in drag in Wilder's *Some Like It Hot* in return for the lead in the director's follow-up, the equally marvellous *The Apartment*. Before his death in June 2001 he made a brilliant comeback as a desperate, washed-up salesman in *Glengarry Glen Ross*.

42- Gene Hackman Eugene Hackman was born in California in 1930 and was a marine for six years. Menial jobs and a journalism degree followed before taking up acting at 30. Along with fellow student Dustin Hoffman he was voted the least likely to succeed by his classmates at the Pasadena Playhouse. After moving to New York he won a role in the Warren Beatty vehicle *Lilith*, and Beatty remembered him when casting for *Bonnie And Clyde*. Hackman was Oscar-nominated for his portrayal of Buck Barrow and, despite being sixth choice for the part, won the best actor Oscar for his role as Popeye Doyle in *The French Connection*. Has always been renowned for putting in good performances even when the films have fared less well.

41- Jackie Chan Jackie Chan was born in Hong Kong in 1954. Born into poverty – his parents almost sold him to the doctor who delivered him because they couldn't pay his medical bills – Chan was apprenticed to the Peking Opera at the age of six. He started out as a stuntman and after the death of Bruce Lee was groomed as a replacement. A Buster Keaton fan, Chan soon realised that he would be better off playing for laughs and was soon Asia's number one film star. Pretty much uninsurable having broken nearly all his bones performing his own stunts, Chan eventually broke through into Hollywood in the late 90s.

40- Gary Oldman Born Leonard Gary Oldham in New Cross, south London, in 1958. The sudden departure of his father, a welder, when Oldman was 7 was the start of an unhappy childhood – he left his brutal boys' school to become a sales clerk, performing at the Greenwich Young People's Theatre in his spare time. He won a scholarship to the Rose Buford College of Speech and Drama and got his film break starring alongside Phil Daniels and Tim Roth in Mike Leigh's *Meantime*. Since then he has played everyone from Sid Vicious to Ludwig van Beethoven, has dated Isabella Rossellini and divorced Uma Thurman. In 1997 he unexpectedly established himself as an accomplished director with the harrowing *Nil By Mouth*, winner of the 1998 BAFTA award for Best Screenplay.

39- Marilyn Monroe -->Norma Jean Mortenson was born in LA in 1926. An illegitimate child, her mother's family had a history of mental imbalance and suicide. With her mother resident in mental institutions for much of her childhood, Norma Jean lived in foster homes where she suffered neglect and even attempted rape. At 16 she married; at 17 she attempted suicide. Surviving to make a living as a model, she was signed by 20th Century Fox in 1946, establishing herself by the mid-50s. Worshipped as a (dyed) blonde sexpot, Monroe never got away from this image despite a keen desire to better herself. Always dogged by ill health and depression, she died of an overdose in 1962, a uniquely alluring but tragic icon, perhaps best remembered for *Some Like It Hot* (1959) and *The Seven Year Itch* (1955).

38- Katharine Hepburn Born in Hatford, Connecticut in 1907, Hepburn was brought up by her surgeon father and suffragette mother to be strong-willed, free-spirited and physically fit. Her Broadway career was a success despite her constant arguments with directors, and her contract with RKO to make movies was signed despite the fact that she had wilfully demanded an extremely high fee. But her first film, *A Bill Of Divorcement*, was a hit and she turned out to be one of Hollywood's best-loved performers, although she refused to play the celebrity game. Having cannily acquired the film rights to *The Philadelphia Story*, she began a fruitful relationship, on and off-screen, with Spencer Tracy. She kept appearing in hit films well into the 90s.

37- Cate Blanchett Born in Melbourne, 1969. Upon graduating from the Australian National Institute of Dramatic Art in 1992, Blanchett joined the Sydney Theatre Company and the next year was awarded both best newcomer and best actress, for two different productions, by the Sydney Theatre Critics Circle. TV roles (including in *Police Rescue*, syndicated in the UK) followed before she was picked up by Bruce Beresford for *Paradise Road*. After playing Lucinda in *Oscar and Lucinda* she hit the A-list with *Elizabeth* in 1998. Since then she has landed a starring role in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, in which she plays Galadriel.

36- Humphrey Bogart Born in New York on 23 January 1899, although many people, including Bogart's fourth wife Lauren Bacall, romantically claim it was 25 December of the same year. The son of a surgeon and a magazine illustrator, Bogart became one of cinema's greatest ever stars despite a slight physical deformity, acquired in an accident while serving in the US Navy, which gave him a lisp and an unconventional, rigid delivery. He initially specialised in playing tough guys, but had the ability to reveal their hidden insecurities, and his roles grew more diverse as his career progressed. He won the Best Actor Academy Award for *The African Queen*. He died in 1957, although thanks to computer trickery he appeared on TV in 1988, in the horror series *Tales From The Crypt*.

35- Bruce Willis Bruce Willis, master of the smirk, was born in Germany in 1955. His father was serving on a US military base, but the family soon resettled in New Jersey. Willis found that acting cured his stutter and after a brief stint at college left for New York. He caught the eye of a Miami Vice casting director while appearing in an off-Broadway play – Willis then auditioned along with 3,000 others for *Moonlighting* and despite his and Cybill Shepherd's mutual hatred, the success of the show led to his action packed film career. Despite being a staunch Republican, he refused to support Bob Dole after he attacked Willis' then wife Demi Moore for her film *Striptease*.

34- Christopher Walken Christopher Walken was born in Queens, New York in 1943 and was acting and dancing from an early age. He met Jerry Lewis while performing on TV aged 10, and dropped out of university to appear in an off-Broadway musical in 1963. He made his film debut in the little-seen mental institution flick *Me And My Brother*, which was co-written by beat poet Allen Ginsberg. One of Hollywood's most prolific actors, he has turned in mesmerising performances in cult classic s including *The Deer Hunter* (1978), *King Of New York* (1990) and *True Romance* (1993).

33- Nicolas Cage Born in California in 1964, the nephew of legendary film director Francis Ford Coppola, Nic Cage changed his name early in his career in order to gain a reputation in his own right. After dropping out of high school at 17, he got a part in Coppola's 1983 film *Rumble Fish*, before appearing as a punk in *Valley Girl* which launched his career. Cage excels at playing unhinged characters, which can be seen in films like *Raising Arizona*, *Birdy*, *Face Off*, *Wild At Heart* and *Con Air*. Having had critical recognition for his performance in *Leaving Las Vegas*, for which he won an Oscar, Cage has begun to play more mainstream roles in films like *Captain Correlis Mandoline*, *Gone in 60 Seconds* and *Windtalkers*.

32- Tom Cruise Thomas Cruise Mapother IV was born in 1962 in Syracuse, New York. A troubled childhood led to a year in a Franciscan monastery at the age of 14, and he took up acting after an injury put paid to his high school wrestling ambitions. Wrestling and the priesthood's loss proved to be acting's gain – at 18 Cruise landed his first movie role in *Endless Love*. By 1983 he was a lead actor and after famously saucing Rebecca de Mornay (on the train, on the stairs and on his dad's leather chair) in classic 80s hit *Risky Business*, he hit the superstar league as Lieutenant Pete 'Maverick' Mitchell in *Top Gun*. Oscar nominations followed as he took on more mature roles. In 1990 he took up scientology, and says it cured his dyslexia. To date, he's been nominated for three Academy Awards.

31- Christopher Lee Christopher Lee was born in Belgravia, London in 1922. His father was a colonel and his mother a Countess and noted Edwardian beauty. A scholarship took Lee to Eton before he served in the RAF throughout WWII. Decorated for distinguished service he began acting in 1947 and, though he will forever be known primarily for his Hammer movies, Lee has appeared in more films than any other actor. Having worked all over the world he speaks seven languages and as a classically trained singer has also appeared in many operas. He was the first choice of his cousin, Ian Fleming, to play Dr. No.

30- Marlon Brando Born in Nebraska in 1924 Brando, a rebellious youth, was taught by Stella Adler on his arrival in New York in 1943. Imbued with *The Method*, he impressed on Broadway and won the first of his five Oscar nominations in the 50s with only his second film, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951). He won for *On the Waterfront* in 1954, but the 60s saw him choose less well. Critical acclaim returned with his Oscar-winning portrayal of Don Vito Corleone, and he was nominated the following year for *Last Tango In Paris*.

29- Julia Roberts Born in Georgia in 1967, Roberts wanted to be a vet until she graduated from high school. She won her first film role thanks to her brother, Eric, in *Blood Red* (made in 1986, although it wasn't released until after *Mystic Pizza* in 1988) and was Oscar-nominated for *Steel Magnolias*. Her break came with *Pretty Woman* – it was originally a bleak drama, but Disney bought the rights and it became *My Fair Hooker*. A number of stinkers followed (*Hook*, *Dying Young*, *Mary Reilly*) and after passing up on Shakespeare in *Love* she won the best actress Oscar for *Erin Brockovich*. We may have had a different view of her had she taken the lead in *Basic Instinct*.

28- Denzel Washington Born in 1954 in Mount Vernon, New York, Washington spent several years as a Shakespearean actor on stage before making his film debut in 1981's *Carbon Copy*. He impressed on TV in *St Elsewhere* before boosting his profile further with *A Soldier's Story*. Since then Washington, who won an Oscar for 1989's glory, has often played real people with deadly seriousness and considerable presence, among them Steve Biko, Malcolm X and the boxer Rubin Carter. Indeed, he is often affectionately mocked in black culture as being the actor to take on any story of a bona fide black hero. In 1995 he made Quentin Tarantino squirm by confronting him about the racial slurs in the *Crimson Tide*'s script. Won Best Actor Oscar in 2002 for his role in *Training Day*.

27- Morgan Freeman Born in Memphis in 1937, Freeman initially pursued a military career, joining the US Air Force at 18. He left after four years and worked in the theatre before his TV break as, variously, Count Dracula and the Mad Scientist on children's show *The Electric Company*. The undemanding work literally drove him to drink, and Freeman nearly abandoned acting in the early 80s until rescued by Paul Newman for *Harry and Son*. Described by Rachel Weisz as the sexiest man she'd ever met, Freeman was Nelson Mandela's choice for the movie based on the statesman's autobiography *Long Walk To Freedom*. Nominated for an Oscar for his outstanding performance as Red in *The Shawshank Redemption*.

26- Russell Crowe Born in New Zealand and brought up in Australia by movie set caterers, Crowe was a child TV star at an early age. He was more interested in music, however, and became *Rus Le Roc* at 16, playing in his band, *30 Odd Foot of Grunts*, who are still performing. He appeared briefly on *Neighbours* in 1985 but it was his role as a neo-nazi in *Romper Stomper* that proved pivotal in his career. Critically well received, it caught the eye of Sharon Stone who insisted he be cast in *The Quick and the Dead*. Larger roles followed and after his Oscar-nominated turn in *The Insider* he won with *Gladiator*, while avoiding a kidnapping plot against him.

25- Susan Sarandon Born in New York in 1946, Sarandon was PC from an early age and was arrested while still at high school for protesting against Vietnam. After university she was a model before her husband, Chris Sarandon, took her along to one of his auditions. He lost out but she won a role in 1970's *Joe*. TV, stage and movie work followed, notably *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. In 1979 she chucked Sarandon for Louis Malle and was Oscar-nominated for her role as a croupier in his 1980 film *Atlantic City*. She met Tim Robbins on the set of *Bull Durham* and was Oscar-nominated four times in the 90s, winning for *Dead Man Walking* in 1995, opposite ex-squeeze Sean Penn.

24- Dustin Hoffman Dustin Hoffman was born in LA in 1937 to a furniture salesman and amateur actress, but not before asking what his motivation was for leaving the womb. His first acting role was *Tiny Tim* at junior school and he joined the Pasadena Playhouse after college. He made his Broadway debut in 1961 and continued to act on the stage until he landed a small part in *The Tiger Makes Out* in 1967. His big break came when he persuaded Mike Nichols to back him over Robert Redford for the role of Benjamin Braddock in *The Graduate*. Oscar-nominated, as he was for his next performance as *Ratso Rizzo* in *Midnight Cowboy*, Hoffman has become synonymous with method and attention to detail.

23- Jodie Foster Jodie Foster was born in L.A in 1962 and was appearing in commercials by the age of three. She had already appeared in numerous films before her role as *Iris* in *Taxi Driver* won her an Oscar nomination. She graduated from Yale despite having to deal with John Hinkley's intention to impress her by assassinating *Ronnie Reagan* in 1981. She was the first actress to win two Oscars before she was 30 (helped by Michelle Pfeiffer turning down *Silence of the Lambs*) and directed her first film, *Little Man Tate*, in 1991. She has set up her own production company, *Egg Pictures*, and is widely rumoured to wear sensible shoes.

22- Johnny Depp Johnny Depp was born in Kentucky in 1963 and after dropping out of school his band, *The Kids*, supported *Iggy Pop*. After moving to LA his then wife, make-up artist *Lori Allison*, introduced him to *Nicolas Cage*. Cage, liking the cut of his jib, helped Depp debut in *Nightmare on Elm Street*. After acting classes he won a small role in *Platoon* before appearing in the TV show *21 Jump Street* for three years. He parodied himself in his first film role after it, *Cry Baby*, and has gone on to eschew roles in blockbusters like *Speed* for left-field films such as *Edward Scissorhands*, *Ed Wood* and *Donnie Brasco*.

21- Nicole Kidman Born in Honolulu in 1967 Kidman's first love was ballet but she turned to acting and received praise as a kid from the then film student *Jane Campion*. Dropping out of school she made her first film at 16 (*Bush Christmas*) before a series of critically acclaimed performances led to her Hollywood debut in *Dead Calm* (1989). After a run of forgettable films where she was a foil to the leading man, she won praise for her first starring role proper in *To Die For*. Before appearing alongside soon-to-be ex-hubby *Tom Cruise* in *Eyes Wide Shut*, she had male critics covering their laps with their programmes when she appeared nude on stage in the *Blue Room* in 1998. Since then she has starred in *Moulin Rouge*.

20- Sigourney Weaver Susan Weaver (the Sigourney came from *The Great Gatsby*) was born in New York in 1949. Daughter to an actress and the president of NBC, she enjoyed a privileged Upper East Side childhood and attained degrees from Stanford and Yale. Frustrated at Yale, where Meryl Streep walked off with all the best roles, she worked off Broadway before making her movie debut with a blink-and-you'll-miss-her part in *Annie Hall*. Her major break came with her role as Ripley in *Alien*, though she needed persuading not to turn it down. Oscar-nominated for the sequel, she has successfully mixed comedy and action with more demanding roles, notably as Janey Carver in *The Ice Storm*.

19- Robin Williams A comic genius who has firmly established himself as one of Hollywood's true stars, Robin Williams was born in Chicago in 1952. A Juillard acting student, Williams found early fame for his wild and exciting comic routines and for his part as the alien in the TV series *Mork And Mindy*. His big screen break came in Robert Altman's *Popeye* in 1980, leading to roles in films like *The World According To Garp*, and *Moscow On The Hudson*. Williams is at home with almost any kind of material, from comic to deadly serious, as can be seen in his roles in *Good Morning Vietnam*, *Dead Poets Society*, *Aladdin* and *Good Will Hunting*.

18- Clint Eastwood Born in San Francisco in 1930, Clint served in the army before winning a contract with Universal Studios in 1954. He played bit parts in films such as *Tarantula* and appeared in *Rawhide* after being spotted in the CBS car park. During filming breaks he starred in the *Man With No Name* trilogy, which topped box office charts on their release in 1964-66. A series of enigmatic hard man roles followed, with loose cannon cop 'Dirty' Harry Callahan the most successful. He made his directing debut with 1971's *Play Misty For Me* and has appeared in studio fodder to allow himself the freedom to make his own movies, notably the Oscar-winning *Unforgiven*.

17- Mel Gibson Mel Gibson, the sixth child of 11, was born in New York in 1956. His father worked on the railways but the threat of the Vietnam draft persuaded the family to move to Sydney. Raised in a strong Catholic family (Gibson's middle name is Columcille, which means "dove of the church"), Gibson initially wanted to be a journalist, but his sister submitted an application in his name to the National Institute of Dramatic Arts. After graduation he featured in a couple of small films before a bar-room brawl sent him on his way to stardom. With his face covered in stitches and bruises he auditioned for the post-apocalyptic action film *Mad Max* and walked off with the role. Since then he has won Best Picture and Director for his self financed epic *Braveheart*.

16- Paul Newman Paul Newman was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1925 and after being discharged from the navy at the end of the war studied at Yale Drama School and the New York Actors Studio. He made his movie debut in 1954's *The Silver Chalice* and thought his performance so bad, he took out an advert to apologise. He won his first Oscar nomination opposite Elizabeth Taylor in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* in 1958 and was nominated four times in the 60s, the last for his directing debut *Rachel, Rachel* (1968). Turkeys such as *When Time Ran Out* were rare and he improved on his Oscar nomination for *The Hustler* by winning the award for the sequel, *The Color Of Money*, in 1986.

15- Brad Pitt Born in 1963 in Shawnee, Oklahoma but raised in Missouri, Brad Pitt studied journalism at the University of Missouri and acting with Roy London. He appeared in 80s super soap *Dallas* before breaking into the movies with *Thelma And Louise*, in a role for which he was the third choice. Blessed, sickeningly, with intelligence as well as looks, he has wisely stayed away from star fodder, featuring instead in *Se7en* (1995) and *Fight Club* (1999). To top it all off, he's happily hitched to everyone's favourite girl next door, *Friends* star Jennifer Aniston.

14- Steve McQueen Born Terrence Steven McQueen in 1930 in Slater, Missouri. By 1970 McQueen was arguably the most popular film actor in the world, but his off-screen life was a mess. His stormy marriage to actress Neile Adams ended on the set of *Le Mans* when he told her that women were "coming from all over the world" to sleep with him. His second wife, Ali McGraw, who also divorced him, said he was semi-literate and was unable to spell the word "blue". At the height of his fame he was top of Charles Manson's death list, was filmed by the FBI attending an orgy, and was taught martial arts by Bruce Lee. He died in 1980 while undergoing surgery for cancer. His most memorable performance for many remains that of *The Great Escape* (1963).

13- Audrey Hepburn Born in Belgium in 1929. The daughter of an English banker and a Dutch baroness, Hepburn attended a private girls school in London when her parents divorced. She returned there after the War on a ballet scholarship, and began a modelling career before taking acting classes. After an early showing in *The Lavender Hill Mob* she took the lead role in *Gigi* on Broadway (though not in the cinema adaptation) and from there starred in *Roman Holiday* (1953). She brought her fragile charm to a string of hits over the next decade and a half, earning a fifth nomination for *Wait Until Dark* in 1967. After that she virtually gave up acting, spending most of her time on charity work.

12- James Stewart Born in 1908 in Indiana, Jimmy Stewart's acting debut was in a boy scout play. He then appeared on stage with a local magician – Jimmy's job was to fill any awkward pauses by playing the accordion. At Princeton University he acted in productions put on by the Triangle Club and, with Princeton being all-male at the time, was head of the cheerleading squad. His first film role was in *The Murder Man* in 1935, and he first hooked up with Frank Capra in 1938 (*You Can't Take It With You*). After serving with honours in WWII he remained in the Air Force Reserve until 1968 and, as a brigadier general, was America's highest-ranked entertainer.

11- Samuel L Jackson Samuel L Jackson was born in Washington, DC in 1948. While studying as an architecture student he auditioned for a musical due to his speech therapist thinking it might help his stutter. Jackson soon switched to drama and won his first professional role in a burger advert. He left for New York in 1976, working for the Negro Ensemble Company and winning the occasional bit part in movies. His friendship with Spike Lee, whom he had impressed back in 1981, paid off when he won critical acclaim for his role as a crack addict in *Jungle Fever* (1991). He popped up in films as diverse as *Jurassic Park* and *Menace II Society* and entered the big league after *Pulp Fiction*.

10- Cary Grant Archibald Leach was born in poverty in Bristol, 1904. His story is one of the most extraordinary in all cinema, and he was one of its greatest stars. Leach ran away from home aged 13 (his mother had departed four years before to a mental institution) to join a travelling acrobatic troupe, ending up in New York. He sang in England and on Broadway before making it to Hollywood. He starred suavely in countless classics, but his real personality always remained shrouded in mystery. His greatest role was that of Cary Grant, who was a fiction, as revealed in the self-produced, veiled autobiography of *None But The Lonely Heart*, where Grant played a poor, struggling man in an English slum.

9- Ewan McGregor Ewan Gordon McGregor was born in 1971 in Perthshire, Scotland. Inspired to act by his afghan-sporting Uncle Denis (Lawson, who played Wedge in the Star Wars films), Ewan joined the Perth Repertory Theatre. A degree course at London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama followed, and he was the star of Dennis Potter's TV musical *Lipstick On Your Collar*. He hit the big time in *Trainspotting* before taking the role of a young Obi-Wan Kenobi, and revealing a rather affecting, if untutored, singing voice in *Moulin Rouge*. He runs Natural Nylon, a production company, with his friends Jude Law, Sadie Frost, Jonny Lee Miller and Sean Pertwee.

8- Sean Connery Born in Edinburgh in 1930 to a truck driver and a cleaner. He left school at 15 and after a stint in the navy worked as a lifeguard, coffin polisher and milkman while also representing Scotland in 1950's *Mr. Universe*. After winning a part in the chorus of *South Pacific*, acting replaced his footballing ambitions. TV work and bit parts followed, though he had the male lead in *Darby O'Gill and the Little People*. Fame hit after he pulled on the toupee and beat off Cary Grant and David Niven to play James Bond. Still a leading man and box office hit, he won an Oscar for *The Untouchables* in 1987. He was knighted in 1999.

7- Anthony Hopkins Born in Port Talbot, South Wales, in 1937, Hopkins joined a local drama club at 17 before attending the Welsh College of Music and Drama. A RADA scholarship led to an audition in front of Olivier for a position at the National Theatre, which he won. His first major film role was that of Richard the Lionheart in 1968's *The Lion In Winter*, but the 70s and 80s provided mostly TV work. He hit the big time when Gene Hackman turned down the role of Hannibal Lecter in *Silence of the Lambs*, and his Oscar-winning performance led to three more nominations in six years.

6- Jack Nicholson Born in New Jersey, 1937, Nicholson was abandoned by his father and was raised believing that his grandmother was his mother and his mother his older sister. At 17 he worked as an office boy at MGM and after a few TV roles made his film debut in 1958 with *Cry Baby Killer*. He worked for Roger Corman through the 60s before his big break came when Rip Torn pulled out of *Easy Rider*. An Oscar nomination and a series of offbeat, intense roles followed, culminating in his Oscar-winning performance as Randle McMurphy in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* in 1975. More recently he notched up another Oscar for his role in *As Good As It Gets* (1997).

5- Harrison Ford If you hear a spot of midnight banging at Harrison Ford's ranch, the chances are that it is actually carpentry. The most famous carpenter since Joseph, Harrison Ford was born in Chicago in 1942. He signed with Columbia and then Universal, playing bit parts in TV series such as *Ironside*, before taking a disheartened break to go back to woodwork. On his return to Hollywood he starred in *American Graffiti* before Han Solo propelled him into space. Capitalising on Tom Selleck's contractual unavailability, he consolidated his A-list status with *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, and then won an Oscar nomination for *Witness*.

4- Kevin Spacey Kevin Spacey was born in 1959 in New Jersey. A naughty child – he set his sister's tree house on fire and was sent to military academy only to be thrown out of that – he joined the drama course at Julliard on the advice of former classmate Val Kilmer. Quitting after two years to perform in the New York Shakespeare Festival, he was on Broadway within a year and by 1986 had made his movie debut playing a thief in Heartburn. After the indignity of See No Evil, Hear no Evil he had to wait six years for his Oscar-winning turn as Verbal Kint in The Usual Suspects, following this soon after with a second gong for his take on middle class America gone wrong in American Beauty (1999).

3- Tom Hanks Tom Hanks was born in Concord, California, July 1956. His parents split when he was five, and Hanks experienced a nomadic youth as his father looked for work. After dropping out of university his movie debut came in the 1980 slasher pic He Knows You're Alone. After two years in cross-dressing sitcom Bosom Buddies, he was remembered by Ron Howard from his bit part in Happy Days and invited to read for Splash. After his Oscar-nominated turn in Big, it was not until 1993 with Sleepless In Seattle and Philadelphia that he could be counted as a major player. An Oscar regular ever since, he did give the rest a chance by turning down the lead in American Beauty.

2- Robert De Niro Born in New York in 1943 to painters (as in artists, not decorators), De Niro caught the acting bug at 10 while playing the cowardly lion in The Wizard of Oz. Nicknamed Bobby Milk because of his complexion, he was so quiet as a young man, people thought he was autistic. He studied The Method with Lee Strasberg (who also taught Pacino) and worked off-Broadway before appearing in Brian De Palma's early films. Long-term collaborator and friend of Martin Scorsese, De Niro famously piled on 50lbs (over 3 stone) to play Jake "Raging Bull" LaMotta, for which he won an Oscar.

1- Al Pacino Alfredo Pacino was born on 25 April 1940 in New York and brought up by his grandparents near the Bronx Zoo. Not allowed out of the house until he was seven, he was inspired at 14 by a performance of Chekhov's The Seagull. He took acting classes after leaving school and at 26 went to the Actors Studio to study with Lee Strasberg. Within three years he'd made his movie debut and on the strength of his second feature, Coppola offered him the role of Michael Corleone in The Godfather. An Oscar nomination and movie stardom followed despite turning down Apocalypse Now, Kramer Vs. Kramer and the role of Han Solo.

(Document created by Adam).