

Carny

US : 1980 : dir. Robert Kaylor : Lorimar : 107 min
 prod: Robbie Robertson : scr: Robbie Robertson : dir.ph.: Harry Stradling
[Jodie Foster](#)
 Gary Busey; Robbie Robertson; Meg Foster; Bert Remsen; Kenneth McMillan; John Lehne;
 Elisha Cook; Craig Wasson

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Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001 review:

"Striking, atmospheric film about a symbiotic pair of carnival hustlers and the teenage runaway who joins them on the road. Candid, intimate (and somewhat voyeuristic) look at seamy midway life, hurt by an unsatisfying and abrupt conclusion. Rock star Robertson also produced and co-wrote the film. Wonderful score by Alex North. *** "

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

"An overwrought buddy-buddy movie with little to recommend it beyond its setting, which is a carnival, somewhat fearsomely portrayed. Gary Busey is the "bozo", and Robbie Robertson a troubleshooter; Jodie Foster is the girl who comes between them, with Kenneth McMillan, Elisha Cook and Meg Foster as other carny types, plus Craig Wasson and a Grand Guignol climax. * "

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89 review:

"The friendship of two men is disrupted when a runaway waif [*sic*] seeks shelter in their carnival. While it's adept at conjuring up the seamy sideshow atmosphere, it's less successful in satisfactorily putting across the love triangle. *** "

Rating the Movies (1990) review:

"A brassy, semi-documentary look at carnival life, with perceptive performances by Foster, Busey and Robertson. Director Robert Kaylor captures the grimy atmosphere of carny life. Unfortunately a feeble script fritters away the talents of the energetic cast. Busey is fascinating as a dunk-tank bozo, and Foster is good in her role as a bored teenager who joins the show. But the film bogs down in an unfocused romantic triangle and finally ends on an unsatisfying note. Robertson, of the rock group "The Band", also produced and co-wrote the film. The supporting cast includes Kenneth McMillan, John Lehne, Elisha Cook Jr and Bert Remson. Rated "R". **1/2 "

The Time Out Film Guide review:

"A long-cherished project of writer-director Kaylor (hitherto best remembered for "ROLLER DERBY"), packaged on the strength of former Band-leader Robertson's enthusiastic involvement, this caused much unease among its backers with its dark tone and manic moodiness. Sex amid the greasepaint and behind-the-canvas graft of a travelling carnival, it features Robertson as the resident con-artist and all-purpose fixer, Busey as the crazed bozo, goading the punters into taking pot-shots at his perch above a water tank, and Jodie Foster as the runaway who threatens to split their strange bond. The road movie/buddy movie situations and emotions gain an intriguing perverse edge from the setting, with its genuine freaks and sideshow illusionism, as well as from Alex North's wonderfully unsettling score, and Harry Stradling's dark cinematography. Better on electric, eccentric ambience than for its final

rush of plotting, but such risk-taking movies are a welcome rarity."

Video Movie Guide 1993 review:

"This film takes us behind the bright lights into the netherworld of the "carnies", people who spend their lives cheating, lying and stealing from others yet consider themselves superior to their victims. Gary Busey, Jodie Foster, Robbie Robertson are all outstanding. The accent in "CARNY" is on realism with disenchanted losers who live only from day to day. Rated "R".
**** "

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "TV Times

Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

Carnival is simply the American word for a touring funfair, with tired remnants of the old nineteenth century freakshow – bearded ladies, monkey women, "fattest man in the world" – scraping what they can between the rigged win-a-prize stalls and the neon-draped mechanical rides. If the world won't come to Coney Island, Coney Island must go on tour. The travelling circus and the travelling fair were once keen rivals on the road. Now both have been rendered obsolete by the mega-budget "Theme Park", and of course by Las Vegas itself – as the public grew more mobile and more affluent, so they were able and willing to travel far into the desert to throw their money away.

Jodie Foster's character puts the carnality in the carny – a shagtail of uncertain age (she claims to be 18, but only Busey believes her, and that's partly wishful thinking)

Circus/fairs, Road films

See also "BADKONAK-E SEFID" and "BASHU" - both recent Iranian films, and subject index under **ARAB WORLD / MIDDLE EAST**.