

CLASSIC DRIVER

Is Sir Michael Caine the coolest man on the planet?

Lead

Whether playing a womaniser, a crook, a secret agent or Batman's butler, he lent them the same British mix of irony and seriousness. In his 80th year, Michael Caine is – effortlessly – what so many aspire to be: simply, inimitably cool.

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That he is called 'Caine' at all was actually down to pure chance. Maurice Micklewhite, the young man from south London, had an awkward name, and at first he used the stage name Michael Scott. But when he was told there was already an actor by that name, he happened to see a movie poster for 'The Caine Mutiny' – and Michael Caine was born. (Although it was only after he was knighted in 2000 that he officially changed his name.)



In his large, horn-rimmed, urban-nerd glasses, Sir Michael has always been the perfect antidote to the equally British James Bond: a blond, lanky anti-hero with a wry, even gloomy attitude to life, whether it's as the seducer 'Alfie' – a melancholy Don Juan in Swinging Sixties London – or his most famous role, as Charlie Croker in the original version of 'The Italian Job'.



Appearing in well over 100 films, and nominated for an Oscar in every decade from the 1960s to the 2000s, Caine has twice received the golden statuette. In recent years, he's reached a wider-than-ever cinema audience in 'Austin Powers' and as Batman's butler, Alfred Pennyworth. With such a cool, serene factotum at Batman's side, the forces of evil stood no chance. This is the man who said he'd retire when he reached 80. Yet, in his 80th year, Sir Michael looks set to carry on working for at least another decade.

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