

IN THE MOVIES

# CineCats

A meow-mix of the silver screen's most iconic cats—some who wowed us with their charisma and others who scared us with their villainous ways. **BY JASON TEICH**



## THE G.O.A.T.

Only one cat can be the greatest, and we all know he loves lasagna. The legendary gluttonous ginger tabby cat owned by handsome everyman John Arbuckle has dominated comics and TV programs since 1978, but he saw his big-screen debut in **Garfield: The Movie (2004)**. During the film, Garfield learns tough lessons about friendship after first rejecting and then rescuing his longtime frenemy, Odie the dog. Garfield made his return in **Garfield: A Tale of Two Kitties (2006)**, which finds Garfield and Odie encountering Garfield's doppelgänger in London.

## SURVIVOR

Classic creature feature **Alien (1979)** gave us one of the most Darwinian monsters in film history: Jonesy the cat. A ginger American Shorthair tomcat, Jonesy confounds the narrative that Ellen Ripley was the lone survivor of the alien attack aboard commercial spaceship *Nostromo*. When Jonesy wasn't luring a crewman to be the alien's inaugural meal, he was hopping aboard an escape shuttle and dozing in stasis while letting Ripley risk her life against a berserk xenomorph. And Jonesy was savvy enough to stay behind when Ripley returned to LV-426 in **Aliens (1986)**, foolishly risking her life for rando colonists and personal redemption, while Jonesy was home hoovering kibble. Ripley termed him a "stupid cat," but there's one true survivor of the *Alien* franchise, and his name is Jonesy.



## MAGIC KINGDOM

Walt Disney Studios has birthed the cinema's most lionized animated characters, and many of them meow. Some were villains: the disappearing, mischievous Cheshire Cat steers Alice into the Queen of Hearts' clutches in **Alice in Wonderland (1951)**; troublemaking Siamese cats Si and Am represent problematic Asian stereotypes in **Lady and the Tramp (1955)**; and the aptly named house cat Lucifer repeatedly tries to devour Cinderella's mouse friends in **Cinderella (1950)**. In **Pinocchio (1940)**, Geppetto's faithful tuxedo cat, Figaro, shows that Disney cats can have heart, too. Figaro overcomes his jealousy and immaturity to accompany Geppetto on a daring sea voyage to save Pinocchio. Cats can even be family: Just ask Duchess, Toulouse, Marie, Berlioz, Thomas O'Malley and Scat Cat—the close-knit cat clan in **The Aristocats (1970)**.



## CARTEL KITTY

Not every cat is worth murdering for, but brown tabby Keanu is one kill-worthy kitten. In **Keanu (2016)**, Everymen Rell and Clarence, played by longtime comedy duo Jordan Peele and Keegan-Michael Key, risk their lives, gun down assassins, and start a cartel gunfight in order to retrieve the irrepressibly adorable Keanu. Of special note: Brown tabbies beat out tuxedo kittens in a cuteness competition, winning the right to portray Keanu on screen.



## HOMEWARD BOUND

Loyal cats always find their way home. When Siamese cat Tao is separated from his family in **The Incredible Journey (1963)**, he teams up with two canine companions to make his way home across hundreds of miles of Canadian countryside. Three decades later, in the remake, **Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey (1993)**, Sally Field's Himalayan, Sassy, follows in Tao's footsteps, joining with two dogs to cross the Sierra Nevada and reach home.



## DEAD IS BETTER

Winston Churchill, aka Stephen King's notorious undead cat, Church, made his big-screen debut in **Pet Sematary (1989)**. The British Blue Shorthair, rising from the dead in mutant form to terrorize the Creed family. Three decades later, Church has been resurrected for the 2019 reboot, and he's so badass that it took five cats, all rescues, to play him on screen. Now, a new generation of movie fans will learn to fear the kitty. He has risen.



Sigourney Weaver holds one of the four cats who played the double-crossing Jonesy in *Alien*.





**COP CAT**

Only one cat solves kidnapping cases, and he's done it twice. In *That Darn Cat!* (1965), Siamese tomcat DC tracks down a hostage, evades the FBI and joins with Hayley Mills to foil a bank heist and save the day. And 32 years later, DC came back for the remake *That Darn Cat!* (1997) alongside Christina Ricci. His breed was changed, but his name and his game stayed the same. This time, DC set his sights even higher, rescuing a kidnapped presidential employee. Cats have long been associated with burglary, but it's time the cat cops got their due.



**CAT CLASSIC**

In the most iconic cat scene in film history, Audrey Hepburn's signature character, Holly Golightly, tosses her kitty, named Cat, out of a cab and into the rain during the climax of *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961). Holly chases Cat and finds it being cuddled by her best friend and love interest, Paul. The three embrace and take shelter from the rain. Cat was played by at least two cats, a classic yellow tabby and the legendary marmalade tabby Orangey. Orangey is the only cat in film history to win two PATSY Awards—the annual award given out to best animal film actor—one for *Breakfast* and one for *Rhubarb* (1951), about a cat who owns a baseball team.

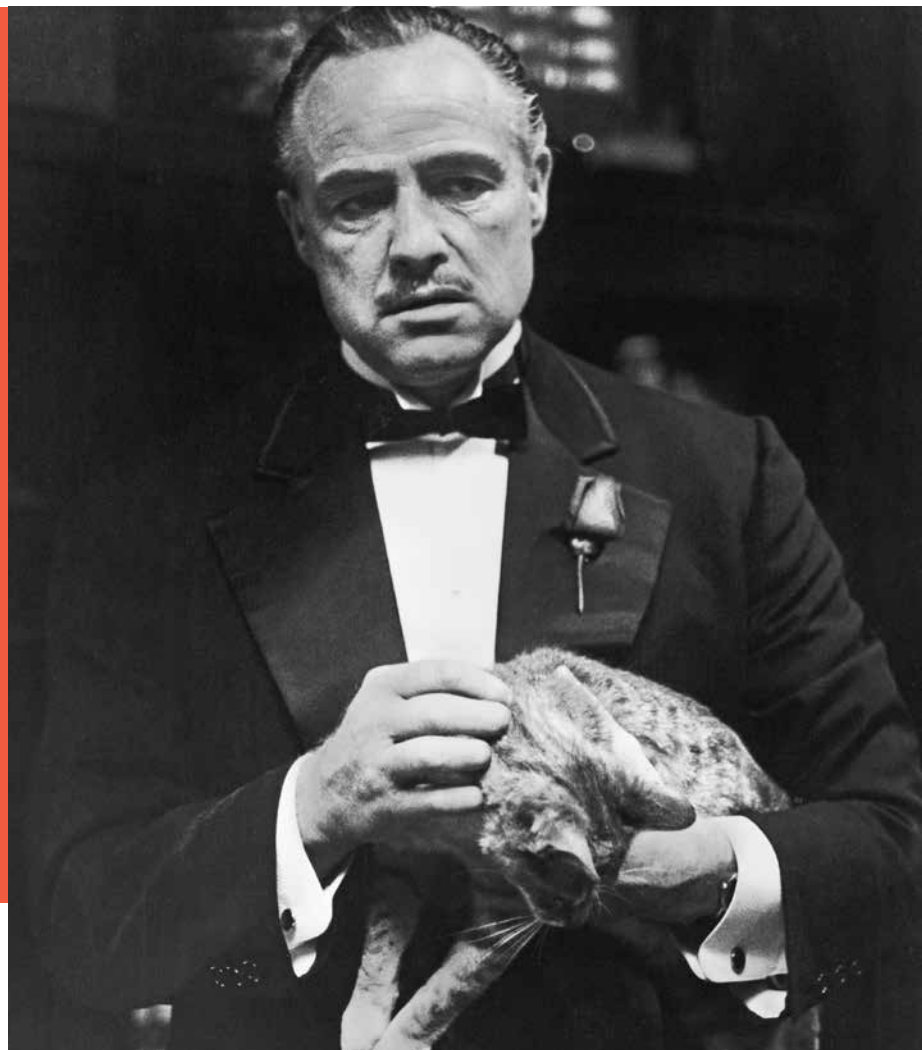


**FAMILIAR FACES**

Every good witch needs an animal sidekick, called a “familiar,” for backup and companionship, and nothing makes a better familiar than a kitten-y furball. In Alfonso Cuarón's *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (2004), Hermione Granger's Red Persian, Crookshanks, played by cat stars Pumpkin and Crackjack, warns Hermione, Harry and Ron of encroaching Dementors and exposes Ron's pet rat Scabbers as Pettigrew, a traitorous murderer. In Hayao Miyazaki's *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989), 13-year-old witch trainee Kiki relies on her talking black cat, Jiji, for guidance and support. Jiji pretends to be a stuffed animal to save Kiki's fledgling delivery service and eventually finds romance with an appealing white kitty. But cats can be witch foes, too: In *Hocus Pocus* (1993), Thackery Binx, a Salem boy transformed into an immortal black cat by three vindictive witches, stays alive through the centuries to prevent his assailants from harming anyone else. 🐾

**FURRY STRESS BALLS**

The most powerful criminal masterminds have one thing in common: their adorable cats. Plotting mass murder is hard work. Stress must be relieved. And what could be more stress-reducing than stroking the velvety coat of a fluffy feline, like SPECTRE chief Ernst Stavro Blofeld's iconic, yet nameless Persian in *From Russia With Love* (1963), or mob kingpin Vito Corleone's domestic shorthair (a stray, cast after Francis Ford Coppola found him wandering the studio lot) in *The Godfather* (1972)? The answer, according to Doctor Evil—not Mister; he didn't spend six years in Evil medical school just to be called Mister, thank you very much—is smoothly petting the satiny skin of his bald Persian, Mr. Bigglesworth, rendered furless in a cryonics mishap in *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* (1997). For all the would-be Big Bads out there, the message is simple: first the kitten, then the world.



**DESPERADO**

Puss in Boots, the swashbuckling, leather-boot-wearing, Antonio Banderas-voiced animated orange tabby, first teamed up with Shrek and Donkey in *Shrek 2* (2004). Puss quickly made amends for his attempted assassination of Shrek by helping him rescue Princess Fiona from the evil clutches of Prince Charming. In *Shrek the Third* (2007), Puss and Donkey swap bodies. In his eponymous film, *Puss in Boots* (2011), Puss finds love and inner heroism in the fight against a giant goose (no, really). Puss was designed based on the casting of Banderas and the original *Puss in Boots* fairy tale, which dates back at least to 1550 and possibly thousands of years before.

