



STAGECOACH



Director, John Ford USA, 1939 Cert. U Black and White

With Claire Trevor, John Wayne, Andy Devine, John Carradine, Thomas Mitchell and George Bancroft

Forget the flawed hero, complex villain, the sexism in good manners and the racism in images of Red Indians. Come to the wild west of heroes where anyone who wore a collar and tie was a hypocrite, where all whores had a heart of gold and Wyatt, Doc, Shane and above all Ringo were their own law. Its politically incorrect, but a marvellous escape to lost innocence.

Stagecoach is justifiably described as establishing the Western as art, the start of a myth that had John Wayne tall in the saddle centre stage and Monument Valley as backdrop. The film won two Oscars. For over fifty years it has been the subject of academic theses and critical analyses.

In all Ford's films there is a tension between the urbane deceit of the town and rural candour, between civilisation and wilderness. The stagecoach leaves under the frowns of the ladies of the Law and Order League. At each station threats to it mount. At the first the cavalry depart. At the second the friendly Indians desert. The third has been burnt. As the stagecoach reaches the barren country Apaches muster. At the end Ringo and Dallas escape, not just from the law, but from the civilisation that has made them outcasts.



The intellectual interest in Stagecoach wasn't Ford's concern. He just liked making films, being in the studio, among artists and technicians. The result was an extraordinary output. In 1939 for example, he directed Stagecoach, making John Wayne a star; Young Mr. Lincoln doing the same for Henry Fonda and Drums Along the Mohawk. From a film for Shirley Temple in the mid-1930s he sustained a steady and varied output for forty years until his death in 1973. But it is Stagecoach that remains on most lists of the ten best films. At every viewing some new miracle can be appreciated.

The story doesn't need elaboration. But if you are tired of John Wayne, concentrate on John Carradine's complex gambler Hatfield, or Thomas Mitchell's drunken doctor, Boone. Or follow the steps as Ford marks the change from town to the wild, including the scene where the new-born baby's cry is mistaken for a coyote. Or look through the eyes of Lucy, the cavalry officer's wife as a meal is taken at Dry Fork Station and decency slips into intolerance. Or wonder at Yakima Canutt's stunts amid the hooves, or the way a film made in the studio passes through the valley.

But above all, be lost in the heat and dust. Let the good triumph once more and the villains exposed. If you have only seen it on TV it will confirm the magic of the big screen. Walk tall as you mosey home as the Ringo Kid. End with that shy, wry smile as you take out the front door key. Wonderful.

Marten Shipman

February 8, 1939

Dallas.....Claire Trevor
 Ringo Kid.....John Wayne
 Buck.....Andy Devine
 Hatfield.....John Carradine
 Doc Boone.....Thomas Mitchell
 Curly Wilcox.....George Bancroft
 Lucy Mallory.....Louise Platt
 Mr. Peacock.....Donald Meek
 Mr. Gatewood.....Berton Churchill
 Cavalry Lieutenant.....Tim Holt
 Chris.....Chris Martin
 Yakeema.....Elvira Rios
 Sgt. Billy Pickett.....Francis Ford
 Mrs. Pickett.....Marga Ann Dalghton
 Nancy.....Florence Lake
 Capt. Sicile.....Walter McGrall
 Express Agent.....Paul McVey
 Mrs. Gatewood.....Brenda Fowler
 Indian Scout.....Chief Big Tree
 Cavalry Scout.....Yakima Canutt
 Indian Leader.....Chief White Horse
 Cavalry Capt.....Bryant Washburn
 Lordsburg Sheriff.....Duke Lee
 Luke Plummer.....Tom Tyler

STAGE COACH

F.1598

Certificate: U. Distributors: United Artists. Producers: Walter Wanger Prod. Director: John Ford. Leading Players: Claire Trevor, John Wayne, John Carradine, Thomas Mitchell, Andy Devine, Louise Platt, George Bancroft, Berton Churchill, Tom Tyler, Donald Meek. 8,627 ft. 96 mins.

The story is set in the eighteen-eighties when the threat of danger from attacking Indians was still potent. A stage-coach sets out through Indian-infested country towards Lordtown. When almost in sight of safety it is attacked. After a fierce conflict troops arrive and beat off the Indians, but not before some of the travellers have been killed or wounded. Such, in brief, is the story of this film, in which the acting, the direction, the conception of the story, the musical score—all are excellent. Fine cutting heightens the suspense and excitement of the film to an unprecedented degree and the exhilarating music enhances it. The intensely moving sequences are lightened by the doctor and by the driver Buck. Subtle touches given by good direction raise the film from an ordinary thrilling adventure to something greater in which the individual is used to typify the general in such a manner that social history is vividly portrayed. The acting of all is extraordinarily good, and the interplay of gesture and expression among the varying types portrayed is admirable. The casting is brilliant. The end of the film, set in Lordtown, tends to be a little slow, but the fact that it is not a complete anti-climax after so exciting and moving a beginning is a great achievement.

JOHN FORD

US director (1895-1973)

Whatever reappraisals are currently touted, his eye for the Monument Valley visual and his myth making are legendary. He made a string of films under the name Jack Ford, then went into Oscar territory with *The Informer* (35), the classic *Stagecoach* (39) and *The Grapes of Wrath* (40), which gave voice to John Steinbeck's anger. There was another Oscar for the Welsh sentiment of *How Green Was My Valley* (41), but more important was the re-invention of Wyatt Earp for *My Darling Clementine* (46).

The cavalry sustained Ford's career with a series of outpost epics — the famous trilogy was *Fort Apache* (48), *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (49) and *Rio Grande* (50) — but it was the Irish comedy *The Quiet Man* (52) that won another Oscar. *The Searchers* (56) was a more compelling western than anything before and *Cheyenne Autumn* (64) was his valedictory western, atoning in some respects for his earlier representations of native Americans. Ford loved heroes and perceived himself as one.



CLAIRE TREVOR
US actress (1909-)

An attractive blonde with a sympathetic personality and a tough streak, Claire Wemlinger was born in New York, studied at Columbia University and the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, worked on Broadway in the theatre and made Vitaphone shorts at Wamer's east coast studio. In Hollywood she appeared in numerous Fox films including *The Mad Game* (33) with Spencer Tracy (qv), the first of her news reporter-career girl roles. Her performance as Bogart's (qv) hardboiled ex-girlfriend in *Dead End* (37) won her an Oscar nomination, her first western was *Valley of the Giants* (38) and her best was *Stagecoach*, (39). She was the tomboyish heroine of *Allegheny Uprising* (39) and the banker's daughter in *Dark Command* (40). In the mid-1940s she won a supporting Oscar for her ill-treated alcoholic mistress in *Key Largo* (48). She earned another Oscar nomination as an airline passenger in *The High and the Mighty* (54), won an Emmy for the TV remake of *Dodsworth* and played several mature roles in the 1960s, including Richard Beymer's mother in *The Stripper* (63).



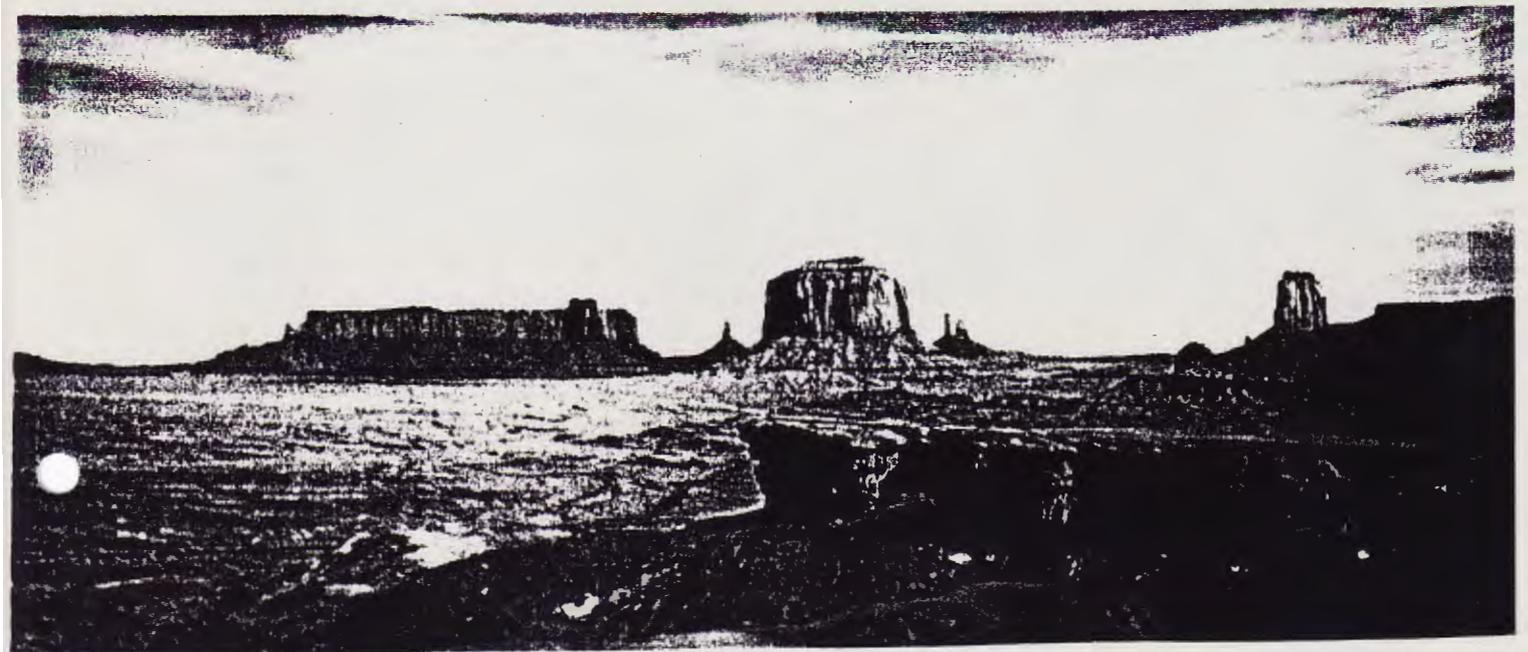


Real name Marion Michael Morrison
 Born Winterset, Iowa, 26 May 1907
 Died 1979

Widely known as Duke, John Wayne grew up in California and went to USC on a football scholarship. In 1928, he became a tough bit-part player then, in 1930, he was given his first Western lead in *The Big Trail* and, in the following eight years, notched up a further 80 films, mostly lowly boots-and-saddle B's. His last Western was *The Shootist* in 1976, three years before his death after a long and very courageous battle with cancer. In the 40-odd years between, he made an almost countless number of movies which, although they included some war films such as *Sands Of Iwo Jima* (1949) which earned him his first Oscar nomination, adventure stories, and the Irish romance, *The Quiet Man* (1952), largely followed the Western trail.

Indissolubly linked with director John Ford in public memory, it was actually Howard Hawks who helped Wayne to realise his full potential as an interpreter of complex, independent-minded loners in the great classic Western *Red River* (1948). His portrayal of a rancher determined to get his huge herd to market against overwhelming odds of distance, difficult terrain and the Indian threat, while locked in conflict with his adopted son (Montgomery Clift), catapulted Wayne to super-stardom. It was after this that Ford passed the much quoted remark, 'I didn't know that big son of a bitch could act' – although he had given the actor his first notable lead as The Ringo Kid in *Stagecoach* (1938), and used him again in *The Long Voyage Home* (1940) and *They Were Expendable* (1945). Director and star teamed up for the remake of *Three Godfathers* (1948), followed by the famous, so-called cavalry trilogy – *Fort Apache* (1948), *She Wore A Yellow Ribbon* (1949), and *Rio Grande* (1950). Ford also directed Wayne in *The Quiet Man* (1952), and in the superlative revenge Western, *The Searchers* (1956). By the late 40s, Wayne was already an independent producer-star, but nothing of note originated from his stable, and his only directing venture, *The Alamo* (1960), was a turgid expression of pioneering patriotism. For the Duke made no secret of his arch-conservative politics, and two of his own productions, the shamelessly Red-scare *Big Jim McLain* (1952) and the pro-Vietnam *The Green Berets* (1968), betrayed his macho representation of the moral majority in no uncertain terms. None of this, however, seemed to hamper his continuing charismatic image as the archetypal American hero, who also displayed a comedy touch in two Hawks films, *Rio Bravo* (1959) and its hilarious follow-up, *El Dorado* (1967).

Thrice married and father of seven children, John Wayne finally won an Oscar for *True Grit* (1969) at the age of 62. By the time of his death, he had assumed the status of an American legend, and had gained the rare distinction of having a Congressional Medal struck in his honour.



To Follow

**COMING
NEXT MONTH**



November 13



1995/US/108 mins/
cert 15/
dir. Wayne Wang
with Harvey Keitel,
William Hurt,
Stockard Channing,
Forest Whittaker.

One of the most enjoyable American films for some time, this has proved a hit with critics and audiences alike. It looks at the lives of a varied collection of customers of a Brooklyn cigar shop, and how they overlap with each other and with the philosophical shop owner. Adapted from short stories by Paul Auster, and with sensitive direction from Wayne Wang (Dom Sum, The Joy Luck Club), this is an engaging series of character studies. Terrific ensemble playing is crowned by superb performances from Harvey Keitel and William Hurt, back on form with a vengeance. The Silver Bear winner at the last Berlin Film Festival.



"Wit, vitality, heart, storytelling flair; the movie has each in spades" Time Out
"One of the most genuinely touching films of the year" Empire

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