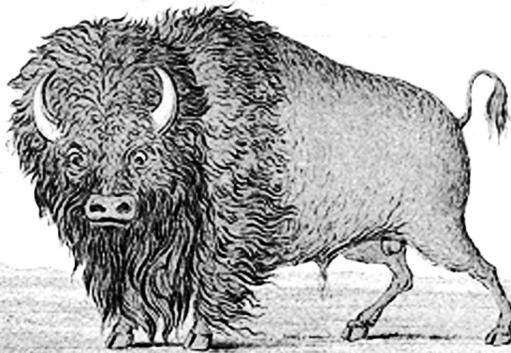


# THE BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS



Conversations about great films with Diane Christian & Bruce Jackson

## MY DARLING CLEMENTINE (1946) 97 min

Henry Fonda...Wyatt Earp  
Linda Darnell...Chihuahua  
Victor Mature...Dr. John 'Doc' Holliday  
Cathy Downs...Clementine Carter  
Walter Brennan...Old Man Clanton  
Tim Holt...Virgil Earp  
Ward Bond...Morgan Earp  
Alan Mowbray...Granville Thorndyke  
John Ireland...Billy Clanton  
Roy Roberts...Mayor  
Jane Darwell...Kate Nelson  
Grant Withers...Ike Clanton  
J. Farrell MacDonald...Mac the barman  
Francis Ford...Dad, Old Soldier (uncredited)  
Russell Simpson...John Simpson

Directed by John Ford  
Screenplay by Samuel G. Engel and Winston Miller, based on a story by Sam Hellman, which was, in turn, based on the book *Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal* by Stuart N. Lake  
Produced by Samuel G. Engel  
Cinematography by Joseph MacDonald  
Film Editing by Dorothy Spencer

National Film Preservation Board,  
USA 1991 National Film Registry

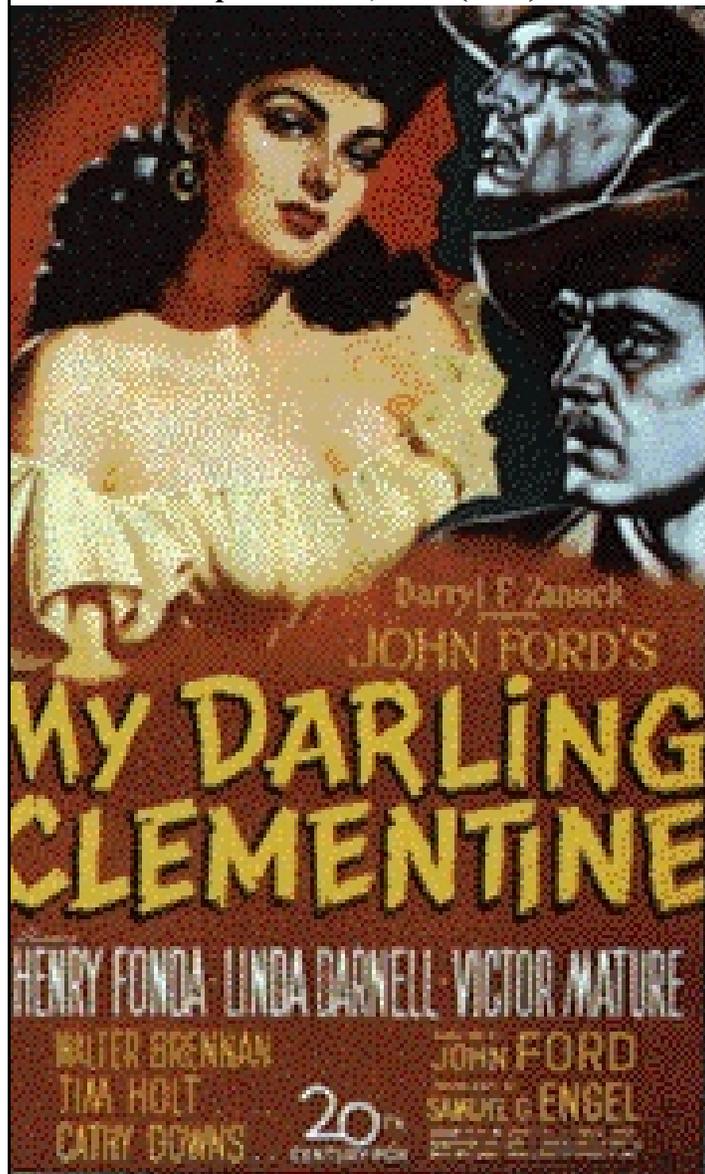


**JOHN FORD** (Sean Aloysius O'Fearná, 1 February 1894, Cape Elizabeth, Maine – 31 August 1973, Palm Desert, California, cancer) directed 146 films, 54 of

them westerns. He won four Academy Awards for Best Director (\*), two more for best documentary (#), five New York Film Critics Best Director awards (+), the Directors' Guild of America Life Achievement Award (1954), and the first American Film Institute Life Achievement Award (1973). Some of his films are: *The Informer*\*+ 1935, *The Prisoner of Shark Island* 1936, *Stagecoach* 1939+, *Drums Along the Mohawk* 1939, *The Long Voyage Home* +1940, *The Grapes of Wrath*\* + 1940, *Tobacco Road* 1941, *How Green Was My Valley*+ 1941, \* *The Battle of Midway* # 1942 (which he also photographed and edited), *December 7<sup>th</sup>* # 1943, *They Were Expendable* 1945, *My Darling Clementine* 1946, *Fort Apache* 1948, *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* 1949, *Rio Grande* 1950, *What Price Glory?* 1952, *The Quiet Man*\* 1952, *Mogambo* 1953, *Mister Roberts* 1955, *The Searchers* 1956, *The Rising of the Moon* 1957, *The Last Hurrah* 1958, *Sergeant Rutledge* 1960, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* 1962, *Donovan's Reef* 1963, and *Cheyenne Autumn* 1964. His older brother Francis started in movies in 1907 and changed his name to Ford. Jack joined him in Hollywood in 1914, acted in a dozen serials

and features, and began directing in 1917. He did three films in 1939, all of them classics: *Drums Along the Mohawk* (starring Henry Fonda and Claudette Colbert), *Young Mr. Lincoln* (starring Fonda), and *Stagecoach* (which made a star of John Wayne). He's known (and has famously identified himself as a maker of westerns, but he's done a large number of non-western classics as well, such as *The Grapes of Wrath*, *How Green Was My Valley*, and the wartime documentaries. But the westerns dominate: *My Darling Clementine*, his so-called "Cavalry Trilogy" (*Fort Apache*, *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, and *Rio Grande*), all of them starring Wayne, and *The Searchers*, also starring Wayne. He had what amounted to a stock company of leading actors (John Wayne, Harry Carey, John Carradine, Henry Fonda) and supporting actors (Ward Bond, Ken Curtis, Jane Darwell, Francis Ford, Ben Johnson, Victor McLaglen, Mae Marsh, Mildred Natwick, John Qualen, Woody Strode, Tom Tyler, and Patrick Wayne). His westerns had various settings, but he shot most of them in Monument Valley, Arizona, because he liked the look

September 14, 2004 (IX:3)



of the place. Whenever there was a funeral in one of his films, the mourners usually sang "Shall We Gather at the River." When C.B. DeMille and other Hollywood McCarthyites got in the witchhunting bandwagon, it was Ford who most publicly and famously stood up to them.

**HENRY FONDA** (16 May 1905, Grand Island, Nebraska—12 August 1982, Los Angeles, cardiorespiratory arrest) received an Academy Award best actor nomination in 1941 for his portrayal of Tom Joad in *Grapes of Wrath*, but it would be 40 years before he got an Oscar. In 1981 the Academy gave him an Honorary Academy Award, the prize the Academy sometimes gives when it worries that a major actor is going to die without ever having gotten up on that stage. The citation read: "The consummate actor, in recognition of his brilliant accomplishments and enduring contribution to the art of motion pictures." They needn't have worried: he received the award for best actor the following year for his work in *On Golden Pond*. Some of his other films are *You Only Live Once* 1937, *Jesse James* 1939, *Young Mr. Lincoln* 1939, *The Grapes of Wrath* 1940, *The Lady Eve* 1941, *Ox-Bow Incident* (1943), *My Darling Clementine* 1946, *Fort Apache* 1948, *Mister Roberts* 1955, *War and Peace* 1956, *12 Angry Men* 1957, *Warlock* 1959, *The Longest Day* 1962, *Advise and Consent* 1962, *Fail-Safe* 1964, and *Il C'era una volta il West/Once Upon a Time There Was a West* 1969 and *Il mio nome è nessuno/My Name is Nobody* 1973. He was a highly-regarded Broadway stage actor before coming to Hollywood and he several times went back there, most notably for *Mister Roberts* 1948, *The Caine Mutiny Court Martial* 1958 and *Two for the Seesaw* 1959.

**VICTOR MATURE**. According to **Leonard Maltin's Movie Encyclopedia**, "Director John Ford cast him as tubercular dentist Doc Holliday in *My Darling Clementine* (1946), opposite Henry Fonda as Wyatt Earp. Although it played fast and loose with the facts (such as killing off Holliday in the shootout at the O.K. Corral, even though he actually lived for several years afterward), the film was a big hit and got Mature's career back on track. (It also marked the first time critics took him seriously.) The top-billed star of *Kiss of Death* (1947), he saw supporting player Richard Widmark steal the film with his portrayal of a cold-blooded killer. Undeterred, Mature worked steadily over the next 13 years, essaying hard-boiled characterizations in Westerns, crime dramas, Biblical spectacles, and costume dramas—even musical comedy and farce. Often kidded for his beefy looks and stolid demeanor on-screen, he was actually a very capable performer."

**LINDA DARNELL** (16 October 1923, Dallas, Texas—10 April 1965, Chicago, Illinois, housefire) acted in 42 films and a lot of television programs in a career that ran from *Hotel for Women* 1939 to *Black Spurs* 1965. Some of the others were *Slattery's Hurricane* 1949, *A Letter to Three Wives* 1949, *Unfaithfully Yours* 1948, *Forever Amber* 1947, *Anna and the King of Siam* 1946, *Buffalo Bill* 1944, *Blood and Sand* 1941, *Chad Hanna* 1940, *The Mark of Zorro* 1940. *Brigham Young - Frontiersman* 1940,

**WALTER BRENNAN** (25 July 1894. Swampscott, Massachusetts—21 September 1974, Oxnard, California, emphysema) was a great character actor who appeared acted in 220 films, the last of them *Smoke in the Wind* 1975. He also starred in several tv series, the last of which was "The Guns of Will Sonnett" 1967-69. He won three best supporting actor Oscars: *The Westerner* 1940, *Kentucky* 1938, *Come and Get It* 1936. Some of his other films: *How the West Was Won* 1962, *Rio Bravo* 1959, *Bad Day at Black Rock* 1955, *Drums Across the River* 1954, *Red River* 1948, *To Have and Have Not* 1944, *The North Star* 1943, *Sergeant York* 1941, *Meet John Doe* 1941, *Northwest Passage* 1940, *Stanley and Livingstone* 1939, *Three Godfathers* 1936, *Great Expectations* 1934, and *Lorraine of the Lions* 1925.

**TIM HOLT** (5 February 1918, Beverly Hills—15 February 1973), Shawnee, Oklahoma, cancer, acted in 68 films, most of them westerns. The two he is probably best known for are Bob Curtin in *Treasure of the Sierra Madre* 1948 and George in *The Magnificent Ambersons* 1942.

**JOSEPH MACDONALD** (15 December 1906, Mexico City, Mexico—26 May 1968 Woodland Hills, California) shot 72 films, among them, *Mackenna's Gold* 1969, *The Sand Pebbles* 1966, *Warlock* 1959, *Ten North Frederick* 1958, *The Young Lions* 1958, *A Hatful of Rain* 1957, *Niagara* 1953, *Viva Zapata!* 1952, *Panic in the Streets* 1950, *Pinky* 1949, *Call Northside 777* 1948, and *Te quiero con locura* 1935.

**WARD BOND** (9 April 1903, Brinkleman, Nebraska—5 November 1960, Dallas, heart attack). **Biography from Leonard Maltin's Movie Encyclopedia**: "It was oddly ironic that when he was cast in his last feature, *Rio Bravo* (1959), Bond was better known as a TV star-for his longrunning hit series "Wagon Train"-than for the countless films in which he'd appeared over the preceding three decades. Even more amazingly, the star of that film-John Wayne-had appeared alongside him in his first, 1929's *Salute* when both were still playing on the USC football team and were hired as extras by director John Ford. It was the start of an extraordinary director/actor relationship that lasted almost the length of Bond's life. A tall, sturdy

actor with a gruff voice and no-nonsense manner, he could play pretty much anything-and did. He seems to have been in half the movies made in the 1930s, appearing in small roles in, among many others, *The Big Trail* (1930), *Wild Boys of the Road* (in a chilling bit as a rapist), *Heroes for Sale* (both 1933), *It Happened One Night*, *Broadway Bill* in a small part he later repeated for director Frank Capra in his 1950 remake *Riding High* (both 1934), *Black Fury*, *She Gets Her Man* (both 1935), *Conflict*, *The Leathernecks Have Landed* (both 1936), *Dead End*, *Night Key*, *You Only Live Once* (all 1937), *Bringing Up Baby*, *The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse*, *The Law West of Tombstone*, *Professor Beware* (all 1938), and a blizzard of 1939 classics:*Gone With the Wind*, *Dodge City*, *The Oklahoma Kid*, *They Made Me a Criminal*, *Made for Each Other*, *Frontier Marshal* including two by Ford: *Young Mr. Lincoln* and *Drums Along the Mohawk* The next year saw a similarly nonstop pace, with two more Fords-*The Long Voyage Home* and *The Grapes of Wrath*-as well as *Buck Benny Rides Again*, *The Mortal Storm* and *Santa Fe Trail*. Though the size of Bond's roles increased, his pace didn't slow down, and he kept busy thereafter in *The Maltese Falcon* (as one of the cops), *Manpower*, *Swamp Water*, *Sergeant York*, *Tobacco Road* (all 1941), *Gentleman Jim* (1942), *The Falcon Takes Over* (a 1942 B film adapted from Raymond Chandler's "Farewell, My Lovely," with Bond as the murderous Moose Malloy, one of his best characterizations), *A Guy Named Joe*, *Hello Frisco, Hello* (1943), *The Sullivans*, *Tall in the Saddle* (both 1944), *They Were Expendable* (1945), *It's a*

*Wonderful Life* (1946, as Bert the cop), *My Darling Clementine* (1946), *The Fugitive, Unconquered* (both 1947), *Fort Apache, Tap Roots, Joan of Arc, 3 Godfathers* (all 1948), *Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye, Wagon Master* (both 1950), *The Great Missouri Raid, On Dangerous Ground* (both 1951), *The Quiet Man* (1952, as the priest/narrator), *Hondo* (1953), *Gypsy Colt, Johnny Guitar* (both 1954), *The Long Gray Line, Mister Roberts* (both 1955), *The Searchers* (1956), *The Wings of Eagles* (1957, as movie director "John Dodge," parodying Ford), and a gag cameo in *Alias Jesse James* (1959) as Major Seth Adams, his "Wagon Train" character. By the way, although the series was based on *Wagon Master* in that Ford feature he had played a religious fanatic, not the lead. He died at the height of the show's—and his—popularity, leaving behind generations of fans to whom he was like a favorite uncle. However, in sharp contrast to his latter-day screen image, Ford made many enemies during the 1950s, as a rabid anticommunist in Hollywood."

### **Robert Warshaw "Movie Chronicle: The Westerner"**

The two most successful creations of American movies are the gangster and the Westerner: men with guns. Guns as physical objects, and the postures associated with their use, form the visual and emotional center of both types of films.

The gangster is lonely and melancholy, and can give the impression of a profound worldly wisdom. He appeals most to adolescents with their impatience and their feeling of being outsiders, but more generally he appeals to that side of all of us which refuses to believe in the "normal" possibilities of happiness and achievement; the gangster is the "no" to that great American "yes" which is stamped so big over our official culture and yet has so little to do with the way we really feel about our lives. But the gangster's loneliness and melancholy are not "authentic"; like everything else that belongs to him, they are not honestly come by: he is lonely and melancholy not because life ultimately demands such feelings but because he has put himself in a position where everybody wants to kill him and eventually somebody will. . . .

The Western hero, by contrast, is a figure of repose. He resembles the gangster in being lonely and to some degree melancholy. But his melancholy comes from the "simple" recognition that life is unavoidably serious, not from the disproportions of his own temperament. And his loneliness is organic, not imposed on him by his situation but belonging to him intimately and testifying to his completeness. The gangster must reject others violently or draw them violently to him. The Westerner is not thus compelled to seek love; he is prepared to accept it, perhaps, but he never asks of it more than it can give, and we see him in situations where love is at best an irrelevance. In the American mind, refinement, virtue, civilization, Christianity itself, are seen as feminine, and therefore women are often portrayed as possessing some kind of deeper wisdom, while the men, for all their apparent self-assurance, are fundamentally childish. But the West, lacking the graces of civilization, is the place "where men are men"; in Western movies, men have the deeper wisdom, and women are children. Those women in the Western movies who share the hero's understanding of life are prostitutes (or, as they are usually presented, barroom entertainers)—women, that is, who have come to understand in the most practical way how love can be an irrelevance, and therefore "fallen" women.

The Westerner is the last gentleman, and the movies which over and over again tell his story are probably the last art form in which the concept of honor retains its strength. The Western hero is necessarily an archaic figure; we do not really believe in him and would not have

him step out of his rigidly conventionalized background. But his archaism does not take away from his power; on the contrary, it adds to it by keeping him just a little beyond the reach both of common sense and of absolutized emotion, the two usual impulses of our art. And he has, after all, his own kind of relevance. He is there to remind us of the possibility of style in an age which has put on itself the burden of pretending that style has no meaning, and, in the midst of our anxieties over the problem of violence to suggest that even in killing and being killed we are not freed from the necessities of establishing successful modes of behavior.

### **Andrew Tudor, JOHN FORD entry in *World Film Directors V I*, ed. John Wakeman, The H.W. Wilson Co, NY 1987.**

He found a variety of employment in the booming industry, including stunt work and doubling for his brother, assistant cameraman and riding with the Ku Klux Klan in *Birth of a Nation*. He became proficient as a cameraman and editor, and often functioned as such throughout his career. Although accounts disagree, he had definitely graduated to assistant directing by 1916.

[Ford visited Germany during the shooting of *Four Sons* (1928) and met Murnau and other German filmmakers.] It is tempting to see their influence in his emerging visual style, doubly so in that he acknowledged no mentors other than his brother, Harry Carey, and D.W. Griffith. It is a difficult judgment to make. The clearest stylistic feature of Ford's early cinema is its inclination to pictorialism, to studied effects of composition and lighting, a tendency as much apparent before *Four Sons* as after it. Anderson argues that "at times in *Four Sons* the influence is strong, with movements that recall German camera handling and lighting effects that verge on the expressionistic." With so many films "lost," however, it is all but impossible to make the appropriate before-and-after comparisons, especially in a period when German influence on American cinema was widespread.

In many ways *Stagecoach* is the foundation stone of the modern Western, for, just as it was the occasion for Ford to find a mature outlook upon the landscape and characters of his early cinema, it also heralded a new seriousness and legitimacy for the Western genre. The French critic and theorist André Bazin saw it as the consummate classical Western, "the ideal balance between social myth, historical reconstruction, psychological truth, and the traditional theme of Western *mise-en-scène*." With its stagecoach laden with characters who were, or who were to become, archetypes of the Western genre, it now looks far more clichéd than would have been the case in 1939.

It also brought John Wayne to stardom. A descendant of the Harry Carey figure in the early Ford Westerns, Wayne's Ringo Kid is in genesis the honest man of few words and profound actions who stands at the heart of Ford's vision. In genesis only, however, for *Stagecoach* viewed in the context of Ford's subsequent work seems a somewhat contrived sketch for what was to follow, not a fully realized achievement. It is a story very well told, and our pleasure in its magnificent Monument Valley settings, its compelling narrative, and its visual elegance, should not disguise the economy and skill with which its characters are presented to us and developed. In the end, though, it lacks the elegiac spirit of *My Darling Clementine* (1946), the irony of *The Searchers* (1956), and the richness of *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962).

*Grapes of Wrath*—the novel's humanity without its disturbing edge. Ford's film is a powerful experience, but apolitical and individualistic

in its affirmation of human fortitude in the face of desperate adversity.

*The Searchers* is more than simply a touching story. In its treatment of its central character it gives us *the* Western hero trapped forever in a world of his making, but a world to which he can no longer belong. It is this sustained reflection upon the major themes of the genre that finally raises *The Searchers* beyond Ford's other work, giving it the status of tragedy. When Ethan turns away at the end it is a profoundly moving moment. McBride and Wilmington, who believe this to be Ford's indubitable masterpiece, put it this way in their monograph on Ford: "[Ethan] . . . steps aside to let the young couple pass him by and turns away to 'wander forever between the winds' like his Indian nemesis. Scar and Ethan, blood-brothers in their commitment to primitive justice, have sacrificed themselves to make civilisation possible. This is the meaning of the door opening and closing on the wilderness. It is the story of America."

It was only with *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962) that Ford successfully returned to the ethically complex world of *The Searchers*.

That said, it must also be conceded that in some respects *Liberty Valance* is far from typical Ford. There are no grand landscapes (indeed, there are precious few exteriors) and the film's visual style makes it almost claustrophobic. It is frequently observed that Ford was ill at the time of shooting *Liberty Valance* and thus unable to work on location. While there is no doubt that he was ill, it is difficult to see how this particular story could have benefitted from location work; as a narrative it is necessarily set in the town of Shinbone, and its thematic concerns are eminently suited to the "closed in" world suggested by Ford's careful framing and camerawork. Although lacking the tragic scale of *The Searchers*, it is a deeply sad movie, and there are critics who believe *Liberty Valance* to be at least the equal of Ford's finest.

As with *The Searchers*, the basis for this evaluation is to be found in Ford's apparently changing vision. *Liberty Valance* stands as his final word on the recurrent tensions between wilderness and civilization, individual and community. Not for the first time in Ford, but for the first time with such absolute consistency and clarity, these oppositions are captured in the casting of the movie's central characters. Doniphon (John Wayne) and Stoddard (James Stewart) embody both the virtues and failings of, respectively, the individualist at home in the wilderness and the bringer of "civilized" legal order to the community. The fundamental narrative device has Stoddard, who is opposed to the rule of law by violence, forced into a situation in which he must face the notorious gunman Liberty Valance. He is victorious, and his success brings him fame and power as "the man who shot Liberty Valance." The truth, however, is otherwise. Doniphon, knowing Stoddard has no chance and impelled by his own standards of integrity, shoots Valance from the shadows, leaving Stoddard to take the credit and the girl whom Doniphon loves. Once more the traditional Man of the West has been sacrificed in the cause of civilization.

The story, already laden with saddening echoes of previous Westerns, is made all but unbearably poignant by its framing a final revelation by the aging Senator Stoddard on the occasion of Doniphon's death. He tells the story to the editor of the Shinbone *Star* in explanation of his arrival at the funeral of an unknown pauper, fully recognizing the political price he might have to pay. But in one of the most famous lines in a Ford movie, the editor (Edmond O'Brien) declines to print: "This is the West, sir. When the legend conflicts with the facts, print the legend." The matter is not left there, however, which would have taken us no further than, say, the end of *Fort*

*Apache*. Instead, in an exquisitely shot scene, we are returned to Doniphon's coffin where Hallie (one of Ford's stronger female characters, played by Vera Miles) is waiting, and, only as Stoddard turns for a last look, do we see that she has planted a cactus rose on the otherwise bare box. Both flower of the Garden and enduring survivor of the Wilderness, the cactus rose (which we have earlier seen as a gift from Doniphon to Hallie) becomes the perfect symbol for the film.

The train takes them away from Shinbone through lushly fruitful country. "Aren't you proud?" Hallie asks. "Once it was a desert and now it's a garden." Stoddard talks of retirement until, on the arrival of the train's conductor to attend his famous passenger, he reverts to the politician's front that has served him so well. The conductor's response to his thanks is sudden and sobering: "Don't you worry about that, Senator. Nothing's too good for the man who shot Liberty Valance." With that ironic line, and our final shot of Stoddard and Hallie lost in their regrets, we reach the last stop in Ford's journey through the West. The captivating optimism of *Drums Along the Mohawk* and *My Darling Clementine* has been replaced by the irony and sadness of *The Searchers* and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. Yet all is not regret, and Ford has showed us the benefits of civilization as well as its price. He was never a filmmaker given to simple didacticism, and both these great achievements of his last years have a density of reference and a control of style that makes them for many his richest reflections upon and within the Western genre.

Though he lived for a decade after *Liberty Valance*, illness effectively ended Ford's career in 1966.

Orson Welles, asked which American directors he most admired, replied "the old masters...By which I mean John Ford, John Ford, and John Ford."

"As a kid," he told Peter Bogdanovich, "I thought I was going to be a great artist; I used to sketch and paint a great deal and I think, for a kid, I did pretty good work – at least I received a lot of compliments about it. But I have never thought about what I was doing in terms of art, or 'this is great,' or 'world-shaking' or anything like that. To me, it was always a job of work – which I enjoyed immensely – and that's it."

**John Baxter in *The St. James Film Directors Encyclopedia*. Ed. Andrew Sarris. Visible Ink NY 1998.**

John Ford has no peers in the annals of cinema. This is not to place him above criticism, merely above comparison. His faults were unique, as was his art, which he pursued with a single-minded and single-hearted stubbornness for sixty years and 112 films. Ford grew up with the American cinema. That he should have begun his career as an extra in the Ku Klux Klan sequences of *The Birth of a Nation* and ended it supervising the documentary *Vietnam! Vietnam!* conveys the remarkable breadth of his contribution to film, and the narrowness of its concerns.

Mythologizing the armed services and the church as paradigms of structural integrity, Ford adapts their rules to his private world. All may speak in Ford's films, but when divine order is invoked, the faithful fall silent, to fight and die as decreed by a general, a president, or some other God-anointed elite.

In Ford's hierarchy, Native and African Americans share the lowest rung, women the next. Businessmen, uniformly corrupt in his world, hover below the honest and imaginative citizenry of the United States. Above them are Ford's elite, within which members of the

armed forces occupy a privileged position. In authority over them is an officer class of career military men and priests, culminating in a few near-saintly figures of which Abraham Lincoln is the most notable, while over all rules a retributory, partial, and jealous God.

Belligerent, grandiose, deceitful, and arrogant in real life, Ford seldom let those traits spill over into his films. They express at their best a guarded serenity, a skeptical satisfaction in the beauty of the American landscape, muted always by an understanding of the dangers implicit in the land, and a sense of the responsibility of all men to protect the common heritage. In every Ford film there is a gun behind the door, a conviction behind the joke, a challenge in every toast. Ford belongs in the tradition of American narrative art where telling a story and drawing a moral are twin aspects of public utterance. He saw that we live in history, and that history embodies lessons we must earn. When Fordian man speaks, the audience is meant to listen—and listen all the harder for the restraint and circumspection of the man who speaks. One hears the authentic Fordian voice nowhere more powerfully than in Ward Bond's preamble to the celebrating enlisted men in *They Were Expendable* as they toast the retirement of a comrade. "I'm not going to make a speech," he states. "I've just got something to say."

**Satyajit Ray, "A Tribute to John Ford," *Our Films Their Films*. Satyajit Ray. Hyperion NY 1994**

The nearest description of Ford's [hallmark] would be a combination of strength and simplicity. The nearest equivalent I can think of is musical: middle-period Beethoven.

Like Picasso's obsession with the bull, Cézanne's with the apple, Bach's with the fugue, and the Hindu miniaturists' with the theme of Krishna, John Ford had a lifelong affair with the Western. 'When in doubt, make a Western,' is reported to have been his maxim. One only wishes he had been in doubt oftener.

For those who look for 'commitment' in the cinema in the new fashionable sense of the term, the work of Ford—as well as most of the great American directors prior to the 1960s—will have nothing to offer. But for those who look for art, for poetry, for a clean, healthy, robust attitude to life and human relationships, John Ford is among the most rewarding of directors. He was also unique in having won unreserved admiration from eminent film makers from all parts of the world—from Eisenstein in Soviet Russia, Kurosawa in Japan, Bergman in Sweden, and Orson Welles in the USA.

There is little doubt that this admiration was based primarily on the genre that Ford perfected. Along with slapstick comedy, the Western is the least literary of film genres. No wonder Ford's genius for pure cinema shone most luminously in it.

The distinction consists, as in all great film makers, in the manner of telling the stories; in how Ford uses his tools, how he stages his actions and photographs them, where he places his camera, how the shots and scenes follow one another, how the pace and the pulse of the film derive from the cutting. Among other things, Ford was a master of the static shot, of the 'telling' composition. There is rarely any movement of the camera within a shot unless it happens to be part of a larger action. This is a method which lies at the other extreme from, say, Orson Welles. One can say that in a Ford film the camera is a sensitive observer, always sure of the best viewpoint, while in Welles it is a dextrous participant, exploring all manner of viewpoints.

Much of the best things in a Ford film has the mysterious, indefinable quality of poetry. Because some of them seem casual—even accidental—it is difficult to realise how much experience and mastery lie behind them.

[he describes a moment from *Fort Apache*] What it does is to invest a casual moment with poetic significance. Those who look for 'meaning' here, whether symbolic or literary, and are disappointed not to find it, are obviously unaware of what makes for poetry in the cinema. All the best Ford films are full of such poetic details, which, taken in conjunction with the sweep and vigour of the action sequences, give the films their satisfying richness. **from John Ford. Peter Bogdanovich. U Cal Press, 1978.**

"I knew Wyatt Earp. In the very early silent days, a couple of times a year, he would come up to visit pals, cowboys he knew in Tombstone; a lot of them were in my company. I think I was an assistant prop boy then, and I used to give him a chair and a cup of coffee, and he told me about the fight at O.K. Corral. So in *My Darling Clementine*, we did it exactly the way it had been. They didn't just walk up the street and start banging away against each other; it was a clever military manoeuvre."

**from John Ford Hollywood's Old Master. Ronald L. Davis. U Oklahoma Press, 1995.**

In 1946 the Hollywood studios reached their zenith; that year ninety million people went to the movies each week. John Ford had come home from the war with a commitment to 20<sup>th</sup> Century-Fox and was prepared to accept a commercial assignment. "Why don't you do a nice easy Western?" Daryl Z, cognizant that Zanuck suggested, cognizant that the mythic West still held undiminished fascination for moviegoers. "I can round up a good cast for you," he said. Ford and the Fox production head decided on *My Darling Clementine*, based loosely on the career of Wyatt Earp, mainly because Ford saw dramatic possibilities in the climactic gunfight at O.K. Corral. *My Darling Clementine* would be the director's first Western since *Stagecoach* and only his second in twenty years, but he was entering his most productive period in the genre.

Ford liked the concept of *Clementine*, especially after Zanuck agreed that the picture could be filmed in Monument Valley. The isolation and tranquillity of Harry and Mike Gouling's trading post would be an ideal place for Ford to forget the war and readjust to civilian life. Besides, the director claimed to have known Wyatt Earp personally. "In the very early silent days," said Ford, "a couple of times a year, Earp would come up to visit pals, cowboys he knew in Tombstone; a lot of them were in my company. I think I was an assistant prop boy then and I used to give him a chair and a cup of coffee, and he told me about the fight at the O.K. Corral." Earp did live in Pasadena during his last years, and occasionally served as a consultant on Western movies, despite failing health. As Ford remembered, "He married a schoolteacher in Tombstone, and she was the boss of the family....His wife was a great churchgoer. Every so often she would go on these meetings and into Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico, and Wyatt would sneak into town and get together with the boys, have a few nips." According to Ford, Earp knew Pardner Jones; the sharpshooter had been Earp's chief deputy in Tombstone. The director said he liked for Earp to visit his set, even though his appearance held up shooting. He and Jones would leave at noon to find a bootlegger and come back "swacked to the gills." Ford claimed to have had several conversations with Earp during those occasions. "I asked him about the O.K. Corral," the director said, "and he pinpointed it for me, drew it out on paper exactly how it happened." Ford vowed that was the way he filmed the shoot-out in *My Darling Clementine*.

Wyatt Earp became a close friend of Western star William S. Hart and often visited Hart's Horseshoe Ranch outside Newhall. With the passing years the legendary frontier marshal grew concerned about his image and wanted to correct the "many wrong impressions of the early days of Tombstone and myself [that] have been created by writers who are not informed." Earp wrote Hart on July 7, 1923: "I

realize that I am not going to live to the age of Methuselah, and any wrong impression I want made right before I go a way. The screen could do all this.”

His alarm continued as inaccuracies spread. “It does beat the band how the truth will be warped and misstated over a period of years,” Earp wrote in 1924. He began working with a writer to set his story straight.

Stuart Lake’s *Wyatt Earp: Frontier Marshal*, published in 1931, two years after Earp’s death, proved to be a further distortion of the facts. Earp had grown disgusted with the film business before his passing, although two of his pallbearers were William S. Hart and Tom Mix. Whenever Hollywood filmmakers sought Earp’s advice on silent Westerns, they paid little attention to what he told them. Colonel Tim McCoy recalled Earp’s admitting to producers that he had never been a U.S. marshal and had “spent most of his days

happily engaged in his profession, which was gambling.” Once Earp realized that movie people weren’t listening to the facts, he began regaling them with yarns that he had read in fictionalized accounts. “To his amazement,” his wife wrote, “they swallowed these tall tales hook, line, and sinker, but were always skeptical of the truth.” At that point Earp refused to have any more to do with those “damn fool dudes.”

That John Ford gleaned anything useful from Wyatt Earp is doubtful. If he did, little of it found its way into *My Darling Clementine*, Western classic though the film became. Winston Miller, who wrote the script, admitted, “We made the whole thing up as we went along.” All Miller and Ford knew when they started was that they were going to make a picture about Wyatt Earp and that it would end at the O. K. Corral. “I wasn’t interested in how the West really was,” said Miller. “I was writing a movie.”

### **Hallwalls New Documentary Series at the Market Arcade:**

**September 30 DEATH IN GAZA** (2002, 79 min., U.K.) by James Miller (deceased), Manson-Smith (directed the edit). DEATH IN GAZA is the shocking story that award-winning filmmaker James Miller gave his life to tell, the story of Palestinian youngsters maturing in a world where the greatest glory is to die a martyr. In May 2003, Miller traveled with reporter Saira Shah to track the lives of kids living in the area’s most desperate borough. Ahmed is a football-loving 12-year-old who, after witnessing the death of his good friend, falls in with a group of paramilitaries. Mohammed is timid but devoted, and helps him fashion bombs to throw at Israeli tanks. Sixteen-year-old Najla has seen eight family members killed, and lives in constant fear that either her house will be destroyed or another loved one will be murdered. In the midst of documenting these heartbreaking stories, Miller was shot dead by an Israeli soldier. His last effort on earth and his untimely death fully demonstrate the incomprehensibility of this conflict and the importance of presenting this story to the world. (Shannon Abel) Bruce Jackson will introduce the film and lead a discussion afterwards.

**October 7 THE FIVE OBSTRUCTIONS** (2003, 90 min., Denmark) by Lars von Trier & Jørgen Leth Together with Danish documentary film veteran Jørgen Leth, Lars von Trier enters the world of documentary filmmaking and takes on the task of challenging conventional ways of documentary and film production. In 1967 Jørgen Leth made a 13 min. short film called *The Perfect Human*, a document on human behavior. In the year 2000, Trier challenged Leth to make five remakes of this film. Trier put forward obstructions, constraining Leth to re-think the story and the characters of the original film. Playing the naive anthropologist, Leth attempts to embrace the cunning challenges set forth by the devious and sneaky Trier and must deal with the limitations, commands and prohibitions. It is a game full of traps and vicious turns. *The Five Obstructions* is an investigative journey into the phenomenon of filmmaking.

**October 14 BUSH’S BRAIN** (2004, 80 min., USA) by Joseph Mealey and Michael Shoob Karl Rove is President George W. Bush’s closest adviser. He is a man who has almost single-handedly shaped the policies of our nation: a brilliant tactician, ruthless opponent, savvy policy maker, and one of the greatest political minds in the history of the Republic. BUSH’S BRAIN introduces the country to Karl Rove, the most powerful political figure America has had but known so little about, the Wizard of Oz behind the curtain of today’s Presidential politics. It is based on the best-selling book BUSH’S BRAIN (Wiley, 2003) by journalists James Moore and Wayne Slater.

**October 21 THE YES MEN** (2004, 80 min., USA) with Mike & Andy in person. By Dan Olman, Sarah Price, and Chris Smith. THE YES MEN follows a couple of anti-corporate activist-pranksters as they impersonate the World Trade Organization at business conferences around the world. The story begins with Andy and Mike setting up a website that looks just like that of the World Trade Organization. Some visitors don’t notice the site is a fake, and send e-mail invitations meant for the real WTO. Mike and Andy play along with the ruse and soon find themselves attending important functions as WTO representatives. Delighted to speak as the organization they oppose, Andy and Mike don thrift-store suits and set out to shock their unwitting audiences with darkly comic satires on global free trade. Weirdly, the experts don’t notice the joke and seem to agree with every terrible idea the two can come up with. Exhausted by their failed attempts to shock, Mike and Andy change their strategy completely, and take a whole new approach for one final lecture.

THE BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS ARE PRESENTED BY THE MARKET ARCADE FILM & ARTS CENTER &  
 **University at Buffalo** *The State University of New York*

Join us next week, Tuesday September 21, James Mason in Carol Reed’s IRA classic

*Odd Man Out (1947)*

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...for the series schedule, annotations, links and updates: [www.buffalofilmseminars.com](http://www.buffalofilmseminars.com)