

The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance | Donovan's Reef

In 1962, when he made *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, the legend known as John Ford was nearing the end of his long and amazing career. There would be only three more fully "Directed by John Ford" films after that: *Donovan's Reef*, *Cheyenne Autumn* and *Seven Women*. He'd begun directing films in 1917 and had made some of the most enduring classics in film history, including such masterpieces as *Stagecoach*, *Young Mr. Lincoln*, *Drums Along the Mohawk*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *How Green Was My Valley*, *My Darling Clementine*, *Fort Apache*, *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, *Rio Grande*, *The Quiet Man* and *The Searchers*, to name only a handful. His influence on other filmmakers was profound; many worshipped at his altar but few achieved his poetry and style.

The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance would be the first of only two films he made for Paramount Pictures. With a screenplay by James Warner Bellah and Willis Goldbeck (based on a short story by Dorothy Johnson, author of *A Man Called Horse* and *The Hanging Tree*), the film is Ford doing what Ford did best – telling a good yarn better than any other filmmaker could. He got two superstars, both of whom he'd worked with before, John Wayne and James Stewart (their first film together). The rest of the cast is peopled with many from the Ford stock company along with some people who were new to him, and what a supporting cast it is: Lee Marvin, Edmond O'Brien, Vera Miles, Andy Devine, Ken Murray, John Carradine, Jeanette Nolan, John Qualen, Willis Bouchey, Woody Strode, Denver Pyle, Strother Martin and Lee Van Cleef. Behind the camera was the great William H. Clothier, who'd recently shot *The Horse Soldiers* for Ford.

It's no surprise that the film, which featured two of the biggest box-office stars in the world, was an immediate hit. Critic Roger Ebert wrote lovingly of the picture: "The film takes place at that turning point in the West when the rule of force gave way to the rule of law, and when literacy began to gain a foothold. It asks the question: Does a man need to carry a gun in order to disagree or state an opinion? It takes place in the town of Shinbone, in an unnamed territory that is moving toward a vote on statehood. Farmers want statehood. Cattlemen do not. In a few characters and a gripping story, Ford dramatizes the debate about guns that

still continues in many Western states. That he does this by mixing in history, humorous supporting characters and a poignant romance is typical; his films were complete and self-contained in a way that approaches perfection. Without ever seeming to hurry, he doesn't include a single gratuitous shot."

Liberty Valance received only one Academy Award nomination, for Best Costume Design – Black-and-White (Edith Head).

Cyril J. Mockridge provided the score for *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* and a great score it is, filled with original themes as well as some source cues that are beautifully woven into the fabric of the film. Ford asked for a nod to Alfred Newman's "Ann Rutledge Theme" from *Young Mr. Lincoln* because he felt it evoked lost love. Mockridge was and remains an unsung film composer who spent most of his film music days at Twentieth Century-Fox, where he wrote such scores as Ford's *My Darling Clementine*, *Miracle on 34th Street*, *Nightmare Alley*, *Road House*, Howard Hawks' *I Was a Male War Bride*, *Cheaper by the Dozen*, *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, *River of No Return*, *The Solid Gold Cadillac*, *Bus Stop*, *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?* and *Desk Set*, to name but a few. He was also prolific in television, writing scores for *Laramie*, *Wagon Train*, *McHale's Navy*, *Daniel Boone* and *Lost in Space*.

Liberty Valance's dynamic and propulsive main title gets the film off to a great start. "Sad Reunion/Overland Stage," a pensive cue of great beauty, is followed by some rousing barroom source music and more dramatic cues; everything is wonderfully evocative and suits the film perfectly. It's a short score, but one cannot imagine the film without it.

The following year, Ford was back with his new film, *Donovan's Reef*, reuniting John Wayne with Lee Marvin, along with a wonderful supporting cast including Elizabeth Allen, Cesar Romero, Jack Warden and Dorothy Lamour. The movie is a colorful lark, but one with some serious undertones such as racial bigotry, conniving corporations and greed. John Wayne is pure John Wayne as Michael Patrick "Guns" Donovan, and Lee Marvin is hilarious as Thomas Aloysius "Boats" Gilhooley, while Elizabeth Allen is both lovely and feisty as Amelia Dedham. The breezy screenplay was by

Frank S. Nugent (who wrote eleven films for Ford) and James Edward Grant (who wrote twelve of John Wayne's films). Shot on location in Kauai, Hawaii, the film is spectacular to look at, with stunning photography by the brilliant William H. Clothier. It's one of Ford's most beautiful color films.

The *New York Times'* critic enjoyed the film and took it for what it was – an entertaining, easygoing, fun picture: "Mr. Ford has been involved with movies for 45 years, and his associates, including his principals, are no tyros either, so they cannot be blamed for using what would be film clichés in less practiced hands to fashion a fable to tickle the funny bone and give us a picturesque change of venue at little expense. They have taken us to the verdant atoll of Haleakoloha—the film actually was shot in vivid color on extremely photogenic Kauai, Hawaii—where an icy Boston heiress has gone to search out her seemingly errant father. That staid lady not only discovers the beauties of the palm-studded island but also romance in the guise of John Wayne, an erstwhile heroic hand on a Navy destroyer who decided to stay on after the war and is now the owner of the island saloon of the title, among other properties."

Once again, Ford asked Cyril J. Mockridge to compose the musical score. Mockridge mostly uses traditional Hawaiian music for his themes, but it all works perfectly in the film, giving it an authentic Hawaiian flavor and keeping the frolicsome nature of the film moving right along. There are also some very lovely themes as the score proceeds, creating a delightful musical pastiche for a delightful pastiche of a film.

This is the world premiere release of both *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* and *Donovan's Reef*. Everything has been taken from various elements in the Paramount vaults. Some of *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* is in stereo; some is in mono. All of *Donovan's Reef* is in stereo.

So, here are two wonderful world-premiere scores by Cyril J. Mockridge. As the Duke would say in *Liberty Valance*, "Listen up, Pilgrim."

— Bruce Kimmel