



Hombre

1967 Drama/Adventure, 1h 51m. PG

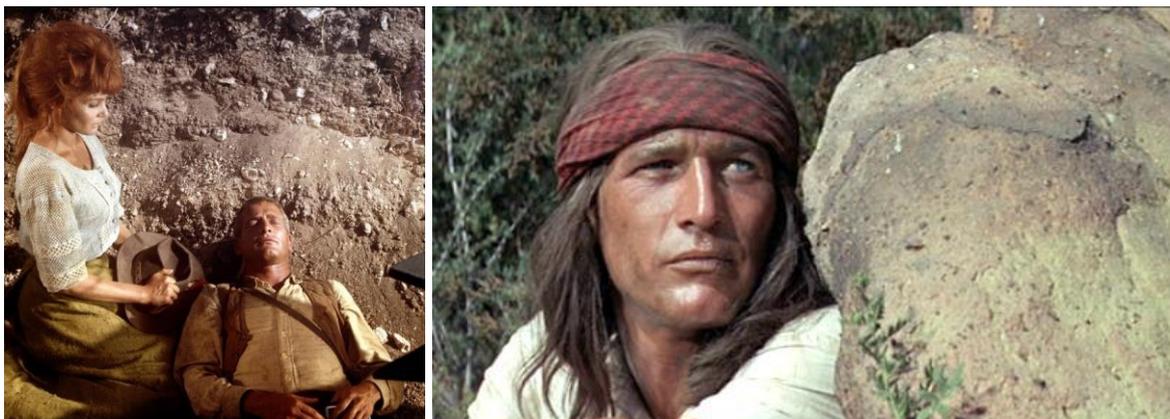
**Third film in
our Western
Season**

Tuesday 26th
June 2018 at
7.15 pm, at
Eden Court
Cinema

Director: Martin Ritt; **Camera:** James Wong Howe; **Cast:** Paul Newman as John Russell, Frederic March as Favor, Richard Boone as Grimes, Diane Cilento as Jessie, Cameron Mitchell as Braden, Barbara Rush as Audra Favor, Martin Balsam as Mendez.

Film notes
sourced by Ann
MacInnes

Former blacklisted Martin Ritt ("Hud") directs this superior western, with a liberal slant, based on the novel by Elmore Leonard. It's a variant on John Ford's 1939 'Stagecoach', as the outcast hero instead of running away from civilization in his final desperate act moves toward it. That was the only phony ring in a hard-bitten tale about racism, injustice and corruption, that is beautifully shot in the Death Valley and Halvetia Mines locations by James Wong Howe.



After an Indian raid white boy Paul Newman is raised by Apaches and learns to believe that the white man's civilization is hell. When given his release and the name of John Russell by his white man relative who is willing to raise him, Newman instead chooses to live in the mountains with the Apaches--working as a policeman for the reservation. Upon Russell's death Newman inherits his boarding house, but chooses to sell it and return to the Apaches. Newman is made an outcast by the passengers and forced to ride on top of the stage with the driver instead of inside with the rest of the paying passengers, when he needs a ride back to his chosen people. It's a special stage leaving the small Arizona town to go to Bisbee. It has been paid for by the slimy racist Indian agent Dr. Favor (Fredric March) and his snobby empty-headed so-called cultured wife Audra (Barbara Rush). The rest of the passengers include the hard-luck softhearted widow who ran Russell's boarding house, Jessie (Diane Cilento), and her boarders, the unhappy young couple Billy Lee and Doris (Peter Lazer & Margaret Blye). The surly Grimes (Richard Boone) forced a soldier to give him his ticket when he learned the stage was sold out, and is an ominous presence aboard. The stagedriver is the conciliatory Mexican Mendez (Martin Balsam), who worked for old man Russell and has known Newman for a long time. Along the way, near an abandoned mining site, bandits hold-up the stage as they reunite with their leader Grimes to steal Dr. Favor's satchel of money, funds he stole from the Indian reservation in his plans to flee to a different part of the world and live luxuriously off the backs of the starving Indians under his charge. Newman kills two of the outlaws and takes back the money with plans to return it to the reservation. One of the Mexican bandits (Frank Silvera) tags him with the nickname of Hombre. The rest of the gang holds Mrs. Favor as a hostage and threaten to kill her unless they get the money. In a last second reversal of his hard stance of not getting involved with the white man's problems Newman makes a fatalistic attempt to rescue the hostage woman when her husband won't, as she's left to die of thirst when tied up under a scorching sun.

The spare literate dialogue, intelligence of the narrative, interesting group of diversely eccentric characters featured and the well-written screenplay by Irving Ravetch and Harriet Frank, keep the melodrama suspenseful. If it didn't come with that tacked on unneeded tragic conclusion, it would have been a far more honest film. **Dennis Schwarz** , 2005



This film made Paul Newman my favourite male actor for decades. It affected the way I have seen every one of his roles, even his sal ad dressing. The story line brings John Russell's (Newman) personal strength of character and survival into sharp contrast with many of the other characters' own sense of strength, and therefore the viewers' as well. There are villains all around and innocent (and not so innocent) victims for the taking. Personal values of all kinds (racial, greed, criminal) are set up for display and comparison against Russell's simple personal strength and integrity like a painting competition at a state fair.

My most remembered quote from this film is Russell's response to Dr. Favor (the embezzler) when Favor attempts to educate Russell that white (implying civilized) people stick together and help each other out and Russell responds, "They better". **2006, BJ Brownell, IMDb**



"Now it pays for you to be a white man for awhile."

So says a Mexican saloon owner (Val Avery) to Paul Newman's John Russell in *Hombre*, an underappreciated Western based on an early Elmore Leonard novel and directed by Martin Ritt. Russell is, indeed, a white man, but he was raised by Apaches after being kidnapped as a child. Now straddling two worlds, Russell cuts his hair and returns to town to claim an inheritance, which he uses to take a stagecoach in search of a new life.

...It's not only that *Hombre* dramatizes the racism endured by Native Americans (and, to a different degree, Mexican Americans). It's that the movie depicts the American West as a collision of codes. What unites the heroes of *Hombre* (and there aren't many) is their capacity for mercy, not the color of their skin.

The characters of *Hombre* are put to this test when the stagecoach is ambushed by outlaws and the passengers escape into the wilderness. Previously disdainful of Russell – they had voted to make him sit up top with the driver – they must now rely on him to survive. Among the passengers is the bullying Cicero Grimes (a pug-faced Richard Boone), a pair of bickering young newlyweds (Margaret Blye and Peter Lazer) and a duplicitous "Indian agent" (Fredric March).

We also have the pleasure of the company of Diane Cilento as Jessie, a practical, plain-spoken boarding-house operator who tells it like it is, particularly to the stone-faced Russell. Speaking the way Dolly Parton sings – "I've been wedded and bedded and loved and let down," she sighs at one point – Cilento is easily the life force of the movie.

She's also its conscience, especially as the plot begins to hinge on whether or not Russell will strike out on his own – go with his survivalist instincts – or risk himself to protect this newfound community, including those who previously disdained him. (With his natural stoicism, Newman plays this tension perfectly.) Jessie is no softie – at one point she slaps that wife across the face – but she knows all too well the cost of living only for yourself. *Hombre*, in the end, honors the opposite: sacrifice.

2013

Our next screening, *Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*, the last film in our Western season – a modern Western starring and directed by Tommy Lee Jones



Eden Court
Cinema

10th July
2018
Time
7:15pm

As a vision of the American West and the wide country around it, "The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada" strikes both fresh and familiar chords, most of them pleasingly dissonant. Directed with a steady hand and an eye for eccentric detail by the actor Tommy Lee Jones, who also stars, this western about a Texas ranch foreman trying to bury his Mexican friend is an accounting of those borders that separate rich from poor, men from women, friend from stranger, and as such, is less an act of revisionism than one of reconsideration. As in most westerns, as in John Ford's "Searchers" and Cormac McCarthy's "Crossing," the journey here is as spiritual as it is physical, as much inwardly directed as outward bound.