

High Noon

Made in 22 days for \$750,000, mostly on a permanent set of a western street in Hollywood, *High Noon* was meticulously preplanned through story-boarding by the fastidious Zinnemann, then cut to the bone in post-production, so that it more or less takes place in so-called real time. The result is a classic example of what had come to be known in the late 1940s as an 'adult' or 'psychological' western.

PhilipFrench-TheObserver

The plot is simple and linear. Gary Cooper's ageing Marshal Kane, right, has cleaned up an archetypal frontier town and is about to settle elsewhere as a storekeeper with his new Quaker bride (Grace Kelly) when a telegraph message announces that a vicious outlaw he'd sent to state prison is arriving on the noon train and is coming after him with three fellow gunslingers.

He's urged to leave; his pacifist wife turns against him; nobody in the community will come to his aid; the town's drinkers and gamblers welcome the return of the honky-tonk times. Kane is the lonely existential hero compelled by the western movie ethic - 'a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do'. The film is in austere black and white, its appearance based on 19th-century photography and the one elaborate visual moment resulted from Zinnemann's friend, director George Stevens, lending him a camera crane for a couple of hours.

High Noon was developed and initially perceived as an allegory about the influence of McCarthyism in Hollywood and America at large, and screenwriter Carl Foreman was a blacklisted exile in England when it opened. But over the years, it has been

Eden Court Cinema
Tuesday 14 July 2015
at 7.15pm

Drama, 1952 USA
B&W, 85 mins

Director:
Fred Zinnemann

Screenplay: Carl
Foreman, T.S. Cook

Cast: Gary Cooper,
Grace Kelly, Thomas
Mitchell and Lloyd
Bridges

differently interpreted. In 1979 it was used in a Solidarity poster in Poland. *High Noon* restored Gary Cooper's waning reputation and brought him his second Oscar. But his fellow right-wing actor John Wayne loathed the film (he was particularly incensed by the marshal throwing his badge of office into the dust), and later made a deliberate riposte in the form of *Rio Bravo* (1959).

Dmitri Tiomkin's taut score featured a haunting theme song performed by B-feature singing cowboy Tex Ritter, which connected the film to the innocence of the traditional western. Mexican actress Katy Jurado, who as yet spoke no English, made her memorable Hollywood debut as the ex-mistress of both Kane and the killer out to get him; this was also the first film of Kelly and Lee Van Cleef.



Bolstered by a highly dignified and impeccable performance from an aging Gary Cooper, long since seen as synonymous with male heroism, Zinnemann's taut, meticulously crafted Western - largely played out in 'real time' with an emphasis on ticking clocks palpably cranking up the tension - still stands as one of the greatest examples of the genre. It's an allegorical tale about the McCarthy witch hunts, penned by HUAC blacklisted writer Carl Foreman, also offering a number of well-thought-out observations on the nature of violence. It's a beautifully composed film - courtesy of Floyd Crosby's picturesque sunlight and shadow compositions .

David Wood, BBC

A film about what it means to be a man that manages to avoid the musk of machismo.

John Wayne once called this the most Un-American film he'd ever seen because he didn't like it's subtext which was very critical of McCarthyism and red-baiting during the Red Scare. Looking at the film now, yes, you can still see shades of that social commentary, but its impact has waned some over the years. However, it is still nevertheless an absolutely fantastic story of one man standing up against unfavorable odds while no one else will stand alongside him.

Carlos Magalhães

Some remarks tell a lot about their authors' artistic conceptions. Howard Hawks said that "High Noon" wasn't his idea "of a good Western". John Wayne went even further, saying it was the most "unAmerican thing" he ever saw. Even Roger Ebert disliked the film and so did many viewers who - I guess - expected fights, chases, vast landscapes and other Western archetypes. I find these views artistically oppressive.

El Maruecan, 2011

Fred Zinnerman's masterpiece "High Noon" is a pure and authentic western with an innovative psychological dimension, incarnated by Will Kane, Gary Cooper in a career defining role, and more than in any film, sublimated beautifully haunting song....

.....The plot is a long build-up, carried by the score resonating with a growing solemnity, as the editing's pacing accelerates. The suspense culminates at noon, where we get to see all the protagonists in close up, contrasting with the deserted sight of the town, and time going faster and faster, until the train whistles. When the first gunshot is heard, Helen's dark and sincere eyes proved to have affected Amy who gets off the train, joins her husband and uses violence despite her reluctance. The last gunshot concludes one hour and half of a psychological torture with the mark of hypocrisy, when the town is instantly submerged by the people 'coming to see'.

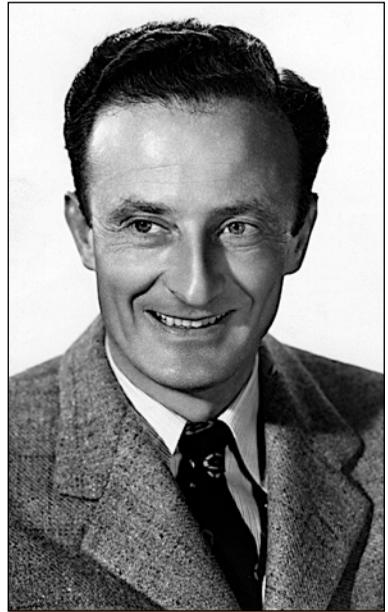
And the ending couldn't have been more satisfying, before getting into the buckboard, a relieved Kane condescendingly looks at the townspeople, removes the tin star and drops it into the dusty ground, an iconic ending celebrating bravery and morality, and an eternal response to all the cowardice, the hypocrisy and the blacklisting in the world.

With all due respect, Mr. Hawks, Wayne and Ebert, "High Noon" is simply perfect the way it is ...

DIRECTOR – FRED ZINNEMANN

Vienna-born (1907) Fred Zinnemann had childhood dreams of becoming a musician, and later planned on a law career, before his viewing of the movies of Erich Von Stroheim drew him into the movie business, initially as a cameraman. He came to the United States in 1929, and later found work as an editor, and as an assistant to documentary filmmaker Robert Flaherty, and then to choreographer Busby Berkeley. He joined MGM in the late '30s as a director of comedy shorts, and won an Academy award for his 1938 short subject *That Mothers Might Live*. Zinnemann moved up to full-length features in 1941, but found little opportunity to work on anything but B-pictures until 1948, with *The Search*, a drama set in post-World War II Europe.

He didn't really become a major recognized box-office name as a director, however, until 1952 when his *High Noon*, starring Gary Cooper, which had been perceived by most observers as headed for commercial disaster, became a monster box-office hit and a multi-Academy award nominee. Zinnemann's handling of *From Here to Eternity* solidified his reputation as one of Hollywood's most reliable hands at dealing with difficult screen material. Comfortable in most genres, Zinnemann subsequently excelled in musicals (*Oklahoma!*), adaptations of stage work (*A Man for All Seasons*, for which he won another Oscar), and thrillers (*Day of the Jackal*). Along with Billy Wilder, Zinnemann represented the most successful of expatriate European directors in Hollywood. He died in London in 1997.



Fred Zinnemann, 1907 - 1997



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at 7.15pm

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