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JOHNNY GUITAR

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Retrospektive Traumfrauen



Diese Geschichte aus dem Wilden Westen hat trotz ihrer handlungsmäßigen Üblichkeit ein gewisses Format. Das ist vor allen Dingen der Hauptdarstellerin Joan Crawford und ihrem Partner Sterling Hayden zu verdanken. Beide bieten Leistungen, die in den Rahmen eines jeden großen Filmes passen würden.

Man sieht sich zurückversetzt in jene Zeit, in der im Westen Amerikas die großen Eisenbahnen gebaut werden. In ihrem Gefolge befinden sich skrupellose Frauen, harte Desperados sowie Haß und Liebe. Wenn dann zum Schluß eine Spielhölle zum Raub der Flammen wird, die Desperados unter den Schüssen der Polizei sterben und sich eine schöne Frau mit einem Gitarrenspieler in Liebe verbindet, dann gibt das den Farben von Trucolor alle Möglichkeiten. Und so möchten wir glauben, daß der Film WENN FRAUEN HASSEN bei Leuten, die das Genre lieben, besonders gute Kassen machen wird.

Dieter Fritko in: Film-Echo (Wiesbaden), Nr. 45, 6. 11. 1954.

Der Gitarren-Johnny (Sterling Hayden) weckt in der feurig-schönen Roulette-Bossin (Joan Crawford) fast gelöschte Leidenschaften und gerät dadurch in den Intrigenmittelpunkt ihrer Gegenspielerin. In letzter Sekunde kann er die Geliebte noch dem Strangulationskommando entreißen. Folgen noch viele Komplikationen, bis die beiden

in ein neues, sauberes, edleres Leben ziehen können. Ein Wild-West-Reiher mit Ambitionen: hart, nahtgenau, mit großartiger Charakterisierung der Personen, scharfäugiger Kamera und in Trucolor. In seiner Klasse: Klasse.

Walter A. Persich in: Filmblätter (Berlin), Nr. 47, 26. 11. 1954.

Joan Crawford, last of the glamour gals of the silent film, has more and more in recent years been choosing fantastically glamerous (and correspondingly unrealistic) stories in which to stalk, stride and strut across the new proscenium-wide movie screens. Some of these fabulous fantasies do come off – and some do not. JOHNNY GUITAR does – and doesn't. Based on Roy Chanslor's novel of the Old West, this film is a strange, often strikingly artistic, decoratively imaginative, and nearly always absorbing drama. Frequently, however, it reaches so far artistically, to make its point, that it stumbles over its own artiness. However, there will be, for many, enough compensations to make up for the picture's occasional overdrawn absurdities.

Conceived in the mystic, folksy, sentimental Frankie and Johnnie tradition, this is basically an off-beat tale of the deathless love of a gunman turned guitar player (Sterling Hayden) for a femme fatale who runs a desert town saloon (Miss Crawford). This lady, between love and hate for

JOHNNY GUITAR

USA 1953/54. | Regie: Nicholas Ray. | Regie-Assistenz: Herb Mendelson. | Drehbuch: Philip Yordan, nach dem gleichnamigen Roman (1899) von Roy Chanslor. | Kamera: Harry Stradling. | Special Effects: Howard Lydecker, Theodore Lydecker. | Schnitt: Richard L. Van Enger. | Ton: T. A. Carman, Howard Wilson. | Musik: Victor Young. | Titelsong: Victor Young/Peggy Lee, gesungen von Peggy Lee. | Art Direction: James Sullivan. | Set Decoration: John McCarthy, Jr., Edward G. Boyle. | Kostüme: Sheila O'Brien. | Make-up: Bob Mark. | Frisuren: Peggy Gray. | Stunts: Robert Bradshaw, Jack Montgomery.

Darsteller/innen: **Joan Crawford** (Vienna) | Sterling Hayden (Johnny Logan, „Johnny Guitar“) | Mercedes McCambridge (Emma Small) | Scott Brady (Dancin' Kid) | Ward Bond (John McIvers) | Ben Cooper (Turkey Ralston) | Ernest Borgnine (Bart Lonergan) | John Carradine (Old Tom) | Royal Dano (Corey) | Frank Ferguson (Marshal Williams) | Paul Fix (Eddie) | Rhys Williams (Mr. Andrews) | Ian MacDonald (Pete) | Will Wright (Ned, Bank Teller) | John Maxwell (Jake, Bank Clerk) | Robert Osterloh (Sam) | Frank Marlowe (Frank, Bartender) | Trevor Bardette (Jenks) | Summer Williams, Sheb Wooley, Denver Pyle, Clem Harvey, Dennis Hopper (Possemen).

Produktion: Republic Pictures Corporation. | Produzenten: Herbert J. Yates, Nicholas Ray (uncredited). | Drehzeit: 19. 10. – Mitte Dezember 1953 (44 Tage). | Drehorte: Republic Studios, North Hollywood, Los Angeles, USA; Originalschauplätze in Arizona, USA (Sedona, Oak Creek Canyon, Red Rock Crossing). | Copyright: 24. 3. 1954, LP3978. | Format: 35 mm, Farbe (Trucolor). | Originallänge: 110 Min. | Uraufführung: 27. 5. 1954, New York, Mayfair. | US-Release: Mai 1954. | Deutsche Erstaufführung: 13. 8. 1954, Salzgitter, Filmbühne (WENN FRAUEN HASSEN).

Kopie: Paramount Print Archive, Burbank, CA (Neue Kopie).



JOHNNY GUITAR: Sterling Hayden, Joan Crawford



Filmuseum Berlin – Deutsche Kinemathek
Retrospektive Traumfrauen

Joan Crawford

Joan was a star in every sense of the word. She didn't remind you of it in a particular way. You just knew it. And you didn't think any less of her for it.

Henry Fonda in: Joan Crawford. London: Pavilion 1986, o.P.

My first impression of Joan Crawford was of glamour. Glamour had nothing to do with aloofness or temperament, it had to do with friendliness, tremendous vitality and hard work, ambition and constant desire to improve her work, and to get knowledgeable about things that were important to her work.

James Stewart in: Joan Crawford. London: Pavilion 1986, o.P.

her man Johnny Guitar, is simultaneously being stalked in a murderous female feud by a psychopathic hussy (Mercedes McCambridge) who is jealous of the saloon gal's fatal fascination for another killer man known as the Dancin' Kid (Scott Brady).

The rampageous story is filmed in an alternately brilliant and subdued Trucolor, whose high quality is reminiscent of the prize-winning *MOULIN ROUGE* [John Huston, Großbritannien 1952], and is unreeled in a kind of frenetic symphonic swing, much like a Western ballad punctuated by the twangy staccato melody of popping guns and hammering hooves. (...) There's enough hard riding, hard fighting, drinking, gambling and loving here for a dozen westerns – and Miss Crawford, in tight black pants, flaming red blouse or flowing white bridal gown, dominates every moment of it. Only one gunshot and guitar chord, so to speak, behind her is Mr. Hayden as her lover Johnny; Mr. Brady as the deadly Dancin' Kid and Miss McCambridge as the perfect balladic image of a jilted gal with a psychopathic hate. (...)

Jesse Zunker in: *Cue* (New York), 5. 6. 1954.

(...) The shadow of Kraft-Ebbing hangs heavily over this preposterous Western. What are we to make of Emma, the fierce and brawling lady banker, with a pathological hatred of The Dancin' Kid – „he makes her feel like a woman, and she doesn't like it, so she wants to hang him,“ explains one of the posse – and an even more vicious one of Vienna, which leads her to fire the gambling house, put the woman (who happens, at this moment, to be wearing a long white organdie dress) on a horse with hands tied behind her back, lead her to the noose, and have her whip in her hand at the moment Johnny Guitar comes to the rescue? And what, too, of Vienna herself, who teeters ambivalently between a Hopalong Cassidy outfit and white organdie, conducts a love-hate war with her Johnny and shoots it out to the death with Emma? Other touches, too, are bizarre: the posse all in funeral clothes, leaping from the last rites of sprinkling dust to a lynching ...

This is, of course, a Joan Crawford picture – in which, as we all know, anything may happen nowadays. She repeats, adding the overtones already listed, her *TORCH SONG* [Charles Walters, USA 1953] characterisation, this time a rude, egotistical prima donna of the West, with a tongue

more sharpshooting than ever. Beside her and Mercedes McCambridge, equally spirited in her way, the men seem poor things – rather cowed, inarticulate and lost. The dialogue does full justice to the situations, the direction is slick, and the „Trucolor by Consolidated,“ with its weird chemical blues and mineral yellows, heightens the general effect of fascinating, potentous lunacy. G.L. (Gavin Lambert) in: *Monthly Film Bulletin* (London), Nr. 246, Juli 1954.

JOHNNY GUITAR is one of those curious composite animals, like the tiglon, the hippolope and the peccadillo, that most people would rather talk about than see. This one is a crossbreed of the western with a psychoanalytic case history. Somehow, strains of Greek tragedy, Germanic grand opera and just plain better-class suburban living have also slipped into the mixture.

The story is a series of switches on the old railroad line. The ranchmen don't want the track to cut through their open range. Vienna (Joan Crawford), the madam of a gambling hall and a big land speculator, is understandably all for progress. She hires Johnny Guitar (Sterling Hayden), a gunman who has reformed and given up his guns, to defend her financial interests and attack her female susceptibilities. The main switch: the menace is not a man but a woman (Mercedes McCambridge). What's more, she is not just the usual jealous woman but a real sexological square knot who fondles pistols suggestively and gets unladylike satisfaction from watching a house burn down. In the end it is the women, not the men, who shoot it out, and Mercedes gets her death wish while Joan gets her man.

(...) Nicholas Ray (...) works with the misguided brilliance of a myopic Pygmalion. Almost every separate part of the picture comes to life in one way or another, but none quite fits into the whole. At one moment a character is declaiming like a choragus; at the next he may be slanging to beat Broadway. Even the backdrops are out of sorts with one another and with the story. In one scene *Frontierswoman* Crawford, dressed to the nines in a Paris gown, sits down to a grand piano in a matted grotto lit by candelabra, and plunks away like a cowtown Liberace while the posse thunders toward a sort of sagebrush „Götterdämmerung“. Anonym in: *Time* (New York), 14. 6. 1954.