

Document Citation

Title	The chase
Author(s)	Robert B. Frederick
Source	<i>Variety</i>
Date	1965 Jan 27
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	The chase, Penn, Arthur, 1966

1/27/1965 **The Chase**
(PANAVISION—TECHNICOLOR)

Sam Spiegel abandons foreign climes to take a look at sociological state of Texas. Name-studded cast and violence laid on with heavy hand should provide profitable grist for the **Weekly Variety**.

Columbia Pictures release of a Horizon (Sam Spiegel) production. Stars Marlon Brando, Jane Fonda, Robert Redford, James Fox; features E. G. Marshall, Angie Dickinson, Janice Rule, Miriam Hopkins, Martha Hyer, Robert Duvall, Richard Bradford, Henry Hull, Diana Hyland. Directed by Arthur Penn. Screenplay by Lillian Hellman, based on novel and play by Horton Foote; camera (Technicolor), Joseph La Shelle; editor, Gene Milford; sound, Charles J. Rice; music, composed and conducted by John Barry. Reviewed at Columbia home office, N.Y., Jan. 20, '65. Running Time, 138 MINS.

Calder	Marlon Brando
Anna	Jane Fonda
Bubber	Robert Redford
Val Rogers	E. G. Marshall
Ruby Calder	Angie Dickinson
Emily Stewart	Janice Rule
Mrs. Reeves	Miriam Hopkins
Mary Fuller	Martha Hyer
Damon Fuller	Richard Bradford
Edwin Stewart	Robert Duvall
Jason Rogers (Jake)	James Fox
Elizabeth Rogers	Diana Hyland
Briggs	Henry Hull
Mrs. Briggs	Jocelyn Brando
Verna Dee	Katherine Walsh
Cutie	Lori Martin
Paul	Marc Seaton
Seymour	Paul Williams
Lem	Clifton James
Mr. Reeves	Malcolm Atterbury
Mrs. Henderson	Nydia Westman
Lester Johnson	Joel Fluellen
Archie	Steve Ihnat
Moore	Maurice Manson
Sol	Bruce Cabot
Slim	Steve Whitaker
Mrs. Shiffletious	Pamela Curran
Sam	Ken Renard

Producer Sam Spiegel has turned away, briefly, from the more exotic climes of his earlier films to take a long, hard look at what makes people tick. The particular Texan examples with which he has peopled "The Chase" are not types one would want as neighbors (although one might have them). They are, however, colorful, uncomfortably identifiable and, hence, generally unsympathetic.

"The Chase," while far from being "Bridge On The River Kwai" or "Lawrence of Arabia," has enough going for it, plus a planned all-out promotional campaign, to make it one of Columbia's top grossers for 1966. Inadequacies in scripting are somewhat balanced by an interesting use of non-type casting. Superb technical work throughout provides "The Chase" with generally consistent dramatic excitement, topped by a violence-laden climax that leaves little to the imagination.

Only the framework of Horton Foote's novel (but little of his play, which preceded it), has been utilized by Lillian Hellman in her screenplay. The original plot centered on an escaped convict seeking revenge on the sheriff who had sent him up but Miss Hellman makes them only two of the many characters with which she has populated her sociologically sick Texas town.

Through introduction of various other types she manages to provide most of the social grievances which trouble the world today—Injustice, bigotry, adultery, apathy, racial prejudice, the over-privileged rich and the undeserving poor, plus a bit of religious fanaticism that doesn't come off. The vapid efforts of Nydia Westman as a soft-spoken psalm-singing eccentric inspire laughter when none is intended. Her scenes, all distracting, should be excised from the over-long film. Miss Hellman gets across much of the melodramatic merit in the script but has left it with plenty of illogical loopholes.

Director Arthur Penn, a specialist in films about sick types, must share with Spiegel the credit for the film's merits and the blame for its occasional failures. The staging discipline and style that were vital elements in "Miracle Worker" are more relaxed here but Penn rules his large cast with a firm hand and gets, from most of them, interesting and even outstanding performances. He has cast some notably sexy screen types as plain to dowdy females and some good girls as bad ones, providing a point of interest which he fully utilizes.

Robert Redford, as the escaped convict whose impending return to his hometown gives many of its citizens the jitters, gives the film's best performance and the best, to date, of his still short screen career. He has an instinct for economy of dialog delivery and, alone on the screen during much of the earlier action and bypassed

for lengthy sequences when the story deals with other plot elements, he so imprints his character on the viewer's mind that, upon re-entering a scene, his last-seen action is still clear to the memory. Even when he finally becomes involved with other cast members, his own performance dominates.

Marlon Brando, in the comparatively small but important role of the sheriff, has obviously given much time and study to the part, but such detailed preparation as a carefully-delivered Texas accent means little when other cast members read their lines with a mixture of regional accents. Underplaying during most of the film, the character doesn't really come alive until a beating scene when he undergoes a shellacking as if William Farnum and Tom Santschl had teamed up to work him over.

Jane Fonda, as Redford's wife and the mistress of wealthy oilman James Fox, makes the most of the biggest female role. While she still displays some awkward mannerisms and tends to blow up her emotional scenes, her overall impression is good and she has learned how to read lines. "I've waited all those years and all these years," spoken to Fox when he tells her Redford has escaped but pleads with her to stay with him, quickly sums up the lengthy frustration of awaiting Redford's release and the crossed emotions that enable her to love both men at once.

Fox, whose British accent melts believably into the soft tones of Texas, continues to add to his promise of becoming one of the screen's top young leading men. He combines the moral weakness of "The Servant" and the good-at-heart-edness of "King Rat" to make his well-meaning but spineless rich man understandable if not sympathetic.

Most of the other female roles are interestingly played, with it a toss-up as to which is the most outstanding. Angie Dickinson, plain and comfortable as Brando's wife; Janice Rule, as a held-in-check nympho married to the wrong man; Miriam Hopkins, as the self-deluding, conscience-stricken mother of Redford and Martha Hyer, as an alcoholic wife, are all impressive. Diana Hyland is wasted, however, in a tiny part as Fox's wife.

The aforementioned Miss Westman and Jocelyn Brando, as Henry Hull's wife, have little chance to compete. Lori Martin and Katherine Walsh as two teenagers, yearning to be 21, are hardly noticed among the more professional adult cast members. Among the males, two in particular stand out. Robert Duvall, as Miss Rule's weak husband, makes his mouse of a man both pitifully weak and dramatically impressive. Also new to films, Richard Bradford, as the handsome, bored husband of Miss Hyer, is a welcome addition to the thinning ranks of younger character actors. E. G. Marshall, as Fox's doting but incompetent millionaire father; Henry Hull, as a bigoted, nosey real-estate dealer and Bruce Cabot as Miss Fonda's stepfather hold their own against the bigger parts of the others. Though uncredited, Eduardo Cianelli is seen and heard briefly in a party scene.

An interesting contribution is made by actor Steve Ihnat, as one of the threesome responsible for the climactic violence. He doesn't have a line of dialog and is an unobtrusive type, but the viewer remains aware of him from the time he makes a late entry at a party given by Duvall until his unexpected Jack Ruby-like action at the end of the film.

One area approached but left unexplored by Miss Hellman's

script is the racial attitude of the community towards Negroes. Although a few are seen briefly during the film and actor Joel Fluellen figures in an important key role, nothing much is said applicable to what must be on any southern city's social conscience today.

Joseph La Shelle's Technicolor and Panavision camerawork, particularly impressive in an excellent pre-title sequence which, though stylized and offbeat, quickly sets the atmospheric scene for the action that follows, also beautifully captures the wild rioting at the junkyard with its melange of fast action, noise, fires and explosions that backdrop the end of the chase. Gene Milford's editing, which could still find material for his scissors, manages to keep apace of the fast-moving happenings even when what is happening has little to do with the main storyline.

John Barry's score, strong on melodic line, should provide a successful soundtrack album but contains no particular theme that lingers in the ear.

As a social treatise, a psychological study or just a thriller, there's much in "The Chase" that's open to question. As an example of action and good acting, it's outstanding, but there are dull passages just as there are brief, brilliant moments of cinematic excellence.

A panning shot of the townspeople looking on as three fellow citizens coldbloodedly try to beat their sheriff to death is one of the most impressive portrayals of civic apathy and non-involvement yet filmed. It should make most responsible citizens squirm in their seats when they recognize their own failures and shortcomings. Unfortunately, there will probably be even more possessed of that self-deluding talent, as common to the Bronx as to Texas, that enables them to see and condemn and never recognize themselves.

Robe.