

Document Citation

Title	Division of cinema
Author(s)	
Source	<i>Publisher name not available</i>
Date	1975 Nov 19
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Stagecoach, Ford, John, 1939

STAGECOACH (1939): Directed by John Ford; screenplay by Dudley Nichols, based on the short story "Stage to Lordsburg" by Ernest Haycox; produced by John Ford and Walter Wanger; director of photography - Bert Glennon; edited by Dorothy Spencer and Walter Reynolds; music by Richard Hageman, W. Franke Harling, John Leipold, Leo Shuken, Louis Gruenberg (adapted from 17 American folk tunes of the early 1880's).

Locations: Kernville Dry Lake, Victorville, Fremont Pass, Calabasas, Chatsworth, Kayenta, Mesa and Monument Valley.

Academy Awards were won by the composers and by Thomas Mitchell ("Doc Boone") for Best Supporting Actor.

Cast: John Wayne ("The Ringo Kid"), Claire Trevor ("Dallas"), Thomas Mitchell ("Doc Boone"), Andy Devine ("Buck"), George Bancroft ("Curly Wilcox"), Donald Meek ("Mr. Peacock"), Louise Platt ("Lucy Mallory"), John Carradine ("Hatfield"), Berton Churchill ("Gatewood").

"Stagecoach shows the end result of Western urbanization, a town and its new values threatening to destroy the loose-knit but homogenous frontier community, with its intricate checks and balances of force and its reliance on individual honor." (The Cinema of John Ford by John Baxter, 1971, p. 80). The stagecoach passengers seem to form two groups, and represent the civilization - frontier conflict. The characters of "Hatfield", "Mr. Peacock", "Lucy Mallory", and "Gatewood" represent civilization, while "Ringo", "Curly", "Doc Boone", and "Dallas" represent the frontier. NOTE: "Ford's exploration of the tensions in this group is ingeniously accurate, carried on, as usual, in patterns of gestures and actions rather than words." (The Cinema of John Ford by John Baxter, p. 81).

"The first four-fifths [of Stagecoach], economically scripted and propelled along with irresistible urgency and drive, constitute perhaps the best chase film ever made--certainly the climatic pursuit of the stage across the salt flats by a party of whooping Apaches, the last-minute rescue by the cavalry, bugles sounding and pennants flying, could not be done better. One regrets only the faulty construction which tacks on a two-reel anti-climax after the film has reached its natural end, and a certain banality of characterization, not wholly compensated by the sympathy and tact of handling." ("The Method of John Ford" by Lindsay Anderson, pp. 236-7, in The Emergence of Film Art by Lewis Jacobs).

"His fine plastic sense enables Ford to develop his stories in a continuous succession of telling compositions. (It is worth noting that when Welles and Toland caused such a stir with their use of ceilings in Citizen Kane, Ford and Glennon had been using them without ostentation for years--in Stagecoach, Lincoln, and Drums Along the Mohawk.) His camera moves comparatively rarely, but so strong is his sense of the essential dynamism of the film that, even where movement within the frame is at a minimum, his films are never static. Ford's action sequences are justly famous for their vigor and grasp, their unrivaled ability to build and sustain tension." ("The Method of John Ford" by Lindsay Anderson, p. 242).