

**ely**  
**film**  
**society** = **the**  
**notes**

**october**  
**2014**

**latest news**

- Many thanks to the members who turned up to The Kid Brother in the Cathedral.
- Numbers were less than at previous showings but Edmund showed himself an improviser of skill and we hope to continue this fruitful partnership.
- We're gingerly dipping a toe in the world of internet social media - local digital marketing expert (and EFS member) Sue Keogh has offered to set us up a group presence on Meetup.com.

# High Noon

Fred Zinneman, US 1952

Carl Foreman ..... screenplay  
John W. Cunningham  
..... magazine story *The Tin Star*

Gary Cooper ..... Marshal Will Kane  
Thomas Mitchell  
..... Mayor Jonas Henderson  
Lloyd Bridges  
..... Deputy Marshal Harvey Pell  
Katy Jurado ..... Helen Ramirez  
Grace Kelly ..... Amy Fowler Kane  
Otto Kruger ..... Judge Percy Mettrick  
Lon Chaney Jr. .... Martin Howe  
Harry Morgan ..... Sam Fuller  
Ian MacDonald ..... Frank Miller  
Eve McVeagh ..... Mildred Fuller  
Morgan Farley ..... Dr. Mahin - Minister  
Harry Shannon ..... Cooper  
Lee Van Cleef ..... Jack Colby  
Robert J. Wilke ..... Jim Pierce  
Sheb Wooley ..... Ben Miller



Winner of four Academy Awards (Actor, Editing, Music, Score) and four Golden Globe Awards (Actor, Supporting Actress, Score, Cinematography *Black and White*)

Iconic Western starring Gary Cooper as Will Kane (the Hadleyville marshall) and Grace Kelly as Amy (his new bride).

Kane has plans to retire, but these are shattered by the news that the Miller gang, led by his old adversary, Frank Miller is coming to town on the noon train, to exact revenge.

The film centers on the events that unfold in the next 85 minutes as Kane is forced to face the gang alone. Meanwhile Amy gives Will an ultimatum, that she is leaving on the noon train, with or without him. The subsequent showdown results in an ending which caused a good deal of controversy in the USA.

The film's production and release coincided with the second Red Scare and the Korean War. Writer and

producer, Carl Foreman was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee, while he was writing the film. A former member of the Communist Party, but inactive for more than ten years, Foreman declined to name names and was labeled as unco-operative witness by the HUAC. Stanley Kramer the joint producer with Foreman then tried to remove him from the production, but director Fred Zinneman intervened.

Thus Foreman remained on the production but was forced to sell his part of the company, and moved to Britain before the film was released, never to work in Hollywood again.

*High Noon* was filmed entirely in California, including Hadleyville itself. In spite of grossing some \$3.4m at the box office in 1952, the film was criticized by some audiences as it did not contain expected Western content such as chases, violence and picture-postcard scenery. In the Soviet Union the film was criticised as glorification of the individual. However, the film has been labelled 'the favourite movie of the presidents' as it has been screened in The White House by numerous presidents, Bill Clinton called it his favourite film and screened it no less than 17 times, whilst Dwight Eisenhower also screened it many times.

In 1959 John Wayne teamed up with Howard Hawks to make *Rio Bravo* because he didn't like *High Noon*. Zinneman later said 'Sheriffs are people, and no two people are alike, *High Noon* takes place in the Old West, but it is a story about a man's conflict of conscience.' In any event respect for the Western Hero has not been diminished by *High Noon*.

In 1989 *High Noon* was selected for preservation in the United States Film Registry by the Library of Congress, as being culturally, historically and aesthetically significant. The film is 27<sup>th</sup> on the American Film Institute's 2007 list of great films and 2<sup>nd</sup> on the 'great westerns' list.

#### TRIVIA

- **Gregory Peck said that turning down this film was the biggest regret of his career; although he modestly added that he didn't think he could have played the lead as well as Gary Cooper.**
- **Fred Zinneman wanted a hot, stark look to the film. Cinematographer Floyd Crosby achieved this by not filtering the sky and having the prints made a few points lighter than normal.**
- **Gary Cooper and Grace Kelly had an affair that lasted for the duration of the filming.**
- **Several shots of clocks are interspersed throughout the film and they correspond with actual minutes ticking by.**
- **This movie is often described as 'a western for people who don't like westerns'.**



Among the many themes inherent in the Western genre, the division between civilization and lawlessness has always been a major issue. Usually, a representative from civilized society (a sheriff, a rancher, an army officer) is called upon to battle the forces of lawlessness, whether they are outlaws, greedy landowners, or Indians. The outcome usually results in a return to normalcy for the community with the antagonists vanquished and the hero riding off into the sunset, his mission accomplished. Alan Ladd's mysterious title character in *Shane* (1953), directed by George Stevens, is a classic example of the archetypal Western hero, one who upholds and protects the morality and laws of a civilized community against those who threaten its existence in the vast Western landscape.

But in *High Noon*, we are presented with something quite different. On the surface, Hadleyville is a long-established community with a vibrant commerce, an active church, and a history of stable law enforcement. But beneath the facade of respectability are major flaws in the infrastructure. The town, which was once terrorized by Frank Miller, is now faced with his return from prison (his death sentence was commuted to life but he was paroled early for good behavior). Yet, except for the marshal, the townspeople seem unconcerned about the effect this will have on their community. They refuse to get involved, take a stand or rally to the side of the man who is responsible for their safe and comfortable existence. Even the marshal's good friend, William Fuller (Harry Morgan), hides inside his house

with his wife and refuses to come to the door when Kane pays a visit. As the couple watch the marshal walk away, Fuller stands next to his ashamed wife and asks her if she would rather have him alive or dead in the street. Yet, his cowardice is not unusual; the entire town is reluctant to defend their freedom against an obvious threat to it. This issue of moral responsibility is what makes *High Noon* unique among Westerns and raises the question, is civilization really worth fighting for?

In his biography, *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World: A Life in Hollywood*, Stanley Kramer had this to say about *High Noon*: "From the start, many of the people around me felt I was bent on a bootless project. I hired Gary Cooper to play the marshal because he was still a star, even though he was no longer at the height of his popularity. I thought he would give the picture the stature and attention it needed. It is, after all, a difficult story to define. It's a story filled with tense anticipation but very little action. Since all those who read it thought of it as a Western, they expected to see guns blazing and horses galloping everywhere. In our minds, though, it wasn't an action picture. We didn't even think of it as a Western."

from *Why High Noon Is Essential*  
by Scott McGee & Jeff Stafford  
tcm.com

**NEXT MONTH'S FILM IS  
WINGS OF DESIRE  
(Wim Wenders, Germany 1987)  
Monday 17 October**