



**MORRICONE**

# Days of Heaven

Despite being second choice after guitarist Leo Kottke opted to write songs rather than the entire score, Morricone received his first Oscar nomination for Terrence Malick's elegiac tale of the Texas Panhandle in the mid-1910s. In many ways, the rustic themes make this the flipside of a compositional coin with his work on Bernardo Bertolucci's *1900* (1976). The ghost of Giuseppe Verdi haunts that epic account of Italy's descent into fascism, but it's the 7th movement of Camille Saint-Saëns's *Carnival of the Animals*, that inspired Morricone's pastoral theme, 'Aquarium'. It's complemented by the equally enchanting string serenade, 'Harvest'; the deft flute piece, 'Happiness'; and a love theme that contains echoes of the score that Vincent Ward would reject for *What Dreams May Come* (1998).

By contrast, there's dramatic urgency in 'The Fire', which swirls around the locust swarm and the billowing blaze. All of which leaves you wondering why Malick kept feeling the need to interfere with the maestro's process.

**David Parkinson, [bfi.org.uk](http://bfi.org.uk)**

## **A contemporary review**

At the risk of being accused of repeating himself, Terrence Malick has here virtually re-orchestrated (though with incomparably greater richness) the principal features of *Badlands*, using an oblique voice-off commentary to distantiate and lend poetic dimensions to the otherwise fairly banal story of young fugitives fleeing from the intolerable frustrations of society. Where *Badlands* was about the unilateral influence of untamed landscapes on two young urban delinquents, *Days of Heaven* widens its perspective to describe no less than mankind, the Earth, and their mutual interaction.

Following a black-and-white montage of photographs summing up the legacy of the industrial revolution, two images perfectly describe the totality of the urban inferno: outside, under a bleak sky, women drudge through a mountain of slag in quest of fragments of coal; inside, roasted by hellish flames, men toil like robots to keep the furnaces alive. Then, seen silhouetted against the skyline with people clinging to every inch of its surface, the train looms as a Noah's ark heading for the promise of a new world, seemingly fulfilled as the paradise of the Texan wheat fields begin to stretch away, golden and lazily waving, as far as the eye can see. 'All three of us been going places, looking for things, searching for things, going on adventures,' Linda's commentary had cheerfully started, almost immediately introducing a note of apocalypse as she describes the forebodings of a stranger on the train. 'He told me the whole earth was going up in flames ... There's gonna be creatures running every which way, some of them burned, half their wings burning. People are gonna be screamin' and hollerin' for help ...'

Lush and pastoral, with herds of bison tranquilly grazing within reach of the harvesters, the Texan wheat fields seem to deny this vision as absurd. Yet already the farmer's stately mansion, perched in solitary splendour on the skyline in echo of *Giant* and apparently devoid of human inhabitants, looms as a House of Usher doomed to fall under the weight of human loneliness and folly. Already steam engines are rumbling in, shaking the earth as they haul in

the machinery to make the harvesting easier, quicker, more profitable. Already the animals are cowering in fear as their domain is invaded. And as the harvest reaches its frenzied climax, one shot of a mechanical separator belching choking clouds of chaff and grain into the parched atmosphere is enough to signal the parallel (unnecessarily stressed by a flash cut-in) with the furnaces of Chicago. This, one might say, is the thesis of the film, echoed by Bill's Horatio Algerish rather than socialistic determination to wage his own war on poverty: 'We got to do something about it; can't expect anybody else to.'

At which point the film turns the thesis inside out in acknowledgment of the follies and frailties of the human heart. Unexpectedly, the phoney marriage turns into a true one; equally unexpectedly, the hungry intruders on wealth react with grace rather than with acquisitive greed; and against all odds, the quartet are forged momentarily into a tight family unit, imperfect only because the initial lie means that Bill can neither remain nor bow out without destroying it. Almost achieved here, but disrupted from within, is the utopic balance that Linda reaches for in her attempt to explain Bill's motivation: 'He figured some people need more than they got, other people got more than they need.' Man, in other words, is turning in a vicious circle, destroying his earth in quest of the profit by which he is incapable of profiting.

The title of the film, given the extraordinary minatory power with which Malick invests his images of landscapes and objects – wind angrily ruffling a field of wheat, a scarecrow standing baleful guard by night, a glass preserving its taint of infidelity at the bottom of a river – seems to refer less to the numbered days of heaven enjoyed by the quartet on the farm, than to a time when gods once walked the earth where now only frail and fallible men persist in their illogical lives and unfathomable drives. Having destroyed their world, they are now dying along with it, purged from its face by the plagues of fire and locusts; and what is perhaps the key image in the film comes when, soon after embarking on his final flight, arriving at a river crossing, Bill is seen in enigmatic long shot holding out a medallion necklace to the ferryman. Obviously trading for a boat, he is also paying Charon prior to crossing the Styx; and as the boat pursues its ghostly voyage down the river, what we see are tranquil images of people going peacefully about their business, but what we hear is Linda's attempt to explain these visions: 'And you could see people on the shore, but it was far off and you couldn't see what they were doing. They were probably callin' for help or somethin', or they were tryin' to bury somebody or somethin'. Some sights that I saw was really spooky, that it gave me goose pimples, and that I felt like cold hands touchin' the back of my neck and ... it could be the dead comin' for me or somethin'.'

Having conjured the old Eden on its last legs, its course of self-destruction hastened by the industrial revolution, Malick then leaves it to die on the battlefields of the First World War. After that a new world began, with new and hitherto undreamed of forms of self-annihilation...

**Tom Milne, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, May 1979**

DAYS OF HEAVEN

Directed by: Terrence Malick  
©/Production Company:  
Paramount Pictures Corporation  
Production Company: O.P. Productions  
Executive Producer: Jacob Brackman  
Produced by: Bert Schneider, Harold Schneider  
Production Manager: Les Kimber  
2nd Unit Manager: Coulter Adams  
Senior Accountant: Edward Hill  
Location Accountant: Heather McIntosh  
Executive Assistant to Bert Schneider: Blue André  
Researchers: Irene Malick, Susan Vermazen, Rosalia Purdum, Peter Neufeld, Nathalie Seaver  
2nd Unit Director: Jacob Brackman  
Assistant Director: Skip Cospser  
2nd Assistant Directors: Rob Lockwood, Martin Walters  
Special Assistants to the Director: Nancy Kaclik, Peter Broderick  
Script Supervisor: Wally Bennett  
Casting: Dianne Crittenden  
Written by: Terrence Malick  
Director of Photography: Nestor Almendros  
Additional Photography: Haskell Wexler  
2nd Unit Photographer: Paul Ryan  
Time Lapse Photography: Ken Middleham  
Colour Consultant: Bob McMillian  
Camera Operators: John Bailey, Rod Parkhurst  
Special Camera Assistants: Kent Remington, Bob Eber  
Gaffer: James Boyle  
Best Boy: Malcolm Kendall  
Electrician: Andy Wilson  
Key Grip: Clyde Hart  
Dolly Grip: Frank Merrells  
Title Sequence Photographs: Lewis Hine, Henry Hamilton Bennett, Frances Benjamin Johnston, Chansonetta Emmons, William Notman, Edie Baskin  
Special Stills: Edie Baskin  
Stills: Bruno Engler  
Special Effects: John Thomas, Mel Merrells  
Editor: Billy Weber  
Additional Editors: Caroline Ferriol, Marion Segal, Susan Martin  
Assistant Editors: Roberta Friedman, George Trirogoff  
Editorial Consultants: Jeffrey Schneider, Dessy Markovski, Tikki Goldberg  
Art Director: Jack Fisk  
Set Decorator: Robert Gould  
Property Master: Allan Levine  
Assistant Property Master: Barry Merrells  
Set Construction: Get Set  
Painter: John Lattanzio  
Costume Designer: Patricia Norris  
Men’s Wardrobe: Gerard Green

Make-up: Jamie Brown  
Hairstylist: Bertine Taylor  
Title Design: Dan Perri  
Music/Music Conductor: Ennio Morricone  
Additional Music: Leo Kottke  
Harmonica: Rick Smith  
Music Co-ordinators: Gabriella Belloni, Enrico Demelis, Denny Bruce  
Music Editors: Dan Carlin Jr, Ted Roberts  
Music Mixer: Robert Glass Jr  
Sound Mixers: George Ronconi, Barry Thomas  
Special Audio Assistants: Allen Byers, Robert Burton, Alan Splet  
Sound: Glen Glenn Sound  
Glen Glenn Sound Crew: Robert Thirlwell, Jean Marler, Peter Gregory, Joe Wachter  
MGM Supervising Engineer: Chet Luton  
Dolby Consultants: Steve Katz, Philip Boole, Clyde McKinney  
Boom Men: Louie Hogue, Glen Lambert  
Re-recording Mixer: John Wilkinson  
Negative Cutter: Barbara Morrison  
Special Sound Effects: James Cox  
Sound Effects: Neiman-Tillar Associates  
Sound Effects Mixer: John Reitz  
Sound Effects Editors: Colin Mouat, Charles Campbell  
Stunt Flying: Erin Talbott, Joe Watts  
Technical Adviser: Clenton Owensby  
Wranglers: John Scott, Isabella Miller, Reg Glass, Bob Wilson, Joe Dodds, Dixie Gray

Cast

Richard Gere (Bill)  
Brooke Adams (Abby)  
Sam Shepard (the farmer)  
Linda Manz (Linda)  
Robert Wilke (farm foreman)  
Jackie Shultis (Linda’s friend)  
Stuart Margolin (mill foreman)  
Tim Scott (harvest hand)  
Gene Bell (dancer)  
Doug Kershaw (fiddler)  
Richard Libertini (vaudeville leader)  
Frenchie Lemond (vaudeville wrestler)  
Sahbra Markus (vaudeville dancer)  
Bob Wilson (accountant)  
Muriel Jolliffe (headmistress)  
John Wilkinson (preacher)  
King Cole (farm worker)

USA 1978©  
94 mins

Promotional partner



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