



BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Red River

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Directed by: Howard Hawks

Co-director: Arthur Rosson

©: Monterey Productions

Production Companies: Monterey Productions, United Artists

Produced by: Howard Hawks

Production Manager: Norman Cook

Assistant Director: William McGarry

Screenplay by: Borden Chase, Charles Schnee

From the Saturday Evening Post story by: Borden Chase

Photographed by: Russell Harlan

Special Photographic Effects: Allan Thompson

Special Effects: Donald Steward

Film Editor: Christian Nyby

Art Director: John Datu Arensma

Make-up: Lee Greenway

Music Composed and Directed by: Dimitri Tiomkin

The Song 'Settle Down' by: Dimitri Tiomkin

Music Recorder: Vinton Vernon

Sound: Richard Deweese

Recording: Western Electric

uncredited

Executive Producer: Charles K. Feldman

Script Supervisor: Bobbie Sierks

Assistant Editor: Carl Lerner

Wardrobe Man: Jack Miller

Cast:

John Wayne (*Tom Dunson*)

Montgomery Clift (*Matthew 'Matt' Garth*)

Joanne Dru (*Tess Millay*)

Walter Brennan (*'Groot' Nadine*)

Colleen Gray (*Fen*)

Harry Carey Sr (*Melville*)

John Ireland (*Cherry Valance*)

Noah Beery Jr (*Buster McGee*)

Harry Carey Jr (*Dan Latimer*)

Chief Yowlatchie (*Quo*)

Paul Fix (*Teeler Yacey*)

Hank Worden (*Simms*)

Mickey Kuhn (*Matthew as a boy*)

Ray Hyke (*Walt Jergens*)

Hal Talliaferro (*Old Leather*)

uncredited

Lane Chandler (*colonel*)

Joe Dominquez (*Mexican guard*)

Davison Clark (*Mr Meeker*)

Glenn Strange (*Naylor*)

Tom Tyler (*a quitter*)

Dan White (*Laredo*)

Ivan Parry (*Buck Kennelly*)

William Self (*Sutter, wounded wrangler*)

Paul Fierro (*Fernandez*)

Shelley Winters (*girl at wagon train dance*)

Lee Phelps, George Lloyd

(*gamblers at wagon train*)

USA 1947

127 mins

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away the film's ending.

Hawks' first western remains one of his greatest, its story of an epic cattle drive that established the Chisholm Trail serving as an examination of the changing relationship between the rough justice favoured by the increasingly authoritarian herd-owner and the more liberal ethos of his adoptive son. It's also, of course, a typically witty and exhilarating Hawksian study of professionalism and group loyalties.

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Red River's ending

At sun-up in a dusty street in Abilene, Kansas, in 1865, a towering figure of a man is striding toward a showdown, as a herd of cattle moves aside like courtiers making way for their king. A cowboy calls to the old-timer, then puts a bullet in his side to get his attention. The man turns, drops the cowboy with one shot, and walks on.

There stands a handsome stripling some 15 or 20 years his junior. The big man barks, 'Draw.' The youngster maintains eye contact, but won't do it. The older man fires off warning shots, one so close it cuts a groove in the young man's cheek. Finally the big guy grabs the youngster's gun, flings it away and begins to beat the kid with one hand. Even then his opponent won't retaliate – until the big man is slightly off guard, and the youngster seizes the chance to knock him flat. Now both throw punch after punch, until they collide with a chuck wagon.

And then, a gunshot. The men separate. A woman appears, gun trained, and gives the dazed combatants a large, and only intermittently coherent, piece of her mind. Why are they doing this, she rages, when they love each other? She stomps away, and the two men end up grinning at each other, their blood feud mended in the space of time it took her to yell at them.

The big man is Tom Dunson (John Wayne), the cowboy is Cherry Valance (John Ireland), the youngster is Matthew Garth (Montgomery Clift), and the ranting woman is Tess Millay (Joanne Dru). The film, of course, is Howard Hawks's *Red River* (1947), a tale of how Dunson drives 9,000 head of cattle and a motley assortment of cowboys across hundreds of miles to find a market for the beef. But Dunson's ambition becomes monomaniacal, he grows violent to keep order, and eventually Matt, the surrogate son Dunson adopted as a boy, seizes the herd and leaves Dunson behind. Dunson takes that about as well as you'd expect: 'Every time you turn around, expect to see me. 'Cause one time you'll turn around and I'll be there. I'll kill ya, Matt.'

Red River may have the most widely disliked ending of any major canonical film. Roger Ebert spoke for many when he called it 'silly'. Co-writer Borden Chase's original story had Dunson dying in grandly symbolic fashion after crossing the Red River, with Matt and Tess, one last time. Hawks's version was 'garbage', said Chase. Clift complained that Dru's intervention made

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Blue Velvet

Sat 19 Aug 17:45; Thu 24 Aug 18:10; Thu 31 Aug 20:35

Brief Encounter

Sun 20 Aug 13:20

3 Women

Sun 20 Aug 18:25

Mildred Pierce

Mon 21 Aug 20:45; Mon 28 Aug 15:10

Sawdust and Tinsel (Gycklanas afton)

Tue 22 Aug 20:45

Merrily We Go to Hell

Wed 23 Aug 18:15 (+ intro by author and film journalist Helen O'Hara)

La Peau douce (Silken Skin)

Thu 24 Aug 20:45

The Night of the Hunter

Sat 26 Aug 18:10; Tue 29 Aug 20:50

Beau travail

Mon 28 Aug 18:30

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Wed 30 Aug 18:10 (+ intro)

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things 'a farce'. Even Hawks, while defending the ending to Peter Bogdanovich years later, called it 'corny'.

Do I agree? I do not. I love it. Where others see a crude *deus ex dame*, I see a woman restoring order. After all, Dunson should have taken a woman's advice from the beginning.

Rewind to the opening, as Dunson leaves his fiancée Fen (Coleen Gray) behind, though she tells him prophetically, 'You need what a woman can give you, to do what you have to do.' She's killed in a Comanche raid. Aside from Tess – who's in love with Matt, and has heard both him and Dunson admit they love each other – only sidekick Nadine Groot (Walter Brennan) understands father and son. And during that last brawl, after Matt lands his first blow, Groot exclaims, 'It's all right. For 14 years, I've been scared, but it's gonna be all right.'

The fight is the culmination of a stupendous tonal high-wire act from Hawks. There is near-constant loss and violence in this film. But when it's over, just as the mood begins to dissipate, Hawks undercuts it – with a look, a line, a reaction shot of Brennan. When the boy Matt is first discovered, raving after escaping a Comanche raid, Dunson lets fly with a slap to bring him out of it. Almost immediately they shift to banter about the kid refusing to give up his gun, lines echoed at the climax; and, like the fadeout, the scene ends with grins. Throughout *Red River*, serious things happen while people crack wise. Dunson brands cattle that aren't his, a hanging offence; Matt remarks, 'You're gonna wind up branding every rump in the state of Texas except mine.' After Dunson shoots deserters from the drive, men drift away, shaken. Then cowboy Simms Reeves (Hank Worden) speaks up: 'Plantin' and readin', plantin' and readin'. Fill a man full of lead and stick him in the ground and then read words at him. Why, when you killed a man, why try to read the Lord in as a partner on the job?'

Dunson, admittedly, is as grim a character as Wayne ever played, aside from Ethan Edwards in *The Searchers* (1956). Dunson's change of heart in *Red River* mirrors Ethan's decision not to kill Debbie at the end of John Ford's film. But like everything else in Hawks, this life-and-death turnabout is played as practical sense, not poetic mystery. *Red River's* conclusion is carefully set up, but this is also true, and not trivial: flawed, obsessive Dunson is a great character, and so is Matt. Hawks knew audiences wouldn't want either man to die. He felt that way himself, and he was right.

Farran Smith Nehme, *Sight and Sound*, July 2015