



Johnny Guitar

Director: Nicholas Ray

©/Production Company:

Republic Pictures Corporation

Presented by: Herbert J. Yates

Associate Producer: Nicholas Ray *

Assistant Director: Herb Mendelson

Screenplay: Philip Yordan

Based on the novel by: Roy Chanslor

Director of Photography: Harry Stradling

Special Optical Effects:

Consolidated Film Industries

Special Effects: Howard Lydecker,

Theodore Lydecker

Editor: Richard L. Van Enger

Art Director: James Sullivan

Set Decorators: John McCarthy, Edward G. Boyle

Costume Designer: Sheila O'Brien

Make-up Supervision: Bob Mark

Hairstylist: Peggy Gray

Music: Victor Young

Song 'Johnny Guitar' by: Peggy Lee,

Victor Young; Sung by: Peggy Lee

Sound: T.A. Carman, Howard Wilson

Stunt Double for Mercedes McCambridge:

Helen Griffith *

Stunt Double for Scott Brady: Bob Folkerson *

Stunt Double for Sterling Hayden: Pete Kellett *

Stunt Double for Ernest Borgnine: Forrest Burns *

Stunt Double for Ward Bond: Rocky Shahan *

Cast:

Joan Crawford (Vienna)

Sterling Hayden (Johnny Guitar)

Mercedes McCambridge (Emma Small)

Scott Brady (Dancin' Kid)

Ward Bond (John McIvers)

Ben Cooper (Turkey Ralston)

Ernest Borgnine (Bart Lonergan)

John Carradine (Old Tom)

Royal Dano (Corey)

Frank Ferguson (Marshal Williams)

Paul Fix (Eddie)

Rhys Williams (Andrews)

Ian MacDonald (Pete)

Will Wright (Ned) *

John Maxwell (Jake) *

Robert Osterloh (Sam) *

Frank Marlowe (Frank) *

Trevor Bardette (Jenks) *

Sumner Williams, Sheb Wooley,

Denver Pyle, Clem Harvey, Jack Ingram (posse) *

USA 1954©

109 mins

Digital 4K

* Uncredited

Moviedrome transmission dates:

10 July 1988

12 June 1999

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Moviedrome: Bringing the Cult TV Series to the Big Screen

Johnny Guitar

'What is a cult film? A cult film is one which has a passionate following but does not appeal to everybody. Just because a movie is a cult movie does not automatically guarantee quality. Some cult films are very bad. Others are very, very good. Some make an awful lot of money at the box office. Others make no money at all. Some are considered quality films. Others are exploitation.' From 1988 to 2000 *Moviedrome* was presented by Alex Cox and then Mark Cousins. Across that time, more than 200 features were shown, and generations of movie fans and filmmakers would be informed and inspired by the selection, alongside the wit and wisdom of the introductions that preceded each screening. *Moviedrome* was a portal into the world of weird and wonderful cinema. This two-month season features some of the most notable titles screened and wherever possible they are preceded by the original televised introduction.

Nick Freand Jones, season curator and producer of *Moviedrome*

Alex Cox: A western, *Johnny Guitar* was produced and directed by Nicholas Ray. Nicholas Ray and Samuel Fuller are considered to be the kings of the cult directors. In his film *The American Friend*, the German director Wim Wenders used them both as actors; he also made a documentary about Ray called *Lightning over Water*.

Johnny Guitar wasn't very popular when it first came out, but in the years that have followed, it's acquired enormous status and prestige. I'm not sure exactly why. While I can see the reasons for liking, say, *One-Eyed Jacks*, *Johnny Guitar* leaves me a little cold. It seems more of a camp film than a cult one. It has very strong female characters who act like men. A lot of time and effort was spent on costumes – perhaps more than on some of the actors.

I don't know much about Sigmund Freud, but apparently, according to certain critics, the film contains a hoard of Freudian symbols, including stairwells, pistols, mine shafts – the kinds of things that are in every western, in fact. It makes you wonder how many other films the critics have seen. *Johnny Guitar* does have great actors, though – Sterling Hayden, Joan Crawford, Mercedes McCambridge, Ernest Borgnine. But altogether it's not an entirely successful film – a bit like Christmas in July.

Alex Cox's original introduction for *Moviedrome*. Also published in *Moviedrome: The Guide* (BBC, 1990). With thanks to moviedromer.tumblr.com

Mark Cousins: In 1953, former journalist, Roy Chanslor, published a novel, *Johnny Guitar*, which he dedicated to his fellow MCA client, Joan Crawford. Chanslor adapted the book into a cliché-ridden screenplay which was given to a third MCA client, director Nicholas Ray, who'd studied architecture with Frank Lloyd Wright and who'd already made three or four of the best pictures since the war, *They Live By Night* and *The Lusty Men*. The studio was Republic, a cheapy outfit which wanted to try out a new filmstock called Trucolor. Nick Ray hated the script, so Philip Yordan, a leftist who sometimes fronted for writers blacklisted by McCarthy, was brought in. Ray and Yordan re-wrote, they introduced a fierce new political, anti-witch-hunt feel to the story. Joan Crawford's character – a saloon-owner on the outskirts of Albuquerque, who's waiting for the railroad, became in their new version a principled

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Johnny Guitar

Fri 1 Aug 20:30; Sun 10 Aug 14:45;
Tue 19 Aug 18:10

The Harder They Come

Sat 2 Aug 15:00; Fri 8 Aug 20:45; Sat 23 Aug 18:10
Yojimbo

Sat 2 Aug 20:45; Mon 11 Aug 18:15;
Sun 24 Aug 12:30

What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?

Sun 3 Aug 14:45; Sat 16 Aug 12:00;
Thu 21 Aug 20:25

Mommie Dearest

Sun 3 Aug 18:20; Thu 14 Aug 20:30

Carnival of Souls

Wed 6 Aug 18:40; Fri 15 Aug 20:50

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

Thu 7 Aug 19:00; Sun 10 Aug 17:30;
Sun 24 Aug 17:30

The Girl on a Motorcycle

Fri 8 Aug 18:30; Sun 17 Aug 15:40

Badlands

Sat 9 Aug 12:30; Sat 16 Aug 18:10;
Tue 26 Aug 20:50

Performance

Sat 9 Aug 18:20; Mon 18 Aug 20:50

Diva

Sat 9 Aug 20:30; Tue 19 Aug 20:40;
Fri 29 Aug 18:15

Escape From New York

Mon 11 Aug 20:45; Sat 23 Aug 20:50;
Thu 28 Aug 18:20

To Sleep with Anger

Tue 12 Aug 20:35; Sat 16 Aug 15:10

Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters

Wed 13 Aug 18:20; Mon 25 Aug 14:50;
Sat 30 Aug 20:40

White of the Eye

Wed 20 Aug 20:40; Sun 31 Aug 15:10

Electra Glide in Blue

Thu 21 Aug 18:15; Fri 22 Aug 20:45

With thanks to

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individualist who stands up to the bully-boy tactics of local bankers and lawmen. The scenes where Crawford and Sterling Hayden talk about the posse being an animal and Mercedes McCambridge's extraordinary incitement to hatred speech are typical of the script additions they made.

Filming began and things were immediately bad. Joan Crawford was drunk a lot and got jealous of Mercedes McCambridge, especially when McCambridge got applauded by the crew for her performance of the lynch mob scene. Crawford was found drunk, having strewn McCambridge's clothes on a highway near the location in Arizona. Director Ray said of Crawford, 'As a human being she's a great actress.' Said McCambridge in her autobiography, 'Poor old rotten-egg Joan. I kept my mouth shut about her for a quarter of a century, now I really can't be bothered thinking about her.' One of the reasons why Crawford was sick with jealousy at McCambridge was that few people took her seriously as an actress, whilst McCambridge had been feted in theatre and Orson Welles said she was the greatest radio actress ever. She later did the voice of *The Exorcist*; and paradoxically for this film, where she's such a right-winger, became one of Hollywood's most committed Democrats. She's still alive but her life took a tragic turn when her only son killed himself and his family. Anyway, poor old rotten-egg Joan's outrage at the attention going to her antagonist led her to demand five more scenes, saying that she was the Clark Gable of the picture. The filmmakers had to comply and the result of this masculinisation of her part gives the film some of its fascinating sense of fluid sexual identity. The title role of Johnny Guitar played by Sterling Hayden is reduced in proportion. He and Crawford in effect swapped roles and so it's the two women who have the shoot-out at the end.

Johnny Guitar was released in America to pretty terrible reviews. Crawford once said, 'There's no excuse for a picture being so bad,' yet it's one of the greatest westerns if not one of the greatest films ever made. It's not just me that says this. The French director and critic, François Truffaut wrote that 'anyone who rejects *Johnny Guitar* should never go to see movies again. Such people will never recognise inspiration, a shot, an idea, a good film or even cinema itself.' The film's been referred to in many other movies since, including Godard's *Weekend*. Gavin Lambert wrote a novel, *The Slide Area*, based on its production. It plays almost continually in Paris. And Martin Scorsese says it's one of the cinema's great operatic works. You'll notice that the painted backdrops are obvious and that the editing is rough and jerky, but maybe, like so many people before, you'll like the maturity of the love story and the leftist denunciation of mob rule, the psychotic intensity of Crawford and McCambridge, the sense that this apparently terrible movie star caused this beautiful thing to be made, Nick Ray's placing of people like chessmen on a board, his use of space like the architect that he was, the fantastic unusual colour and, my favourite, the hysteria about what men are and why they fear women. *Johnny Guitar* is, I think, one of the greatest, strangest things this century has produced. I'm with Truffaut: if you don't like it, you're on another planet.

Mark Cousins' original introduction for *Moviedrome*. With thanks to moviedromer.tumblr.com