



Re-releases

The Misfits

The Misfits

Director: John Huston

©/Production Company: Seven Arts Productions

Producer: Frank E. Taylor

Production Manager: C.O. Erickson

Assistant to the Producer: Edward Barone

2nd Unit Director: Tom Shaw

Assistant Directors: Carl Beringer, John Gaudio

Script Supervisors: Angela Allen, Frank Remsden

Screenplay: Arthur Miller

Director of Photography: Russell Metty

Editor: George Tomasini

Art Directors: Stephen Grimes, William Newberry

Set Decorator: Frank McKelvy

Miss Monroe's Wardrobe by: Jean Louis,

Shirlee Strahm

Make-up: Allan Snyder, Frank Prehoda, Frank Larue

Body Make-up: Bunny Gardel

Hairstyles: Sydney Guilaroff, Agnes Flanagan

Main Titles: George Nelson & Co Inc

Music Composed and Conducted by: Alex North

Sound Recording: Philip Mitchell,

Charles Grenzbach

Wranglers: Billy Jones, Cindy James,

Bobby Davenport

uncredited

Camera Operator: Ledge Haddow

2nd Unit Camera Operators: Harry Underwood,
Richard Kelley

1st Camera Assistant: Louis Schwartz

2nd Camera Assistants: Eddie Pyle,

Michael Moramarco

Gaffer: Lefty Budman

Key Grip: Charles Cowie

Stills: Al St. Hilaire

Special Effects: Cline Jones

Assistant Editor: Stewart Linder

Property Master: Ross Burke

Construction Co-ordinator: Arnold Pine

Painter Gang Supervisor: Robert L. Stephen

Costumes: Jesse Munden

Boom Operator: Al Marsh

Stuntmen: John Day, Jim Palen, Richard Pasco,
Chuck Roberson

Dialogue Coaches: J. Louis Smith, Paula Strasberg

Additional Wrangler: Buford Randall,
James Sherwood

Cast:

Clark Gable (*Gay Langland*)

Marilyn Monroe (*Roslyn Taber*)

Montgomery Clift (*Perce Howland*)

Thelma Ritter (*Isabelle Steers*)

Eli Wallach (*Guido Delinni*)

James Barton (*old man in bar*)

Kevin McCarthy (*Raymond Taber*)

Estelle Winwood (*church lady*)

uncredited

Dennis Shaw (*young boy in bar*)

Phil Mitchell (*Charles Steers*)

Walter Ramage (*old groom*)

Peggy Barton (*young bride*)

J. Louis Smith (*fresh cowboy in bar*)

Marieta Tree (*Susan*)

Bobbie La Salle (*bartender*)

Ryall Bowker (*man in bar*)

Ralph Roberts (*ambulance attendant*)

USA 1961

125 mins

Digital

A BFI re-release

(courtesy of Park Circus/Amazon MGM Studios)

'Help.'

Marilyn Monroe's Roslyn utters this simple yet profound plea with a mixture of worry, exhaustion and sadness, but also a mysterious strength. For she, whether she wants it or not, is the centre of this universe – a contemplative woman of beauty and empathy, yes, but maybe stronger and angrier than anyone knows in John Huston's *The Misfits*.

'Help.' In the pre-dawn darkness, her back resting against an unfinished house deep in the Nevada desert, her entreaty feels philosophical, poetic – to the sky, to the stars, to anyone or anything up above to 'God's country', as she will later scream to three men.

Marilyn's moment comes after an all-nighter spent looking after three inebriated men – men who keep trying to figure her out. They are ageing cowboy Gay (Clark Gable), who she's already involved with (and has moments of fear about: 'What if, someday, you suddenly turn around and you don't like me any more?'); pilot Guido (Eli Wallach), who, though sweet at times, possesses a simmering bitterness that will reveal itself as the film goes on; and sensitive rodeo cowboy Perce (Montgomery Clift), a wandering soul who was thrown from his horse earlier that day, and who tells her, 'Don't you let them grind you up here.' (This reads especially touching when Perce unties the horses for Roslyn later in the picture.)

After a divorce in Reno, Roslyn ventures off with two men – first, with Thelma Ritter in tow (Clift will show up later), to see the country, living for the 'next thing that happens'; but she will wind up distraught over her eventual job, rounding up misfit horses to be ground into dog food. Those unlucky mustangs lead to Marilyn's blisteringly powerful scene where, in a wide shot, blonde and denim in the vastness, she unloads her anger and frustration on the three men. She screams: 'Killers! Murderers! You're liars! All of you, liars! You're only happy when you can see something die! Why don't you kill yourself to be happy? You and your God's country! Freedom! I pity you! You're three dear, sweet, dead men!'

It's the culmination of Roslyn's frustrations, a purging, made more interesting by how Huston films her at a distance, much like how the men look (all three gaze at her with different expressions, different thoughts). Her truth, anger and even enraged empathy speaks to all of us. As Jonas Mekas's 1961 *Village Voice* piece pondered: 'One doesn't know if she is saying those words to Gable and Wallach or to the whole loveless world.'

One does wonder how Monroe was feeling in this scene. On a notoriously troubled shoot, she reportedly had issues with the screenplay by her soon-to-be-ex-husband Arthur Miller, which seemed to include reflections of Marilyn's own life and how the world perceived her, threatening to reduce Roslyn to a symbol. But Marilyn's magic and intelligence with the camera and her craft and complexity as an actress brought sadness, wisdom, kindness, anger, nervousness, and also an earthly fortitude to the part.

Part of the power of *The Misfits* is in its mythic poignancy: the finale of these characters, wherever they may go; the finale of their way of life, and yes, of the actors themselves. We know these movie stars (Gable, Monroe, Clift) are not long for this world, and it's hard not to be haunted by this. And then there's Marilyn at the centre of it all – yelling at these men to wake up.

It's just so moving to watch Marilyn, nonconformist that she was, as Roslyn. She was already an often excellent, thoughtful actress and performer – ahead of her time, really – but just think of the pictures she could have made in the emerging cinema of the 1960s and 70s. Surely she would have been inspired. Because she was, truly, in the best possible way, a magnificent misfit.

Kim Morgan, *Sight and Sound*, June 2026

Marilyn Monroe: Self-Made Star

Monkey Business

Mon 1 Jun 18:15 (+ intro by BFI Programme and Research Coordinator Giulia Saccogna);
Sat 13 Jun 17:45

The Misfits

From Fri 5 Jun

Some Like It Hot

Fri 5 Jun 18:00 (+ extended intro by Kimberley Sheehan); Sun 14 Jun 18:15; Fri 19 Jun 14:30

Niagara

Sat 6 Jun 12:10 (+ *The Marilyn Monroe Century* book talk); Wed 17 Jun 20:40 (+ intro)

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes

Mon 8 Jun 18:10 (+ intro by BFI Film Programmer Rógan Graham); Sat 20 Jun 12:00;
Thu 25 Jun 14:30

River of No Return

Fri 12 Jun 20:50; Mon 22 Jun 18:15 (+ intro)

There's No Business Like Showbusiness

Sun 14 Jun 15:10; Fri 26 Jun 18:00 (+ intro)

25 and Under:

An Introduction to Marilyn Monroe

Wed 17 Jun 19:15 Blue Room

The Prince and the Showgirl

Fri 19 Jun 18:05 (+ intro); Thu 25 Jun 20:40

How to Marry a Millionaire

Fri 19 Jun 20:45; Thu 25 Jun 18:15 (+ intro by Lucy Bolton, Queen Mary University of London)

Philosophical Screens:

How to Marry a Millionaire

Thu 25 Jun 20:15 Blue Room

Let's Make Love

Sat 27 Jun 20:30; Tue 30 Jun 18:15 (+ intro)

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John Huston on 'The Misfits'

Marilyn was very grateful to me for giving her first opportunity. One day I received a script from a man I'd never met, but whose work I admired very much, Arthur Miller. It was the screenplay of *The Misfits*. He asked me if I would read it with a view to directing it, if I didn't find it thoroughly bad. I read it, was deeply impressed, and telephoned him. I had finished *The Unforgiven* and gone to Ireland, and I telephoned him at his home in New York. Arthur came over, we talked about the script and the few changes that he had in mind, and some that occurred to me, and he set about making them. That was the book we worked from. That was the script – our Bible! Very little was changed as we went along. The casting was done in a very short period of time. Marilyn, I think, was the first to mention Gable. She had adored him as a little girl, on the screen. We arranged for production by United Artists and we went out to Reno and shot the picture.

Things went without a hitch, except where Marilyn was concerned. Very quickly one perceived that she was in difficult straits, she was taking drugs to go to sleep, drugs to wake up, and she was in a vicious circle. She was suffering from this physically, and the time it took to make the picture suffered because of this. She would be late on the set for the simple reason that she couldn't be awakened by a certain time, and we'd wait, sometimes for hours, for her. Eventually we had to close down and the writing on the wall was there to read. I knew that it had to come to a desperate conclusion, and where I thought it might take three or four years, or five or six years, why, it was a matter of months.

Arthur Miller was with her all through the shooting. He did everything he could. Finally he couldn't do any more. His efforts met with antagonism on her part, and she was no longer capable of helping herself. She went into hospital and we had to stop shooting for two weeks. It was ever so clear that the drugs were her undoing, and still it was possible for her to get the drugs. The company doctor wouldn't give them to her, but she was being provided with them by her own doctors out of Hollywood. This was criminal, an awful indictment of the medical profession, but they do it. Quite unforgivable in my opinion. There were times when we wondered if we'd ever get finished at all. Each time when we got a scene, why, it was a bit of a victory. Sometimes she'd be excellent, sometimes she would hardly know where she was, and we had to cut our cloth accordingly.

There was something deeply touching about Marilyn. We all loved her and knew that tragedy was impending. We had to re-shoot scenes occasionally and sometimes it would be impossible to make a scene, so we'd defer it, do something else, and wait until she had recovered sufficiently to do it. Occasionally she was just wonderful. It was said that Arthur should have seen to it that she never got any drugs. There was an estrangement there, and they separated during that period. I think Arthur made every attempt, and did everything possible to assist her recovery, and finally they were living in different hotels in Reno. This was her doing. I didn't enquire too deeply as to what was going on between them but it was evident. They would go home from the set in different cars.

It was not a difficult picture to make physically, and the only difficulty, as I have said, was with Marilyn herself. It was shocking, you know, that Clark Gable, like the gentleman he was, finished his last shot in the picture and went home and died. Almost unbelievable.

Gerald Pratley, *The Cinema of John Huston* (The Tantivy Press, 1977)