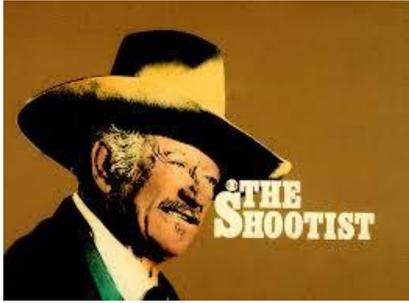




THE MUSEUM OF WESTERN FILM HISTORY

John Wayne (May 26, 1907 - June 11, 1979)

The Shootist released August 20, 1976



In 1976, battling the cancer that would kill him, John Wayne stepped in front of the camera for one final face-off. The result was *The Shootist*, a rich and elegiac western film and, says literary critic, Philip Horne, a fitting swansong for Hollywood's most courageous gunslinger.

The *Shootist*, is based on a novel by Glendon Swarthout and directed by Don Siegel. It was known that it might be Wayne's last film, so there's a remarkable supporting cast – above all James Stewart in a fine cameo as the Carson City doctor (Wayne and Stewart had co-starred in Ford's *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962)), but also Lauren Bacall and the young Ron Howard (who would go on to direct *Apollo 13* and *Frost/Nixon*) – as well as the great western veteran Richard Boone.

The movie is set in January 1901 – Queen Victoria has just died – and in Carson City, Nevada, which has telephones, trams and motor cars, and is planning on introducing metaled roads, gas lamps and electricity. It is the whole 20th-century package.

However, Wayne's character, the abrasive JB Books, almost sole survivor of the violent Old West, does not belong in this tame, commercialized new world – about which the film is pretty ambivalent.

A succession of venal characters try to exploit the nationwide fame of Books – by interviewing, marrying, burying, or stealing souvenirs from him – while quite a few others want to kill him.

The nasty little sheriff wants to drive him out of town. But while the film is tinged with bitter ironies, the touching drama of his relations with his landlady (Bacall) and her restless son (Howard), who idolizes Books, plus our certainty that a John Wayne movie is not going to end with its hero dying of cancer, make it an involving, exciting experience.

The Shootist is a fitting memorial to a great star – and leaves his image indelibly fixed on our imagination.

Wayne and Siegel

During the making of *The Shootist* (1976), Don Siegel's western about an ageing gunfighter dying of cancer, its star, John Wayne became too ill to film. The actor had had a lung removed twelve years earlier and was now struggling with the stomach cancer that would eventually lead to his death in 1979. A few days later, when Wayne bravely returned to the set, he picked a quarrel with the director, who had carried on filming a gunfight scene in his absence, over the way his character was shown killing a villain.

He forced Siegel to redo the scene, declaring: "Whatever the cause, I would never shoot anyone in the back. It's unthinkable for my image... I spent many years in this business building up my image."



Wayne had lived a very full life and his 70-year-old body was quickly breaking down. The filming was very unsteady, due to the Duke's bad health. He had trouble breathing and there was an oxygen tank on the set for him to take breaths. There were bad coughing spells and Wayne missed several days shooting, necessitating the use of a double.

Wayne, like so many people in great pain, was moody, angry and often hostile. One day he blew up at the cameraman, bawling him out for not filming right and not paying enough attention to "lighting." Siegel then angrily told Wayne to leave the cameraman alone and take a look at the dailies (the previous day's footage). John did come in and watch the dailies and he was pleasantly surprised. "That's the best damn film of me I've ever seen. I love you and I hope you'll forgive me," he said.

Unfortunately, ***The Shootist*** was a massive flop, grossing less than \$6 million domestically. Wayne, not broke, but in need of money, was now forced to star in TV commercials- something he never did before. He filmed commercials for **Datril** (an aspirin substitute) and **Great Western Savings & Loan**.



See commercial @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ofASoButR2E>, filmed in the Alabama Hills.

He was fading fast and family and friends came to pay their respects. Wayne's last few days were spent in a hospital bed, fading from unconsciousness to semi-consciousness. On June 11, 1979, with his several family members surrounding him, the Duke took his last breath. "Good bye, Dad", said his son, Patrick.

His daughter, Aissa, held his hand. As she held her father's hand, she asked him if he knew who she was. John Wayne, in response, spoke his final words: "Of course I know who you are. You're my girl. I love you." <http://www.neatorama.com/2014/03/05/The-Final-Days-of-John-Wayne>

Wayne made 13 films in Lone Pine area. These include:

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| <i>3 Godfathers</i> | 1948 |
| <i>Blue Steel</i> | 1934 |
| <i>I Cover the War</i> | 1937 |
| <i>King of the Pecos</i> | 1936 |
| <i>Lawless Range</i> | 1935 |
| <i>Man From Utah, The</i> | 1934 |
| <i>North To Alaska</i> | 1960 |
| <i>New Frontier, The</i> | 1935 |
| <i>Oregon Trail, The</i> | 1936 |
| <i>Somewhere In Sonora</i> | 1933 |
| <i>Three Faces West</i> | 1940 |
| <i>Tycoon</i> | 1947 |
| <i>Westward Ho</i> | 1935 |

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