



Print the Legend: The Life and Times of John Ford

Scott Eyman

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"When the legend becomes fact, print the legend." This line comes from director John Ford's film, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, but it also serves as an epigram for the life of the legendary filmmaker.

Through a career that spanned decades and included work on dozens of films -- among them such American masterpieces as *The Searchers*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Quiet Man*, *Stagecoach*, and *How Green Was My Valley* -- John Ford managed to leave as his legacy a body of work that few filmmakers will ever equal. Yet as bold as the stamp of his personality was on each film, there was at the same time a marked reticence when it came to revealing anything personal. Basically shy, and intensely private, he was known to enjoy making up stories about himself, some of them based loosely on fact but many of them pure fabrications. Ford preferred instead to let his films speak for him, and the message was always masculine, determined, romantic, yes, but never soft -- and always, always totally "American." If there were other aspects to his personality, moods and subtleties that weren't reflected on the screen, then no one really needed to know.

Indeed, what mattered to Ford was always what was up there on the screen. And if it varied from reality, what did it matter? When you are creating legend, fact becomes a secondary matter.

Now, in this definitive look at the life and career of one of America's true cinematic giants, noted biographer and critic Scott Eyman, working with the full participation of the Ford estate, has managed to document and delineate both aspects of John Ford's life -- the human being and the legend.

Going well beyond the legend, Eyman has explored the many influences that were brought to play on this remarkable and complex man, and the result is a rich and involving story of a great film director and of the world in which he lived, as well as the world of Hollywood legend that he helped to shape. Drawing on more than a hundred interviews and research on three continents, Scott Eyman explains how a saloon-keeper's son from Maine helped to shape America's vision of itself, and how a man with only a high school education came to create a monumental body of work, including films that earned him six Academy Awards -- more than any filmmaker before or since. He also reveals the truth of Ford's turbulent relationship with actress Katharine Hepburn, recounts his stand for freedom of speech during the McCarthy witch-hunt -- including a confrontation with archconservative Cecil B. DeMille -- and discusses his disfiguring alcoholism as well as the heroism he displayed during World War II.

Brilliant, stubborn, witty, rebellious, irascible, and contradictory, John Ford remains one of the enduring giants in what is arguably America's greatest contribution to art -- the Hollywood movie. In *Print the Legend*, Scott Eyman has managed at last to separate fact from legend in writing about this remarkable man, producing what will remain the definitive biography of this film giant.

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