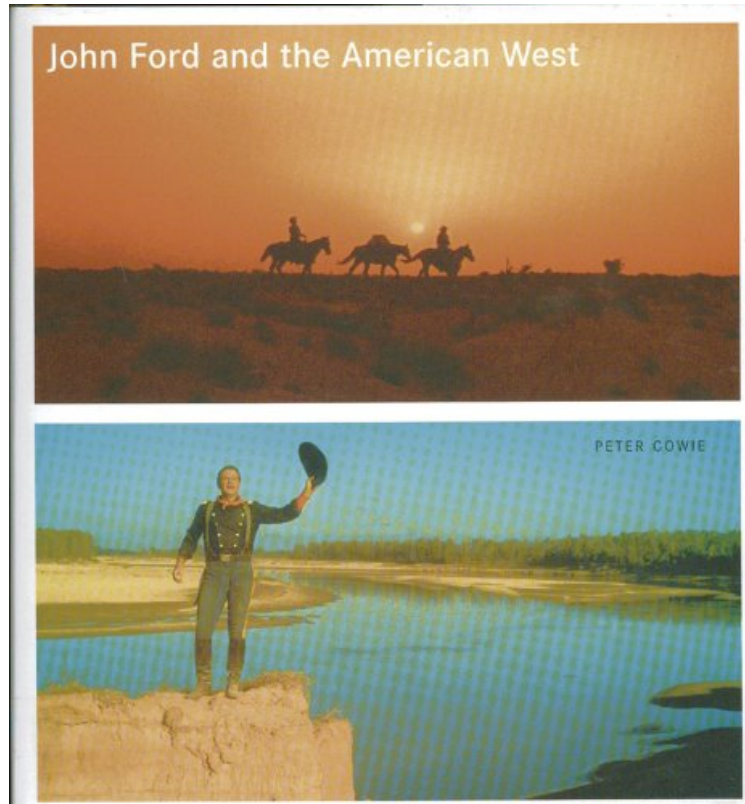


## John Ford and the American West

*Peter Cowie*

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#2184885 in Books Harry N. Abrams 2004-11-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 10.25 x 1.13 x 9.381, 3.27 #File Name: 0810949768224 pages | File size: 44.Mb

**Peter Cowie : John Ford and the American West** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised John Ford and the American West:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Tour Guide From Your Home. By Steven Leach If you are going to visit Monument Valley, Utah, this is the book to get. It was recommended by "The Great American Adventures" vacation site that provides tours in Monument Valley. The book features excellent photos of the area, and also pictures of John Wayne, Clint Eastwood, and other actors who made films with John Ford in that area. I WOULD RECOMMEND IT. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Exploring John Ford's Vision of the American Frontier! By Mike O'Connor During a distinguished movie career, 'Pappy' Ford directed some 50 western films, several of them classics. Films like 'Fort Apache,' 'My Darling Clementine' and 'Stagecoach' all share a consistent cinematic and thematic vision of Ford's making. Noted film author Peter Cowie examines that Fordian vision in this colorful and insightful 2004 book from Harry Abrams. In trying to characterize major themes in Ford's westerns, there is a temptation to lump it all together under the classic 'Man Who Shot Liberty Valance' line: "This is the West, sir. When the legend becomes fact, print the legend." Ford's Old West wasn't the West of fact but rather an imagined West where decent, God-fearing, sentimental yet hard-nosed men and women struggled onward and usually persevered over nature and native Americans. It was a West where saddle-sore cavalymen and poorly paid but principled lawmen were the only protectors of life and property. At once beautiful and pitiless, Ford's West was a mythic land of thundering action and

hardscrabble living where progress came at a cost for all involved. In large part Ford's vision, as demonstrated in Cowie's book, was based on the books and artwork of a raft of American authors and artists such as Fennimore Cooper, George Bingham, Frederic Remington, Charles Russell, George Catlin, Charles Schreyvogel, Matthew Brady and others filtered through Ford's inventive mind. Cowie's examination of those writings and artwork and the influence they had on Ford's Cavalry trilogy, for instance, made for fascinating reading. Then too Cowie's summary of all those wonderful Ford Westerns featuring the Duke, Ward Bond, Henry Fonda, Victor McLaglen, 'Dobe' Carey, et al are sure to please cinema fans. Visually JOHN FORD AND THE AMERICAN WEST is a treat since it features over 125 black white or color photographs of actors, action scenes, scenic vistas, etc. To be honest, I thought the book deserved even more images, which is why I rated it four stars not five. Thinking back through 'Stagecoach,' '3 Godfathers,' 'She Wore a Yellow Ribbon' and 'Rio Grande,' for instance, brought back mental images as evocative as those found in the book. In any case, Cowie's book is a marvelous, insightful and well-illustrated exploration of and tribute to one of our greatest directors. Western fans will want to pick this one up. 7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Nicely illustrated By Dr. James Gardner Peter Cowie's book on John Ford stresses the attempt by Ford to bring the beauty of 19th century painters (e.g., Frederick Remington, Charles Russel) to the big screen. He provides a few striking examples of how stills from Ford films can be seen in these great works of art, showing, for example, Henry Fonda astride a horse from "My Darling Clementine" juxtaposed against Remington's "The Alert", or John Wayne huddled against the wind and cold in "The Searchers" contrasted with Remington's "The Luckless Hunter," or a long shot from "The Wagon Master" compared with Albert Bierstadt's "A Surveyor's Wagon." It's truly instructive, and I only wish Cowie had more of these examples. Apart from this, the rest of the book is pretty ordinary, and you won't learn much about the films or about Ford that isn't readily available elsewhere. I was especially disappointed with the chapter concerning Ford's players. Cowie spends a lot of space writing about Wayne, Fonda, and Stewart, but he spends precious little on the people he calls "The Regulars". Outstanding actors like Ward Bond and Ben Johnson get a mere paragraph. People like Ken Curtis, Thomas Mitchell, John Carradine, Andy Devine, Mae Marsh, and Hoot Gibson get even less. Some of his most faithful players get no mention at all (e.g., Jack Pennick, Willis Bouchee, Harry Tenbrook). There is almost no mention of his brother Francis and the relationship between the brothers which certainly helps explain some of the character studies we see in Ford's westerns. John Ford fans should look elsewhere for a better discussion of the director and his films. But as far as the visual aspects of his films, this is certainly a good book to examine.

A visual exploration of the western films of John Ford relates them to the paintings and sculptures of such artists as Albert Bierstadt, Frederic Remington, and Charles M. Russell, discussing such topics as the inspiration for the filmmaker's classic works and how he used visual sources to create his idealized view of frontier life. 12,500 first printing.

About the Author Peter Cowie was sometime Regents Lecturer in Film Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara.