

# The Main Feature

Season 40 – Issue 12 - Screening 12 March 2020

## *The Magnificent Seven*

USA, Philippines, 1960

138 min, Certificate U

|                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Director       | John Sturges    |
| Screenplay     | William Roberts |
| Producer       | John Sturges    |
| Cinematography | Charles Lang    |
| Music          | Elmer Bernstein |

|                 |                                                      |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Cast            |                                                      |
| Yul Brynner     | Chris Adams, a Cajun gunslinger, leader of the seven |
| Steve McQueen   | Vin Tanner, the drifter                              |
| Horst Bucholz   | Chico, the young hot-blooded shootist                |
| Charles Bronson | Bernardo O'Reilly, the professional in need of money |
| Robert Vaughn   | Lee, the traumatised veteran                         |
| Brad Dexter     | Harry Luck, the fortune-seeker                       |
| James Coburn    | Britt, the knife expert                              |
| Eli Wallach     | Calvera                                              |



In *The Magnificent Seven*, a gang of bandits led by Calvera (Eli Wallach) periodically raids a poor Mexican village for food and supplies. After the latest raid, during which Calvera kills a villager, the village leaders decide they have had enough. On the advice of the village elder, they decide to fight back. Taking their few objects of value, three villagers ride to a town just inside the United States border hoping to barter for weapons. They are impressed by Chris Adams (Yul Brynner), a veteran Cajun gunslinger, and approach him for advice. Chris suggests they instead hire gunfighters to defend the village, as "men are cheaper than guns." At first agreeing only to help them recruit men, Chris eventually decides to lead the group.

The film was a remake of Kurosawa's well-known film *Seven Samurai* (1954). The idea for the remake was Yul Brynner's. When he approached Walter Mirisch with the idea, Mirisch had acquired the rights from Japan's Toho Studios. It was Mirisch who finalized a distribution deal with United Artists. Anthony Quinn later claimed that he and Brynner had developed the concept together and had worked out many of the film's details before the two had a falling-out. Quinn ultimately lost his claim for breach of contract because there was nothing in writing.

During filming there was considerable tension between Brynner and McQueen, who was displeased at his character having only seven lines of dialogue in the original shooting script (Sturges had told McQueen that he would "give him the camera"). To compensate, McQueen took numerous opportunities to upstage Brynner and draw attention to himself, including shielding his eyes with his hat, flipping a coin during one of Brynner's speeches, rattling his shotgun shells. Brynner, who was only half an inch taller than McQueen, would often build up a little mound of earth to stand on when the two actors were on camera together only to have McQueen surreptitiously kick the dirt out of place before retakes. When newspapers started reporting on

the altercations on set between the two, Brynner issued a press statement, declaring, "I never feud with actors. I feud with studios."



In later years, Yul Brynner and Steve McQueen reconciled. McQueen, dying of cancer, called Brynner to thank him. "What for?" queried Brynner. "You coulda had me kicked off the movie when I rattled you," replied McQueen, "but you let me stay and that picture made me, so thanks". Brynner told him, "I am the king and you are the rebel prince:

every bit as royal . . . and dangerous to cross." McQueen said, "I had to make it up with Yul 'cause without him I wouldn't have been in that picture."

The music score is by Elmer Bernstein with a readily recognized main theme that is an effective support to the story line. The theme is reminiscent of twentieth-century symphonic works, such as the reference to Bartok's Second Concerto for Orchestra in the tense quiet scene just before the shoot-out.

The film was made at a time when the appetite for westerns was going into decline. Whereas westerns were staple film and TV fare in the 50s, the sixties saw a sharp decline, as spy dramas and sex farces burgeoned. One interesting theory about this is that it was not so much that audiences tired of westerns, but that TV executives discovered that they were being watched by the people too poor to buy their sponsor's fine products.

Although the film received only mixed reviews when first released, John Sturges got a rave review from the one source that really mattered to him. After seeing the picture, Kurosawa was so impressed, he sent the American director a ceremonial sword as a gift.

Robert Vaughn (Lee) – Napoleon Solo in *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* - was the last surviving member of the Magnificent Seven cast when he passed away on 11 November 2016 at the age of 83 with acute leukaemia. The legacy of the Wild West blockbuster film lives on, as do memories of his six screen icon co-stars.

There were four remakes of the film; *Return of the Seven* (1966), *Guns of the Magnificent Seven* (1969), *The Magnificent Seven Ride!* (1972) and *The Magnificent Seven* (1998) (TV Series)

Finally, watch out for the goof. The first man that Calvera shoots puts his hand to his chest after the first bullet. As the second bullet fails to make an inbound wound in his chest, it must have hit his hand, yet he clearly has no wound to his left hand shown then nor afterwards.

Mike Widdup



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## Roman Polanski: Actress walkout as he wins best director at 'French Oscars'

Several actresses have walked out of the César awards ceremony in Paris after Roman Polanski won best director. The awards - France's equivalent of the Oscars - have been mired in controversy after Polanski's *An Officer and a Spy* received 12 nominations earlier this year. The Polish-French director has been wanted in the US for the statutory rape of a 13-year-old girl since the 1970s. He has since faced other accusations of sexual assault.

*An Officer and a Spy*, or *J'accuse* in French, is about the Dreyfus affair in 19th Century France and won a total of three awards. Polanski and members of his crew did not attend the event, with the director having said previously that he feared for his safety.

Actress Adèle Haenel, who has said she was sexually abused as a child by another director, was one of the women who walked out of the ceremony after Polanski's win was announced. She left the room saying "shame!", and was followed by director Céline Sciamma. Actress and comedian Florence Foresti, who was presenting at the ceremony, did not return to the stage after Polanski's award was announced. She later updated her Instagram story to a black screen with the word "disgusted".

Hours before the ceremony began, France's Culture Minister Franck Riester said it would be "symbolically bad" if Polanski were to win the prize for best director, "given the stance we must take against sexual and sexist violence". Protesters also gathered outside of the venue ahead of the awards.

The decision to honour Polanski at this year's awards had angered feminist groups and led to calls for a boycott. The César's entire board resigned earlier this month amid the backlash.



France's equality minister, Marlène Schiappa, had previously condemned the decision to nominate Polanski's film, saying she found it "impossible that a hall gets up and applauds the film of a man accused of rape several times". But the Césars defended the nominations, arguing that the body "should not take moral positions" in giving awards. Polanski himself told Paris Match in December that he had tried to distance

himself from the calls for a boycott of his film. "For years people have tried to make me out as a monster. I'm used to the slander and I've grown a thick skin, which is as hard as a shell," he said.

In September, Polanski's film won the Grand Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival. Two months later, however, French former actress Valentine Monnier accused Polanski of an "extremely violent" assault and rape in 1975, when she was aged 18,

in the latest in a series of sexual assault accusations against the director. Monnier said that the release of Polanski's most recent film had prompted her to speak out.

Despite the controversy surrounding the film, *J'accuse* was a box office hit in France at the end of 2019 and has done well in several other European countries.

This is not the first time the César awards have faced controversy because of Polanski. In 2017, he was picked to head the awards' jury, but later stepped down after the move sparked outrage.

Polanski has French and Polish citizenship, and has evaded various extradition attempts by US authorities. France - where he lives - does not extradite its own citizens. A Polish court also rejected a US request when he was filming in Krakow in 2015.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-51684494>

## Comments and reactions to: **Manbiki kazoku (Shoplifters)**

No of reaction slips received = 31

Average score = 6.45

| Score | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
|       | ~ | ~ | ~ | ~ | 2 | 6 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 2 | ~  |

***I didn't really follow the film***

*Very strange film – hard to follow*

***Given the bleak content of the film, I found the cinematography wonderful, constantly evolving camera angles, mise-en-scène colourful. All the main characters were engaging***

*Disappointing. Not easy to follow and not helped by the sub-titles. Why cannot films have sur-titles?*

***Thought provoking but a bit slow for me***

*So sad*

***An interesting film, showing a different culture, a little slow!***

*Fascinating story – I still didn't follow the relationships*

***Certainly gave one a lot to think about – families, I mean!***

*Intriguing – I think I want to watch it again to get everything out of it*

***Tugs at your heartstrings and draws you in***

*Intriguing, so sad, well acted*

***A thought-provoking, well-made film. Showing such non-mainstream films is what WNCC is about***

***A mini-masterpiece!***

*Beguiling but sad and ultimately rather pointless*

*Sad, poor, not so poor, happy – a strange mixture*

***Second half much better!***

*Strangely watchable – apart from mealtimes*

***A haunting film***

*Very sad story of dysfunctional people*

***Fascinating! Very moving and intriguing***

*Moving and nuanced picture of marginalised in Japanese society*

| Position | Film                              | Average score |
|----------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| 1        | Green Book                        | 8.43          |
| 2        | Bohemian Rhapsody                 | 8.35          |
| 3        | The White Crow                    | 7.29          |
| 4        | Il Capitale umano (Human Capital) | 7.22          |
| 5        | Before the Flood                  | 7.17          |
| 6        | Pillow Talk                       | 7.11          |
| 7        | Stan and Ollie                    | 6.92          |
| 8        | Ballon (Balloon)                  | 6.91          |
| 9        | Todos lo saben (Everybody Knows)  | 6.71          |
| 10=      | Sherlock Jr                       | 6.52          |
| 10=      | La Tortue Rouge (The Red Turtle)  | 6.52          |
| 11       | Manbiki kazoku (Shoplifters)      | 6.45          |

Forthcoming attraction: 26 March 2020



## **Comme un avion (Sweet Escape)**

Michel, a fifty year-old graphic designer, decides to abandon his urban lifestyle. One day, he assembles a kayak and embarks on an adventure.

*Feather-light, yet finally profound and packed with both visual ideas and delightful banter, Sweet Escape (Comme un avion) from French filmmaker Bruno Podalydès is another home run.*

Hollywood Reporter