



THE MUSEUM OF WESTERN FILM HISTORY

Randolph Scott

January 23, 1898 – March 2, 1987)



Randolph Scott was a handsome leading man who developed into one of Hollywood's greatest and most popular western stars. In 1917 at 19 years old, Scott joined the United States Army serving in France as an artillery observer. His wartime experience would give him training that would be put to use in his later film career, including the use of firearms and horsemanship.

Around 1927, Scott developed an interest in acting and decided to make his way to Los Angeles and seek a career in the motion picture industry. Fortunately, Scott's father had become acquainted with Howard Hughes (RKO) and provided a letter of introduction for his son to present to the eccentric millionaire filmmaker. Hughes obtained an audition for him for Cecil B. DeMille's *Dynamite* (1929), a role which went instead to Joel McCrea. Hughes responded by getting Scott a small part in a George O'Brien film called *Sharp Shooters* (1928).

In the next few years, Scott continued working as an extra and bit player in several films, including *Weary River* (1929) with Richard Barthelmess and *The Virginian* (1929) with Gary Cooper. Reputedly, Scott also served as Cooper's dialect coach in this latter film. In 1931 Scott played his first leading role (with Sally Blane) in *Women Men Marry*, a film, now apparently lost, that was made by a Poverty Row studio called Headline Pictures.

Paramount scouts saw Scott in a play and offered him a contract. Scott's first role under his new Paramount contract was a small supporting part in a comedy called *Sky Bride* (1932) starring Richard Arlen and Jack Oakie. Following that, however, Paramount cast him as the lead in *Heritage of the Desert* (1932), his first significant starring role and also the one that established him as a Western hero. Again, Sally Blane was his leading lady. The film was the first of ten "B" Western films that Scott made for Paramount in a series loosely based on the novels of Zane Grey. In 1936, Scott, on loan to independent producer Edward Small, starred in another adventure classic, *The Last of the Mohicans* gave Scott his first unqualified "A" picture success as a lead.

In 1946, after playing roles that had him wandering in and out of the saddle for many years, including a role alongside Charles Laughton in the cheaply made production *Captain Kidd* (1945), Scott appeared in *Abilene Town*, a UA release which cast him in what would become one of his classic images, the fearless lawman cleaning up a lawless town. The film "cemented Scott's position as a cowboy hero" and from this point on all but two of his starring films would be Westerns. The Scott Westerns of the late 1940s would each be budgeted around \$1,000,000, equal to \$11,970,990 today.

By 1956, Scott turned 58, an age where the careers of most leading men would be winding down. Scott, however, was about to enter his finest and most acclaimed period.

In 1955, screenwriter Burt Kennedy wrote a script entitled *Seven Men from Now* which was scheduled to be filmed by John Wayne's Batjac Productions with Wayne as the film's star and Budd Boetticher as its director. However, Wayne was already committed to John Ford's *The Searchers*. Wayne therefore suggested Scott as his replacement.

The resulting film, released in 1956, did not make a great impact at the time but is now regarded by many as one of Scott's best, as well as the one that launched Scott and Boetticher into a successful collaboration that totaled seven films.

Scott made 107 films as an actor. He was a pleasant figure in comedies, dramas and the occasional adventure, but it was not until he began focusing on westerns in the late 1940s that he reached his greatest stardom. Sixty of the 107 were westerns, twelve of these were made here in the Alabama Hills.

Featured in our exhibit room are framed one-sheets of the twelve movies and many memorabilia items, some from the museum archives and a good portion on loan from Randolph Scott's daughter, Sandra. Sandra and her family attended the 2014 Film Festival, where she talked about her father's career in the movies and his very successful career as an oil business man. The Single Action Army Colt 45 guns on display were a gift from a friend, Justin Dart, of Dart Industries.



The exhibit also includes a pair of Scott's cowboy boots, Hat, Golden Boot Award presented in 1974, lobby cards, articles, books, and letters from politicians. George Montgomery, actor and artist, created a beautiful bronze which is also on display.



In 1962 Scott made his final film appearance in ***Ride the High Country***, a film now regarded as a classic. It was directed by Sam Peckinpah and co-starred Joel McCrea, an actor who had a screen image similar to Scott's and who also from the mid-1940s on devoted his career almost exclusively to Westerns.

Scott and McCrea's farewell Western is characterized by a nostalgic sense of the passing of the Old West; a preoccupation with the emotionality of male bonding and of the experiential 'gap' between the young and the old; and the fearful evocation, in the form of the Hammonds (the villains in the film), of these preoccupations transmuted into brutal and perverse forms.

Following ***Ride the High Country***, Scott retired from film at the age of 64. Having made shrewd investments throughout his life, he eventually accumulated a fortune worth a reputed US\$100 million.

Scott was the inspiration for the popular 1973 *Whatever Happened to Randolph Scott?*, a top-20 country hit for the Statler Brothers lamenting the passing of Western films.

Scott spent his remaining years playing golf and avoiding film industry affairs, stating that he didn't like publicity. He died, March 2, 1987 at the age of 89, in Beverly Hills of heart and lung ailments. Scott was survived by his second wife, Patricia Stillman, and his two adopted children, Christopher and Sandra. He was interred at Elmwood Cemetery in Charlotte, North Carolina.