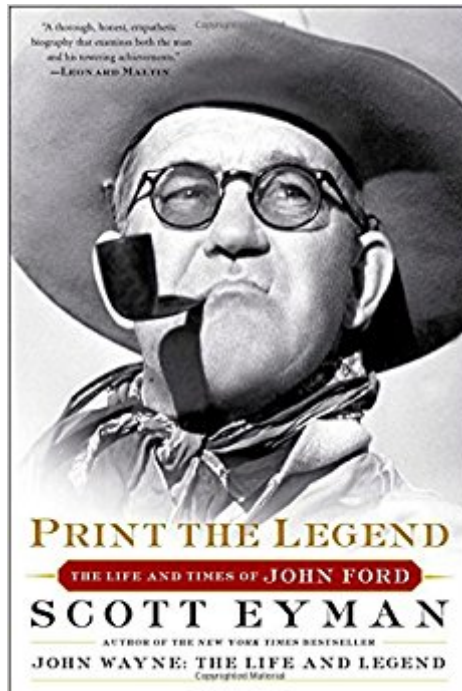




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# Print The Legend: The Life And Times Of John Ford



## Synopsis

“When the legend becomes fact, print the legend.” This line from director John Ford’s film *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* serves as an epigraph for the life of the legendary filmmaker. Through a career that spanned decades and included 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, he was reticent about his personal life. 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. What mattered to Ford was always what was up there on the screen. 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 and the legend.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Borrowing his title from dialogue in John Ford’s classic Western, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (“When the legend becomes fact, print the legend”), Scott Eyman heeds this advice in his splendid study of Ford, finding a convincing balance between the gruff image Ford cultivated and the sensitive artist that Ford truly was. The result is a to-date definitive biography, occasionally

prone to indelicate critical assessment while benefiting greatly from Eyman's full access to the Ford family archives. Arguably the greatest American filmmaker of the 20th century, Ford protected himself with a façade of belligerence yet engendered more loyalty among his crew and stock players (notably John Wayne and Ward Bond) than any other director. Eyman illuminates the Ford legend while focusing on fact--on a complex genius who would berate even the most vulnerable actor and then "apologize without apologizing," a binge drinker who never let alcohol interfere with his closely-guarded artistry, and a stalwart Navy captain whose service in World War II became his primary source of pride. *Print the Legend* essentially confirms Ford's brief affair with Katharine Hepburn, but Eyman emphasizes Ford's deep, abiding affection for his wife, Mary, who valiantly tolerated his absolute devotion to filmmaking. While hundreds of interviews yield a comprehensive account of Ford's working methods (which the director was loathe to discuss), Eyman expertly navigates around Ford's own penchant for autobiographical embellishment. What emerges is likely to remain the most thorough portrait of a cinematic master who recognized his own greatness without parading it, and whose human flaws were ultimately forgivable by those--and they were many--who loved him. Readers should look elsewhere for more astute studies of Ford's films, but Eyman has captured Ford the man with lasting authority. -- Jeff Shannon --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

One of the great directors in the history of film, John Ford (1894-1973) was "America's tribal poet," writes Eyman, a man whose movies added up to a national epic. The director of such classics as *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Searchers* and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, Ford certainly had a dark side, according to Eyman: he was bad-tempered and pugnacious; a sloppy, self-pitying drunk; a dictatorial, frequently abusive director; and a failed father estranged from his son and daughter. Biographer of Ernst Lubitsch and Mary Pickford, Eyman has written a quietly magnificent biography of an American original who has shaped our perception of movies as serious art. His westerns conjure up a democratic community of equals unified by shared purpose. A Maine saloonkeeper's son, Ford grew up in a large, working-class Irish immigrant family. Using hitherto untapped transcripts, Eyman tells the full story of the famous, tumultuous 1950 Screen Directors Guild meeting, when Ford took a courageous stand against hard-line conservative Cecil B. DeMille, who sought to mandate a McCarthyite loyalty oath for members. Eyman's study serves up a big, gorgeous chunk of Hollywood history, chock-full of priceless anecdotes of Katharine Hepburn, James Cagney, Henry Fonda, Frank Capra, Clark Gable and others. Though many considered Ford *passé* by the 1960s, a new generation of critics and cineastes were championing the six-time

Academy Award winner for his largeness of spirit, his deeply felt poetry, his evocation of innocence and of America as it was meant to have been. (Nov.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

For whatever reason, I've read a couple hundred books or so about the history of Hollywood. One filmmaker mesmerized me more than any other, and that was John Ford. For more than 50 years I have returned, again and again, to what I consider his 15 or 20 best films and been moved by them, moved in ways that I could never fully explain to myself. I was helped by the late film critic Andrew Sarris, who beautifully captured Ford, but only in brief. But Scott Eyman has done the seemingly impossible job; he has, much more than everyone else who has tried to explain Ford, and his films, deeply, richly and fully illuminated this strange man who is America's greatest film director. It's long (588 pages in hardback), but fascinating on every page, since he reveals Ford to us by describing the man's personal and professional life as he lived it. Walter Hill has said of Ford "He is our Dickens." But he might perhaps better have called him our Yeats, not just because his Irish soul is in his films, but because he is our greatest cinematic poet, and just as Yeats was Ireland's greatest historian, so Ford is our best historian.

If you are a cinema buff...Scott Eyman's Hollywood Bios are as good as it gets.. This is truly fine research into one of the true cinema greats..with a closer look at 'Quiet Man' & the triumph of "The Searchers"..It doesn't hold back on the "Dark Side' of Ford, and his demons..but truly enlightening info., especially considering the longevity and quality of the work. Timeless. Also highly recommend , Eyman's John Wayne and Louis Mayer bios as well. A gifted writer.

Scott Eyman has written an outstanding book on John Ford! Ford was the second generation son of an Irish bartender from Portland Maine who followed his brother Frank to Hollywood. In over 130 films from such silent classics as Iron Horse to his four Oscars for best director: The Informer; How Green Was My Valley; the Grapes of Wrath and The Quiet Man Ford chronicles the life of ordinary people living in extraordinary circumstances. Ford made Westerns better than anyone as witness his classic cavalry trilogy: Fort Apache, She Wore a Yellow Ribbon; Rio Grande and the peerless The Searchers. John Ford was a bristling porcupine guy who could dish out insults, reduce strong actors to tears and cover his sensitive, melancholic, brooding intellectual Irish soul with a veneer of toughness and macho maleness. Ford was a complex man isolated and in conflict with family who made great films for over 50 years in the Hollywood jungle. He was an admiral who loved the military

serving with distinction in World War II. You may not like Ford after reading this fine book but you will be in awe of one of Hollywood's giants. Eyman gives a sketch of each of Ford's top films and charts the choppy waters of his long marriage to wife Mary and the difficult relationship he had with his daughter and son. John Ford will always ride tall in the saddle of Film History as we travel with him to Monument Valley, meet such Ford stars as John Wayne, Henry Fonda, Maureen O'Hara and the other excellent actors in the Ford acting troupe. Anyone claiming to be knowledgeable about film who does not know about John Ford (1894-1973) should read this fine biography. Readers may also wish to peruse Joseph McBride's lengthy biography of Ford "In Search of John Ford." Both books are well done.

As we are going to get to the seminal biography of the great John Ford. All of Ford's biographers describe him as secretive, purposely misleading, obstreperous and ornery. To get an accurate picture of the grandfather of modern film must be difficult with such a subject. Eyman manages to give us the facts of Ford's life to the best extent they can be found in a non-judgmental way, such that his art and craftsmanship shine, despite the fact that Ford was an obnoxious person. The reality of Ford's heinous personality and the beautiful Ford vision of the history of America is startling. How could such a gross character give us our most compelling views of ourselves from the Revolutionary war through the Korean conflict? Eyman explains that Ford was just a mass of contradictions, scarred by his Irish immigrant roots, when the Irish in New England were looked down upon. For a bright, ambitious boy to overcome such prejudice, he had to develop some coping strategies. These strategies became more pronounced and vicious as Ford aged, and became prominent, wanting to keep his place in the film industry. His family suffers as well. The two family members he really gets on with are both able to stand up to him, which is apparently what it took to get along with Ford. Eyman provides satisfying and surprising detail for Ford's masterpieces and failures alike, particularly "Stagecoach." He explores Ford's relationships with his muses who are men, not women; Henry Fonda and John Wayne. Hank and Duke appear in some of his very best films ("The Grapes of Wrath," "Stagecoach," "Fort Apache," "The Searchers"). But Ford can make masterpieces without them too ("How Green Was My Valley,"). He can also turn a Shirley Temple vehicle (no slight to Shirley, I am a fan of hers) into a wonderful "picture" as he called his work ("Wee Willie Winkie"). Eyman is a truthful biographer who does not engage in character assassination. I bought this book because I liked his biography of Louis B. Mayer so much. My only quibble with his book is that he explores Ford's anti-semitism, and concludes that Ford never committed an anti-semitic thought to paper, even though Eyman includes a letter Ford wrote to a

military friend, calling Hollywood "mockieland." I believe that is a Jewish derogation. He also discusses Ford's sympathy with and for American Indians (who loved him back), and African Americans. Although there is little doubt he respected his black actors, and black people as a whole, he does throw the N word around a lot. So maybe these derogations are just a product of his time and not indicative of hatred for any particular group. Whether you are a Ford fan or not, this is a great study of the history of American cinema, and is well worth reading for any film fan.

book arrived as described. still reading it. interesting read. interesting individual.

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