

THEY WANTED—SO MUCH—TO LOVE EACH OTHER



BUT BETWEEN THEM, LIKE A WALL, WAS A FATHER'S SHAMELESS PAST AND A MOTHER'S POSSESSIVE LOVE



AND A BOY, WHOSE STRANGE SECRET THE WHOLE TOWN KNEW...TOO WELL!

METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER PRESENTS
A SOL C. SIEGEL PRODUCTION

HOME FROM THE HILL



Starring

ROBERT MITCHUM • ELEANOR PARKER

Co-Starring

GEORGE PEPPARD • GEORGE HAMILTON • EVERETT SLOANE • LUANA PATTEN

Screen Play by HARRIET FRANK, Jr. and IRVING RAVETCH • In CinemaScope And METROCOLOR

Directed by VINCENTE MINNELLI • Produced by EDMUND GRAINGER

FROM
WILLIAM
HUMPHREY'S
RICH AND
EARTHY
NOVEL



THE BADLANDS COLLECTIVE PRESENTS




A 35mm presentation
THE CINEMA MUSEUM, LONDON
March 17, 2018

USA / 1960 / 150 minutes / Released by MGM / Directed by Vincente Minnelli /
Produced by Edmund Grainger / Written by Harriet Frank, Jr. & Irving Ravetch /
Cinematography by Milton R. Krasner / Edited by Harold F. Kress / Music by Bronislaw Kaper /
Starring Robert Mitchum, George Hamilton, George Peppard, Eleanor Parker,
Luana Patten, Everett Sloane

"[Minnelli's] work in [melodrama] is as great as—and, in my view, even greater than—his musicals...Home from the Hill is a cauldron of crucial, furious, and unresolved passions. All of Minnelli's great films (and there are many) are vehemently, achingly emotional; here, with a blend of timeless myth and contemporary crises, he makes the subject hit home with an exceptionally visceral force." Richard Brody, *The New Yorker*

In 1958, at the age of 55, director Vincente Minnelli had the most productive year of his career. He made three very different films, all released over a seven month period, and two of which would go on to dominate the following year's Academy Awards. The terrific Frank Sinatra vehicle *Some Came Running* was nominated for five Oscars, while the frothy Paris-set musical *Gigi* won a record-breaking nine, including Best Director. But by the day of the ceremony, Minnelli's mind was already on his next picture: "The celebration, my part of it anyway, had to be put off. I wasn't home to accept the messages that arrived the following day. I'd left at five that morning for location on *Home from the Hill*."

Home from the Hill stars Robert Mitchum as the philandering, imperious patriarch Wade Hunnicutt, whose wealth and influence make him the most powerful resident of a small Texan town. Eleanor Parker plays his long-suffering wife Hannah, who does everything she can to shield their sensitive son Theron (George Hamilton, in only his second film role) from the corrosive influence of his father. And George Peppard plays Rafe, the loyal farmhand who holds the key to some of the family's secrets.



An adaptation of the novel by William Humphrey, the screenplay was written by Harriet Frank, Jr. and Irving Ravetch. In his autobiography, Minnelli tactfully commented that the pair “took an arty book and turned out a beautiful screenplay with almost Biblical simplicity.” As well as scripting a number of Westerns (they would go on to write the Oscar-nominated screenplay for *Hud*), the husband and wife team adapted several novels by William Faulkner, whose influence is prevalent in the rugged, psychologically rich Americana of *Home from the Hill*. Of all the changes Ravetch and Frank made to the novel, the best - and most Faulknerian - touch, is the addition of Rafe, Wade’s employee and surrogate son.

Minnelli and Peppard clashed over the latter’s acting style, informed by his time at Lee Strasberg’s Actor’s Studio in New York, with Minnelli reportedly saying to him during one difficult scene: “You might be a seething volcano inside, but I’ve got news for you - nothing’s happening. You’ll have to do it my way.” According to Minnelli, Mitchum was helpful in bringing Peppard and the younger cast into line. Indeed, the film belonged to the veteran actor, who gave one of his best performances in it. “Few actors I’ve worked with bring so much to a picture,” said Minnelli of Mitchum, “and none do it with such lack of affectation.” He also spoke fondly of the “distinctive poetry” of Mitchum’s style: “To Bob, acting is just a matter of cadence and rhyme.”

Home from the Hill is at heart a film about fathers and sons. Though some contemporary critics accused Minnelli of overplaying it, the film’s take on the generation gap is far subtler than many of the more celebrated films of the time, centring on the way a boy’s perception of his father changes as he becomes his own man. The contemporary Western setting is key: if *Home from the Hill* was set a few decades earlier, Wade would be a tough, roguish hero, but in the West of 1960, he’s a man out of time - a bitter, abusive bully. In recasting the Western hero in this mould, *Home from the Hill* becomes a picture about the disappointing, agonising realisation that the hero is in fact nothing of the sort.

In this sense, it’s tempting to see the film as part of the lineage of the fin-de-siècle Western; reflective, elegiac movies like John Ford’s *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* or John Huston’s *The Misfits* (the role of Wade in *Home from the Hill* was initially intended for Clark Gable), concerned with the end of an era. Like these pictures, *Home from the Hill* is an epitaph for Hollywood’s Golden Age and its stars, style and ideas, but it’s also about the end of a certain type of retrograde masculinity and the emotional damage wrought by it. Wade and his ideas of manhood crushed his sons and sidelined his wife, and the drive of the film is their emergence from his overbearing shadow.

*Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me die.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will*

*This be the verse you ’grave for me:
Here lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.*
“Requiem”, Robert Louis Stevenson



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