

Films made in Southern Oregon By Dennis Powers

Southern Oregon has had its share of feature films, independents (“indies”), and made-for-TV filmed here. In the 1975 film, “Rooster Cogburn,” John Wayne played the one-eyed, alcoholic, out-of-shape federal marshal who met and was won over by Katharine Hepburn’s tough, New England schoolteacher character. The river float scenes were filmed on the Rogue, and dating back to this film, John Wayne made Deer Creek Ranch, located one mile west of Selma, as his private hideaway.

In 1960, the television show “Route 66” televised two episodes set in Grants Pass, Merlin, and Wolf Creek. As Marshal Matt Dillon in “Gunsmoke,” James Arness dove into the cold Rogue River waters while escaping outlaws; this series was the country’s longest-running, prime-time, live-action drama that ran for over 20 seasons. The 1994 film, “The River Wild,” was filmed on the Rogue and with film stars Kevin Bacon and Meryl Streep.

Despite these well-known features, it turns out that the famous cliff-diving scene in the 1969 film, “Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid,” did not happen at Hellgate Canyon. The Rocky Mountains provided the cliff and river scene with the cliff duplicated on a Hollywood soundstage. The filming of two stuntmen jumping from a crane into a water tank was combined with a painting of the river and cliffs on glass.

Jacksonville with its turn-of-the-century buildings has been another favorite. For example, “The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid,” was filmed there in 1970 and released two years later. Universal Pictures had the town appear like the 1870s one where Jesse James and his gang had tough problems robbing a bank, including where an outlaw was locked inside the vault. Planks were laid over concrete sidewalks, telephone poles removed, and streets covered with dirt; when the producers asked for extras, needing only 200, some 5,000 area residents showed up with many in western garb. In addition, a prior remake of “Last of the Wild Horses” (1948) and a made-for-TV rendition of “Inherit the Wind” (1987) were also filmed in that town.

Owing to a favorable movie-making climate, more indies are being filmed in this area now and with well-known actors and actresses. The great majority of the thirty-seven productions filmed in part or their entirety in Southern Oregon within the last ten years ending in 2012 (and see the source listing below at “SOFaT”) are indies. Two recently made were “Redwood Highway” and “Night Moves.”

In late 2012, crew members in the movie, “Night Moves,” came to eat at Porters restaurant in the historic Medford downtown railroad depot. Liking the setting, one of the members approached a co-owner and asked if they could shoot a scene there. Porters agreed and later could add a film credit to its list of TV commercials. The movie is about three eco-terrorists who conspire to blow up a dam, and the production was filmed from Roseburg to the Applegate Valley, Medford, and Ashland. “Night Moves” features Jesse Eisenberg, who had the starring role as Facebook founder, Mark Zuckerberg, in the box-

office hit, “The Social Network,” as well as Dakota Fanning, who has appeared in dozens of movies including “War of the Worlds.”

“Redwood Highway” is about a woman (Marie) who was living in a retirement community in Southern Oregon, but embarks on an 80-mile journey on foot along the Redwood Highway to the Pacific Ocean. Premiered in 2013, Marie is played by Shirley Knight--a Tony, Emmy, and Golden Globe winner—who was twice nominated for an Academy Award. Tom Skerritt, who acted in “Alien,” “Top Gun,” and “A River Runs Through It,” is in a supporting role. The locations ranged in Southern Oregon from Cave Junction and downtown Grants Pass to the Applegate River Lodge, Talent, and Ashland.

With the increasing impact of the Ashland Independent Film Festival, the snap of a scene set with the shout for “Action!” is being heard even more.

Sources: “Southern Oregon Film and Television (“SOFaT”): List of Films” at [List of Films](#); Ryan Pfeil, “The Stars Were Out,” *Mail Tribune*, October 23, 2012, at ["Night Moves"](#); Craig Sailor, “Made in Oregon Road Film,” *Tacoma News Tribune*, May 10, 2013, at ["Redwood Highway"](#); Bill Miller, “Hellgate Canyon Rogue River landmark is a Hollywood favorite,” *Mail Tribune*, June 21, 2009, at [The Hellgate](#); Dawna Curler, “Lights, Camera...Jacksonville,” Jefferson Public Radio, April 15, 2005, at [Jacksonville](#).