

Howard Hawkes (1896-1977)



Howard Hawks' list of films is very impressive and includes many genres such as comedies, dramas, gangster films, science fiction, film noir, war films and westerns. He directed *Scarface* (1932), *Bringing Up Baby* (1938), *Only Angels Have Wings* (1939), *His Girl Friday* (1940), *Sergeant York* (1941) *To Have and Have Not* (1944), *The Big Sleep* (1946), *Red River* (1948), *The Thing from Another World* (1951), *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953), and *Rio Bravo* (1959) and many others.

In his long career he only directed five Westerns, but four out of the five (all four starring John Wayne) are considered classics and *Red River* is certainly one of the greatest (if flawed) westerns ever made. After John Ford, Hawks directed John Wayne in more major westerns than any other director. Hawks, like Anthony Mann, is one of the directors tied for "second best director of the classical western" after John Ford.

Hawks is also famous for his direction of women (the “Hawksian woman”) which Wikipedia describes as “up-front in speaking her mind and keeping up with her male counterparts in witty banter as well as taking action to get what she wants personally as well as sexually. She can be seen as the fast-talker, frank, and can beat a man in verbal sparring.^[1] Despite his preference for this kind of woman, Hawks never considered himself a feminist and simply stated that he thought these women were lively and interesting both in films and in life.”





Howard Hawkes was a huge John Ford fan and even though Ford was only two years his senior, Hawkes worshipped Ford as a “master” film maker and his superior. Of course, most directors felt that way about John Ford. But while Hawkes openly tried to imitate Ford’s visual style, there is an interesting contrast between them.

Ford was famous for often having his characters say *less*. As much as possible Ford tried to communicate meaning through his camera. Rather than have a character talk, he would often film the characters doing something or just thinking something and let his camera do the work. Hawkes, on the other hand, was not only famous for his talkative women characters, but also for his use of “natural” talk in his films. One of his signature techniques was to have characters “talk over” one another. In other words, they will talk at the same time or interrupt each other. For example, Thomas Dunson interrupts the Mexican guard no fewer than three times in their brief exchange...actually he interrupts him *four* times. The fourth time he shoots him.