

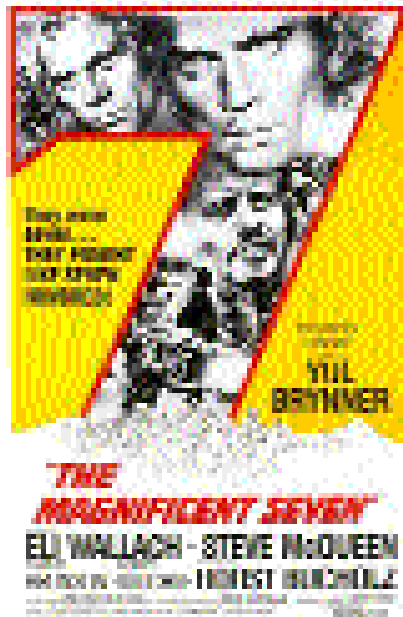
Brattle Theatre Film Notes: The Magnificent Seven

(USA, 1960. PG-13. 128 min. Cast: Eli Wallach, Yul Brenner, Horst Buchholz, Charles Bronson, Robert Vaughn, Brad Dexter; Music: Elmer Bernstein; Cinematographer: Charles Lang, Jr.; Writer: William Roberts; Producer: Walter Mirisch; Director: John Sturges)

According to IMDb's website (Earth's Biggest Move Database), The Magnificent Seven (1960) was directed by John Sturges and the screenplay, based on The Seven Samurai, was written by William Roberts, (1913-1997), who wrote twenty-one other screenplays: Major Payne (1995), 10 to Midnight (1983), Legend of the Lone Ranger (1981), Posse (1975), The Last American Hero (1973), Red Sun (1972), Come Fly with Me (1963), The Bridge at Ramagen (1969), Her Twelve Men (1954) and Easy to Love (1953) a comedy musical.

The Magnificent Seven involves classic themes: good vs. evil, self-determination vs. domination, good guy gets girl, love and the lonely existence of adventurous gunslingers who muse about what's missing in their lives, such as a home and a family. Calvera (Eli Wallach) and his band of men raid a local village and kill resisters, stealing chickens and corn leaving the farmers and their families without food. The village men (Jorge Martinez de Hoyos, Rico Alaniz, Pepe Hern, Natividad Vacio, Mario Navarro) seek advice from the Old Man (Vladimir Sokoloff) who tells them they must fight or they will be killed; He tells them they need to learn to use guns or hire gunfighters; He sends them to the border town to get help.

The men arrive in town to find Chris Adams (Yul Brenner) and Vin (Steve McQueen) providing the muscle to help bury a dead Indian, facing down prejudice of the "civilized" town people who are opposed to an Indian's burial in their graveyard. As Chris and Vin gallop through the town pulling a hearse and avoiding bullets, the Mexican men decide that Chris is their man; They visit him, explain their predicament and ask for help.



He agrees to do the job for \$20. Chris and Vin find five other men who are gunfighters: Chico (Horst Buchholz), Bernardo O'Reilly (Charles Bronson), Lee (Robert Vaughn), Harry Luck (Brad Dexter), and Britt (James Coburn) and enlist their aid.

Although the village men want the gunfighters to help them, they hide their women in the woods where Chico, a farmer himself, discovers Petra (Rosenda Monteros)

and falls in love with her; forcing him to come to terms with the machismo lifestyle of the gunfighter and his strong desire for a home and a family. The seven gunfighters teach the men, who are peaceful farmers, how to fight, fire a gun and defend themselves. At first, Calvera tries to reason with the seven men, appealing to their common ground as gunslingers. "If he didn't want them sacrificed, God wouldn't make sheep," he argues, and "Where will I get corn for my men?" "Grow it, or buy it," the men answer. Eventually, Calvera's desperate tactics divide the village into one group who wants to fight him and another group that wants to appease him in order to avert a blood bath when the gunfighters leave. Calvera uses this opportunity to create a diversion outside the village, leading Chris and his men to investigate. While they are gone, Calvera captures the village; and when the gunfighters return he demands their surrender and forces them to leave the village, unarmed. Reluctantly, they agree and ride out of town where their guns are returned to them; however, Britt tells Chris "No one throws me my gun and orders me to leave." They decide to return to the village and fight it out with Calvera. After this glorious battle, the victorious gunfighters leave the village freed of the plague of Calvera and his bandits, but Chico stays to be with Petra. The Magnificent Seven is a classic western drama superbly performed by its star-studded cast, a win for lovers of this genre.

- Christine Walen