

The Hostage

US : 1967 : dir. Russell S Doughton : : 84 min
 prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:
[Danny Martins](#) [d]
 (Harry) Dean Stanton; John Carradine; John Hagerthy; Ann Doran

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω 8 € M ⚡	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 1996 review:

"Well-done low-budget film about a six-year old who stows away on a moving van driven by two murderers. Shot entirely on location in Iowa. ****1/2**"

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review – identical to above

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

Radio Times review:

"The big surprise about **"THE HOSTAGE"** is that Roger Corman's name isn't on it. One of scores of independent features made in the sixties, it has all of Corman's credentials: a dime budget, bleak locations, bags of energy, and John Carradine and Harry Dean Stanton in key roles. It's a crime story with a twist, about a six-year old boy trapped in a removal van which contains a corpse who, when the corpse is buried, becomes the dispensable witness. *******"

"Having witnessed a murder, a boy is pursued by the killers."

Not to be confused with the 1983 Australian/West German film **"HOSTAGE"**, a 1987 South African film, or a 1992 British film of the same title. Danny Martins debuts as six-year old Davey Cleaves, a bored and friendless boy who gets underfoot as his parents are packing up their home. A nosey neighbour spies on him as he saunters out into the street and chats with a derelict (John Carradine) who happens to be ambling by. The removal men arrive unexpectedly early, and Davey, unobserved, decides to inspect the rear of their lorry from the inside. The removal men are bogus, a psychotic alcoholic, "Bull", and his timid stuttering sidekick (Harry Dean Stanton), and when they drive off with the contents of Davey's home the boy is unwittingly taken along. The contents of the van also include the corpse of a drinking partner "Bull" beat to death the previous night, and Davey's father's handgun in a packing chest.

When the boy's absence is discovered, and his parents are maliciously informed by the neighbour about the tramp "accosting" him, they frantically attempt to trace the man's movements. When Davey's father finally tracks Carradine down at a bar, it is only to see him walk straight into the path of an oncoming truck. The suspected abductor is taken off to hospital, unconscious, before he can shed any light on the whereabouts of the boy. The bogus removal men, meanwhile, have stopped to bury the body, and in the process the boy is discovered. After a long chase he eludes them, and seeks sanctuary at the nearby farm of a kindly old woman (shades of "**NIGHT OF THE HUNTER**"), only to be handed directly back to the killer, claiming to be the boy's father, by the woman's husband.

Ample plot for a mainstream Hollywood thriller, except that this production was rolled off at a fraction of the cost. Occasionally its low budget is all too evident, and the direction not taut enough, but it has the merit of its modesty, and the standout performance is that of the old woman, who contacts the boy's parents and puts them on the trail of the (by this time volitional) kidnappers. The part of the psychotic "Bull" is overwritten, as one would expect, leching after Davey's mother, piling humiliation on his sidekick, menacing the boy with sadistic relish, while it is sad to see an actor of John Carradine's former stature reduced here to a small part any competent amateur could have played. Harry Dean Stanton is Harry Dean Stanton, just a little more nervous than usual.

Broadcast at 3 a.m., "**THE HOSTAGE**" was scarcely worth losing a moment's sleep for, and inevitably looks flat and dated against thirty years of more violent comparable productions, but it does manage a few moments of genuine suspense and tells its story in a linear, uncluttered way. Danny Martins has little to do beyond trembling his chin affectingly, but he does not seem overtly conscious of the camera, and carries his part well enough for a six-year old.

See subject index under **EYEWITNESS TO MURDER / BOY-WHO-CRIED-WOLF, [KIDNAPPING](#), MOVING HOME** and **RUNAWAYS / STOWAWAYS**.