

The Red Pony

US : 1949 : dir. Lewis Milestone : Republic : 89 min
 prod: Lewis Milestone : scr: John Steinbeck : dir.ph.: Tony Gaudio
Peter Miles; Beau Bridges; Don Kay "Little Brown Jug" Reynolds
 Robert Mitchum; Myrna Loy; Louis Calhern; Shepperd Strudwick; Margaret Hamilton;
 Patty King; Jackie Jackson

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CHARLES K. FELDMAN presents MYRNA LOY and ROBERT MITCHUM
in JOHN STEINBECK'S "THE RED PONY" Color By TECHNICOLOR
A Lewis Milestone Production with LOUIS CALHERN and SHEPHERD STRUDWICK
and introducing PETER MILES as Tom



Man-to-man stuff...

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide
1996 review:

"Tasteful version of the John Steinbeck book about a boy attached to a horse, seeking escape from his bickering family; leisurely pacing. Fine Steinbeck script and Aaron Copland score. Remade as a TV movie. *** "

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"John Steinbeck adapted his own novel for this film, which concerns the love of young Miles for his horse. An enthralling relationship develops between the boy and cowboy Mitchum, who has a lot of understanding for him. In contradiction to his father, Strudwick, who initially understands the boy very little. Calhern, a prattling grandpa, is also treated none too amicably by Strudwick. The climax is moving, however. 9-year old Miles and Mitchum steal the film. Loy, as the mother, and Strudwick don't appeal. Robert Aldrich was assistant director on this. Later director Harry Keller edited the film and Tony Gaudio did the lovely camerawork. Aaron Copland provided the suitable music. In 1949 young Reynolds played Little Beaver in the **RED RYDER** series. *** "

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"When his pet pony dies after an illness, a farmer's son loses faith in his father. Sincere but rather obvious little fable which although capably made does not make inspiring film drama."

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

"John Steinbeck wrote the story and screenplay of this boy-and-pony story but it isn't particularly better than others of its kind in showing that the world can be a cruel place. Richard Miles is the boy¹, Myrna Loy and Shepperd Strudwick are the parents and Robert Mitchum the rancher. Also: Louis Calhern, Margaret Hamilton and young Beau Bridges. Aaron Copland wrote the score. Maureen O'Hara and Henry Fonda were the parents in a television remake in 1973. * "

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89
review:

"Ranch boy is gifted with a colt, grows to love him, but the colt escapes. John Steinbeck story

¹ *wrong!*

receives a good production, but moves rather

"You see boy? The front end's got these brown



leisurely. *** "

pointy ears here. I mostly try to ride a horse with the front end pointing where I'm fixing to go.."





The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on
Television review:



"One of those boy-and-his-horse epics, where he relates more to the animal than to the warring humans (Myrna Loy, Robert Mitchum, Louis Calhern among them) around him. Lewis Milestone kept it running wild, running free in 1949. * "

TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995 review:

"Outdoor adventure stories about boys and horses held great appeal in Hollywood in the Forties, so John Steinbeck's short novel about a chestnut colt seemed a natural for filming. All credit to Republic Studios who hired a good cast, top photographer Tony Gaudio (whose Technicolor camerawork is wonderful) and noted composer Aaron Copland to provide the score. The results are poignant and winning; Peter Miles, who plays the boy, later became a screenwriter and author. *** "

Variety Movie Guide 1993 review:

"Lewis Milestone's filmisation of a novelette by John Steinbeck has been pieced together with taste and fidelity. It has, however, stumbled over one obstacle. The secondary theme, an attempt to etch the emotional complexities of the grown-ups that surround the boy is slack-paced and sketchily drawn.

Boy-and-pony theme owes much of its compassion and winning graces to a fine and sensitive performance by Peter Miles. As Billy Buck, the hired man, Robert Mitchum underscores a likeable role. Neither Myrna Loy nor Shepperd Strudwick are as satisfactory as the boy's parents. Since it is their lot to go through some pretty tedious bits of business, script and direction are undoubtedly more at fault than their thespian efforts."

Video Movie Guide 1993 review:

"It is very hard to make a dull movie from a John Steinbeck novel. This rendition manages to accomplish that. Myrna Loy and Robert Mitchum are wasted in this story of a young Northern California boy who is given a colt, which runs away. ** "

Those Endearing Young Charms caption to still:

"A nine-year old boy learns about human values and life's mysteries when his beloved pony dies. Peter starred opposite Myrna Loy and Robert Mitchum. In this scene we have Peter being carried into the house after his valiant attempt at saving his dying colt from the buzzards."

Purportedly first person account - by 9-yr old Miles - in **Hollywood-London Film Parade 1949:**

" "Five hundred to one and the boy made it - you can't beat that for good luck!" Lots of people say something like that when Mr Lewis Milestone, producer-director of Republic's **"THE RED PONY"** tells how I was chosen for the part of Tom Tiflin in that picture. It's so - Mr Milestone did interview five hundred boys before he chose me. He'd wanted to make **"THE RED PONY"** for nine years and he said he could certainly take the time to make sure he had exactly the right cast. I suppose I was lucky to be around when he began to test for Tom, because I was born in Tokyo. And when I was still pretty little we went back to France so my father could fight in the war with the French Army.

Then we came to California. I was in some of Hal Roach's comedies, the ones with mostly 9children, and in some features. **"POSSESSED"** was one. I like acting. So do my sisters Gigi, who is six - I'm nine - and Janine. Janine is just four. They played in some pictures, too. Well, if you're the only boy and the oldest, you've got to be the best. So I worked extra hard in my pictures. I tried even harder when I tested for **"THE RED PONY"** because I thought it would be swell to be in a picture with lots of animals. There are lots of animals beside the pony in the picture - horses, cows, pigs, dogs, even some field mice. There are birds, too - chickens, hawks, buzzards."

[no listing in "The Critics' Film Guide", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Time Out Film Guide" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

Radio Times review:

"Republic Studio's version of the John Steinbeck story about a boy (Peter Miles), a sick pony and the problems of childhood. A bit wobbly as a drama, but sincere and well made

(Lewis Milestone directs), strongly cast (Myrna Loy, Robert Mitchum, Louis Calhern) and attractively filmed in Technicolor. Plus a fine Aaron Copland score. ** ”

“Sad but old enough to be interesting, made in 1949 with Hollywood star Robert Mitchum.”

“While young Tom Tiflin devotes himself to his pony, trouble is brewing. Screenplay: John Steinbeck; Producer/director: Lewis Milestone”

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Miles:

“The sensitive, innocent-looking French-bred Gerald Richard Perreau-Saussine had fled France in 1940 with his French father and American mother: after crossing the Atlantic on a tramp steamer, they went to join his mother’s parents in Los Angeles. His pretty younger sister Gigi Perreau (Ghislaine, born 1941) entered movies before Gerald, and became a well-known child actor, as to a lesser extent did another sister, Janine.

The boy acted as Gerald Perreau until 1948, when – with the big time looming – he was persuaded to adopt the homelier name of Peter Miles. He and Gigi appeared together in **"ENCHANTMENT"**, **"FAMILY HONEY-MOON"** and **"ROSEANNA McCOY"**. His own best-remembered lead was in **"THE RED PONY"**, Lewis Milestone’s effective version of a John Steinbeck story.

In the 1950s Peter abandoned acting, and rather than going into his father’s banking business devoted himself to writing. In both 1966 and 1967 he won the Samuel Goldwyn Creative Writing Award for his novels **"Angel Loves Nobody"** (originally called **"Crooked Children"**) and **"The Moonbathers"**. In 1969 Robert Altman filmed an earlier novel of his, **"THAT COLD DAY IN THE PARK"**. In a last switch of name, Gerald/Peter now decided to publish as Richard Miles.

Peter Saussine remains in reserve.”

So far as plot construction goes, this has as much in common with **"OLD YELLER"** or **"THE YEARLING"** - or at a pinch even **"FREE WILLY"** - as with other boy-and-horse operas like **"MY FRIEND FLICKA"** or **"RIDE A WILD PONY"**. Peter Miles, 10, older brother of Gigi Perreau, was also seen in **"POSSESSED"** ('47), **"ENCHANTMENT"** ('48) and **"WHO KILLED DOC ROBIN?"**, among numerous others.

See also **"THE RED PONY"** (TV '73, with Henry Fonda and Clint Howard) and subject index under **HORSES & PONIES**, **SPECIAL FRIENDSHIPS** and **WESTERNS**.

See also **"BADKONAK-E SEFID"** and **"BASHU"** - both recent Iranian films, and subject index under **ARAB WORLD / MIDDLE EAST**.