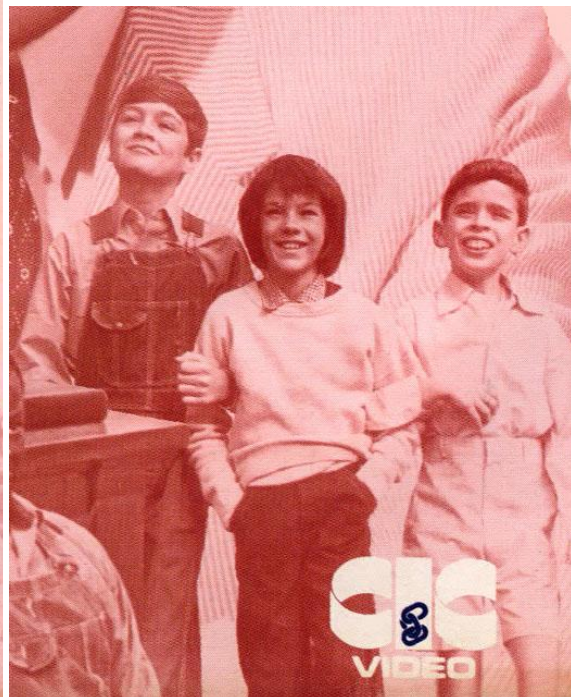
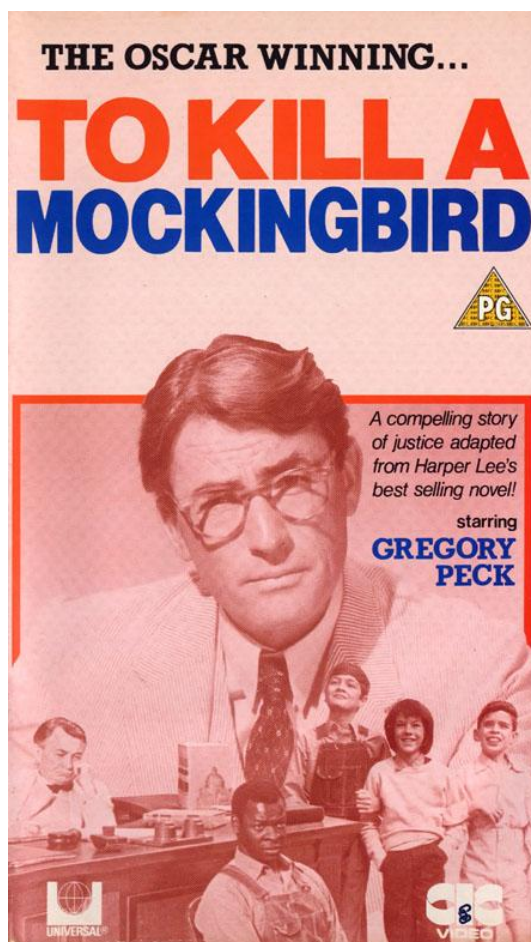


To Kill a Mockingbird

US : 1962 : dir. Robert Mulligan : Universal : 129 min
 prod: Alan J Pakula : scr: Horton Foote : dir.ph.: Russell Harlan
 Mary Badham [d]; Philip Alford [d]; John Megna
 Gregory Peck; Frank Overton; Rosemary Murphy; Ruth White; Brock Peters; Paul Fix;
 James Anderson; Alice Ghostley; William Windom; Crahan Denton; Robert Duvall

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω 8 € M ♀	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide
 2001 review:

"Peck won an Oscar as the Southern lawyer who defends a black man (Peters) accused of rape, and tries to explain the proceedings to his children and their friend. Leisurely paced, flavourful adaptation of the Harper Lee novel; Horton Foote's screenplay also earned an

Oscar. Duvall's film debut. Narrated by Kim Stanley. ***1/2 "

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"Peck won an Oscar as the lawyer who defends a negro accused of rape. Badham, Alford and Megna are excellent as the children who try to understand something of life in a small southern town. ***1/2 "



Jem (Philip Alford) retails the local legend of Boo Radley to Scout (Mary Badham) and friend Dale (John Megna)
Source: indeterminate

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"A lawyer in a small southern town defends a black man accused of rape. Familiar dollops of social conscience, very well presented with a child interest and excellent atmosphere, but a mite overlong. The narrator is Kim Stanley. ** "

The Critics' Film Guide review:

"A white lawyer (Gregory Peck) defends a black man (Brock Peters) accused of rape. Solid, well-acted drama which works okay as an evocation of childhood in a southern town (the two kids are especially good). But it's also a Hollywood parable about racial bigotry, which wears its liberal intentions a little too earnestly on its sleeve. Would rednecks really be so easily talked out of their lynch-mob by a little girl? Might they not just have lynched the little girl as well? Russell Harlan's photography and Elmer Bernstein's score were Oscar-nominated, as were Alexander Golitzen, Henry Bumstead and Oliver Emert for Art Direction and Set Decoration. 6/10 "

Anti:

"When Gregory Peck got the Academy Award for Best Actor for his performance as an upstanding widowed lawyer practising in a small Alabama town in the early 30s, there was a fair amount of derision throughout the country: Peck was better than usual, but in that same virtuously dull way."

- Pauline Kael

"Has nothing very profound to say about the south and its problems. Sometimes, in fact, its side-porch psychology is simply fatuous... Peck... seems to imagine himself the Abe Lincoln of Alabama." - Time

"Mulligan's direction is merely solid and academic" - The Times

Pro:

"Peck always seems to do very little acting, but he has the great screen actor's ability to evoke feeling and suggest inner thoughts by his deep sincerity... He lifts this leisurely film into the first class."

- Felix Baker, Evening News

"The kind of film that grows on you like a skin"
 - Evening Mail

"What the film has – and this is what gives it its maturity and wisdom – is a poetic realism that soars way above the requirements of surface truth... There is a contradiction... between the child's-eye fantasy of... the "haunted house" and the very adult emotions of the courtroom... [which] throws the development a bit off-balance. But there is so much sincerity and passion in [the] direction, and so little compromise in the script, that the total impact sweeps away all quibble or doubt."

– Nina Hibbin, *Daily Worker*

"The story may seem slightly sentimental today in its portrayal of race relations, but its stature and lasting substance stem from the beautifully observed relationship between father and children and from the youngsters' perceptions of the enduring human values in the world around them." – **Judith Crist**

"I can only say that I am a happy author. They have made my story into a beautiful and moving motion picture. I am very proud and grateful." – **Harper Lee**

"My favourite film, without any question"

– **Gregory Peck**

The Time Out Film Guide review:

"Tackling Harper Lee's novel, Stanley Kramer would have hit us over the head with a hammer, so perhaps we can be grateful that Mulligan merely suffocates with righteousness. The film sits somewhere between the bogus virtue of Kramer's **"THE DEFIANT ONES"** and the poetry of Laughton's **"NIGHT OF THE HUNTER"**, combining racial intolerance with the nightmares of childhood, born out of Kennedy's stand on civil rights and Martin Luther King's marching. In Alabama in the early '30s, Peck is a Lincoln-like lawyer who defends a black (Peters) against a charge of rape, while looney-tune Duvall scares the shit out of Peck's kids. It looks like a storybook of the Old South, with dappled sunlight and woodwormy porches, and Peck is everyone's favourite uncle. But screenwriter Horton Foote does less well by Harper Lee's novel than Lillian Hellman did by Foote's **"THE CHASE"** for Arthur Penn. That movie really was a pressure-cooker; this one is always just off the boil."

Video Movie Guide 1993 review:

"**"TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD"** is a leisurely paced, flavourful filming of Harper Lee's bestselling novel¹. Gregory Peck earned an Oscar as a small-town southern lawyer who defends a black man accused of rape. Mary Badham, John Alford and Philip Megna are superb as Peck's children and a visiting friend who are trying to understand life in a small town. ***** "

Videocassette - CIC VHS VHR 1192 - sleeve notes:

"This is an excellent and atmospheric adaptation by Horton Foote of Harper Lee's sensitive novel. Told in retrospect, it successfully tackles the themes of racial prejudice in America's Deep South with the gradual maturing of compassion and social insight in children. Gregory Peck (who won an Oscar for his performance) plays Atticus Finch, the soft spoken, small town, Alabama lawyer given the responsibility of defending Tom Robinson (Brock Peters). A black man unjustly accused of rape. This is perfectly balanced with Finch as the family man who has the added responsibility of bringing up two motherless children, magically played by Mary Badham and Philip Alford. Directed by Robert Mulligan, **"TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD"** is one of the best movies dealing with racial tension and moral justice that the American Film Industry has ever made."

Source unknown:

"Harper Lee's semi-autobiographical novel of her upbringing in Alabama was dramatised for the screen by Horton Foote. The central character is Atticus Finch, liberal lawyer – an anachronism in the bigoted deep south of the 1930s. He is played by Peck, who won an Oscar for the part. Atticus defends an innocent black on a rape charge, but loses to a biased jury. His young children, Badham and Philip Alford, are threatened, but an unknown rescuer beats off the assailant. The lazy southern atmosphere is carefully wrought and Robert Duvall makes an impressive debut as a brain-damaged young man."

¹ Coincidentally the very words Maltin uses to describe it.

[no listing in "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" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

Radio Times notes:

"Classic, Oscar-winning drama. A smalltown Southern lawyer in the 30s defends a black farm worker accused of rape."

"Classic drama starring Gregory Peck. A smalltown southern lawyer in 30s America defends a black farm worker accused of rape. **** "

The Sunday Times review:

"Gregory Peck won an Oscar for his portrayal of the 1930s southern lawyer, Atticus Finch, who defends a black man, Brock Peters, accused of rape. Horton Foote adapted Harper Lee's novel and also won an Oscar. At its heart is Finch's relationship with his two children. Robert Duvall makes his debut."

Daily Mirror note:

"Principled lawyer Gregory Peck defends a black man on a rape charge in a redneck town. **** "

How did we get through 8 reviews without tripping over the cliché "coming of age drama"? Because at heart this film is less a courtroom thriller or a liberal indictment of the segregated south than it is a "turning point of my childhood" story, which is what "coming of age drama" typically means. The story is told with great warmth and affection, despite the sourness of its principal incidents, or the outcome of the trial itself. It's a daughter's testament to the moral courage of her father, and the relationship between Atticus and Scout – a most unusual one for 1932 – is the drama's true centre of gravity. Mary Badham inhabits her role so naturally and unaffectedly that it seems a real waste she did not make another film for three years. What nobody has mentioned is that she too was nominated for an Academy Award.

For those who've not read the book – a one-time favourite in schools – or seen the film, the significance of the title is explained by Atticus (Peck) when telling son Jem of the first gun his father gave him at around the same age (Jem wants a gun, but Atticus won't give him one yet). His father said he could shoot all the jays he wanted, *if* he could hit them, but he must never shoot a mockingbird, since they cause no nuisance to farmer or gardener, providing only pleasure through their song. The lesson acquires added resonance at the end of the film.

Gregory Peck rightly won the Best Actor Oscar for his quiet, unflamboyant central performance as Atticus Finch, although he does seem vaguely out of place in a Deep South small-town community. It's the kind of role that Spencer Tracy would have eaten up in the 1930s, a modest, immovable man of principle. "Some men are born to do all our dirty jobs for us" a neighbour explains to Jem, "Your father is one of them." Atticus is called upon to defend a black labourer accused of the cardinal sin of raping a white woman, at a time and place where summary lynching was still the remedy of choice in such situations. He has to face down a mob arriving by night at the jailhouse to do precisely that, and finds himself despised by some sections of the white community for a "nigger-lover". He wins his case on both evidence and eloquence, but the all-white jury convict the defendant in any case for his effrontery – under cross examination he admitted to having felt sorry for the poor young white girl who brought the allegation against him.

which Producer Alan J Pakula moved on to become a fine director in his own right with films including "KLUTE", "ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN" and "THE PARALLAX VIEW".

See subject index under AUTOBIOGRAPHY / VIDEO DIARIES, COURTROOMS, DISCRIMINATION / PREJUDICE, DEPRESSION / 1930s SETTINGS and OSCAR WINNERS / AWARD WINNERS.