

## New Hollywood: American 70s

# Days of Heaven 1978

Friday, December 4 - Thursday, December 10, 2009



### Film Information

**Directed by**

Terrence Malick

**Language**

English

**Running Time**

94 minutes

### Film Notes

There are numerous formats to watch a film in these days—streamed to our television, downloaded to our tiny iPod screen—but it is still hard to beat watching a film projected onto a big screen as you sit in the dark amongst friends and strangers. And few films beg to be seen in celluloid more than DAYS OF HEAVEN.

The film is, put simply, a visual masterpiece. Vast panoramas fill up the screen, bisected by the horizon line and lit primarily by natural light. Much of the film was shot at what filmmakers deem “magic hour,” when the sun has dipped in the horizon, bathing the landscape in a soft, warm glow. The earth-toned, warm-hued color palette is consistent throughout, and much of the film’s superb creation of atmosphere and tone—it’s closer to a visual poem than a novel—is owed to Nestor Almendros’ Oscar-winning cinematography.

Malick understands the inherent strengths of film as an art form: the ability to evoke a mood, create an atmosphere, and emotionally move a viewer, with the simple yet powerful combination of image and sound. He exalts the sensory, relishing in sight, sound and even texture—holding the camera on the pattern of water rippling over rocks or the movement of wheat fields in the wind.

A narrative does exist, but it’s doled out in small, often elliptical doses, leaving gaps to be filled by one’s imagination. A persistently elusive film, scenes end before they feel finished, while the spare voice-over appears and disappears for no apparent reason. Together these devices, along with the sumptuous cinematography, give the film a dream-like feel.

Malick also isn’t afraid to pull away from his actors and even the narrative, in order to appreciate the visual details—a flock of geese, the contour of a landscape, drops of dew on a leaf. These minute compositions of the natural world hold equal importance as the characters, and create a more dimensional world of, in this case, the Texas panhandle during wheat harvest season.

—Lindsay



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“Nobody’s perfect. There was never a perfect person around. You just have half-angel and half-devil in you.”

**More Information**

**Screenplay by**  
Terrence Malick

**Featuring**  
Richard Gere  
Linda Manz  
Sam Shepard  
Brooke Adams  
Robert J. Wilke

**Cinematography by**  
Néstor Almendros

**Film Editing by**  
Billy Weber

**Original Music by**  
Ennio Morricone

**Country of Origin**  
USA

“I rented a Ford Mustang and drove up to Alberta, Canada, not knowing really what I was getting myself into. Wound up on the plains of Alberta, which was extraordinary in itself. Prairie country, very flat. And Jack Fisk had constructed this remarkable set in the middle of the plains, out of plywood, this house that sat there like some Edward Hopper painting. All this wind from the prairie and it somehow stayed in one piece. And there were all these other amazing people—[cinematographer] Néstor Almendros, one of the most gentle men I ever met. Looking at everything through his dark glasses, measuring the light. Shooting at night with candles and flashlights. I mean, even for me who hadn’t had much experience with filmmaking, I knew that was extreme.”

—Sam Shepard

**Also Recommended by Terrence Malick**

Badlands 1973  
The Thin Red Line 1998  
The New World 2005