

= The Long , Hot Summer =

The Long , Hot Summer is a 1958 film directed by Martin Ritt . The screenplay was written by Irving Ravetch and Harriet Frank , Jr . , based in part on three works by William Faulkner : the 1931 novella " Spotted Horses " , the 1939 short story " Barn Burning " , and the 1940 novel The Hamlet . The title is taken from The Hamlet , as Book Three is called " The Long Summer " . Some characters , as well as tone , were inspired by Tennessee Williams ' 1955 play , Cat on a Hot Tin Roof , a film adaptation of which - also starring Paul Newman - was released five months after the release of The Long , Hot Summer .

The plot follows the conflicts of the Varner family after ambitious drifter Ben Quick (Newman) arrives in their small Mississippi town . Will Varner (Orson Welles) , the family 's patriarch and the owner of most of the town , has doubts about the abilities of his only son , Jody (Anthony Franciosa) , and sees Ben as a better choice to inherit his position . Will therefore tries to push Ben and his daughter Clara (Joanne Woodward) into marriage . Clara is initially reluctant to court Ben , and Jody senses that Ben threatens his position .

Filmed in Clinton , Louisiana , the film 's cast was composed mostly of former Actors Studio students , whom Ritt met while he was an assistant teacher to Elia Kazan . For the leading role , Warner Brothers loaned Paul Newman to 20th Century Fox . The production was marked by conflicts between Welles and Ritt , which drew media attention . The music score was composed by Alex North , and the title song , " The Long Hot Summer " , written by North and Sammy Cahn , was performed by Jimmie Rodgers .

The film was well received by critics but did not score significant results at the box office . Its critical success revitalized the career of Martin Ritt , who had been blacklisted during most of the 1950s , and also earned national fame for Paul Newman , who won the Best Actor Award at the Cannes Film Festival .

= = Plot = =

Ben Quick is on trial , suspected of barn @-@ burning , but when no solid evidence is found , the peace judge expels him from town . Ben then hitches a ride to Frenchman 's Bend , Mississippi , with two young women in a convertible , Clara Varner and her sister @-@ in @-@ law Eula (Lee Remick) . Clara 's father , Will Varner , is the domineering owner of most of the town .

Ben goes to the Varner plantation . Will is away , but Jody , Will 's only son , agrees to let him become a sharecropper on a vacant farm . When Will returns from a stay in the hospital , he begins to see in Ben a younger version of himself and comes to admire his ruthlessness and ambition , qualities that Jody lacks . Will is also disappointed with the man that his 23 @-@ year @-@ old daughter , Clara , has been seeing for five or six years : Alan Stewart (Richard Anderson) , a genteel Southern " blue blood " and a mama 's boy . Will therefore schemes to push his daughter and Ben together , to try to bring fresh , virile blood into the family . However , she is openly hostile to the crude , if magnetic , upstart . Will is determined to have his bloodline go on , so he offers Ben much wealth to marry Clara . Ben is interested , but eventually comes to see something more in Clara . Meanwhile , Minnie Littlejohn (Angela Lansbury) , Will 's long @-@ time mistress , is dissatisfied with the arrangement and wants to marry him . Will , a widower , is strongly against the idea .

Jody becomes increasingly alarmed and frustrated when he sees his position in the family undermined by Ben . After Ben manages to sell some wild horses , Will offers him the position of clerk in the general store , alongside Jody . Later , Will invites him to live in the family mansion .

This is the final straw for Jody . When he finds Ben alone , he pulls a gun on him and threatens to kill him . Ben talks his way out by telling Jody about buried Civil War @-@ era treasure he has supposedly found on a property that Will gave him , a down payment to seal their bargain over Clara . Ben and Jody head to the property , where they start digging . When the two men find a bag of coins , Jody is elated , thinking he might finally get free of his father 's domination ; he buys the land from Ben . Late that night , Will finds his son , still digging . After examining one of the coins , Will

notices that it was minted in 1910 . Jody is shattered .

Meanwhile , Ben aggressively pursues Clara . She finally asks Alan his intentions , and does not like what she hears . The following day , a crushed and frustrated Jody finds his father alone in their barn . Jody bolts the entrance and sets the barn on fire , but he cannot go through with it and releases Will . The incident leads to a reconciliation between Jody and Will . Meanwhile , some of the men assume Ben is the culprit and start toward him . Clara persuades a defiant Ben to drive away in her car . Will later claims responsibility for accidentally starting the fire by dropping his cigar .

The smell of fire brings back bad memories for Ben , who confesses to Clara that his father was a real barn @-@ burner . He tells her how , at the age of ten , he had to warn a farmer that his father was about to set another fire . Ben 's father got away , but Ben never saw him again . Grateful that she saved his life , he tells her he is leaving town . However , Clara makes it clear she has fallen in love with him , so he stays . An elated Will confides to Minnie that life is so good , he may have to live forever .

= = Cast = =

Paul Newman as Ben Quick . Newman met director Martin Ritt as a student at the Actors Studio , where Ritt was a teacher @-@ assistant for Elia Kazan . Newman , who was under a contract with Warner Brothers , was loaned to 20th Century Fox for a fee of US \$ 75 @,@ 000 . Meanwhile , his contract earned him US \$ 17 @,@ 500 for each ten @-@ week shot . He travelled to Clinton , Louisiana , before the start of filming to study the mannerisms , accent and speech of the Southern men in order to create a proper characterization .

Orson Welles as Will Varner . The character was inspired by Big Daddy Pollitt from Tennessee Williams ' play Cat on a Hot Tin Roof . Welles ' presence on the film was marked by multiple conflicts with director Martin Ritt . He agreed to take the role due to a tax debt of US \$ 150 @,@ 000 ; he stated years later , " I hated making Long Hot Summer . I 've seldom been as unhappy in a picture " .

Director Martin Ritt met the three cast members listed below while they were students at the Actors Studio .

Joanne Woodward as Clara Varner

Anthony Franciosa as Jody Varner

Lee Remick as Eula Varner . Remick later admitted that during the shooting she was intimidated by Orson Welles on the set because of his " icon " status .

The supporting roles were played by :

Angela Lansbury as Minnie Littlejohn

Richard Anderson as Alan Stewart

Sarah Marshall as Agnes Stewart

Mabel Albertson as Elizabeth Stewart

J. Pat O 'Malley as Ratliff

William " Bill " Walker as Lucius

= = Production notes = =

Producer Jerry Wald hired former co @-@ worker and Warner Brothers director Martin Ritt to shoot the adaptation of two William Faulkner novels based on a recommendation by script writer Irving Ravetch . Wald convinced the studio executives to pay US \$ 50 @,@ 000 for the rights for the novels The Sound and the Fury and The Hamlet . The first to be produced , The Hamlet , was renamed The Long Hot Summer to avoid confusion with William Shakespeare 's play Hamlet . Ravetch and Harriet Frank , Jr. wrote the script , also adding fragments from Faulkner 's short stories " Barn Burning " and " Spotted Horses " . In the new script , the book 's main character , Flem Snopes , and the rest of the Snopes family were removed . The plot was recentered on a minor character , Ben Quick , and the reconciliation of the Varner family . On their first important

screenplay , Ravetch and Frank implemented their signature style , using the names of characters and a few details of the plot but significantly modifying the details of the story . The final product was heavily influenced by Tennessee Williams ' play Cat on a Hot Tin Roof , resulting in an " erotically charged " story .

The film was shot in Clinton and Baton Rouge , Louisiana , in CinemaScope color , with a budget of US \$ 1 @, @ 645 @, @ 000 . A Southern Gothic story , Ritt decided to shoot it on location to capture the characteristics of the area , emphasizing the regional details . Ritt met leading actor Paul Newman while teaching at the Actors Studio . The rest of the main cast also consisted of former Actors Studio alumni , including Joanne Woodward , Anthony Franciosa and Lee Remick .

The film attracted attention for the appearance of Orson Welles as Will Varner , the patriarch of the family . 20th Century Fox wanted to avoid the casting of Welles due to his temperament , but the studio was persuaded by Ritt , who considered him the right actor for the role . The director and the actor had several marked differences during the shooting of the movie , which included problems with the interpretation of the lines , costume design and the position of Welles while shooting the scenes . At one point during the production , Welles informed Ritt that he did not want to memorize his lines , requesting instead that they be dubbed afterwards . Part of the cast was intimidated by Welles ' temperamental attitude .

The conflicts between Welles and Ritt attracted media attention . Immediately after filming was completed , during an interview with Life , Welles explained that the cause of his behavior was that he did not know what kind of " monkeyshines " his co @-@ stars would be or the " caprices " they would receive from him . He also stated that they overcame the differences and completed the film . Welles later wrote a letter to Ritt praising his work and apologizing for his interference during the making of the movie . Ritt replied , expounding his admiration for Welles . Despite the mutual apologies , during an interview in 1965 , Ritt recalled an incident on the set . While the film was being shot , it was often stopped by bad weather . During a day suitable for shooting , he found Welles not ready for the scene , instead reading a newspaper in Spanish . Ritt decided to skip Welles ' scene and shoot the next one . He attributed Welles ' later cooperation to the incident , which Welles had found humiliating . Ritt thus earned the nickname " the Orson Tamer " throughout the Hollywood community .

= = Soundtrack = =

Alex North composed the film 's score , which leaned toward a jazz style . " The Long Hot Summer " was the only song written by North to be used as the title track of a film . Composed in a AABA form , it was characterized by its lyricisms and its " tense dissonant " jazz @-@ figures . The lyrics of the song were written by Sammy Cahn , while instrumental variations of the melody were used throughout the film , underlining the progression of the relationship between Ben and Clara . Recorded by Jimmie Rodgers , it was released by Roulette Records , reaching number 77 on Billboard 's Top 100 Sides in June 1958 . The orchestra was conducted by Lionel Newman .

Billboard described the soundtrack as " a model of music use in a dramatic film " . On another review , Billboard favored the album , stating that it " makes for good listening out of the cinematic context " and that the financial success of the soundtrack may have been propelled by Jimmie Rodgers ' " smooth vocal treatment " . The publication praised North 's musical understanding of the deep South , and particularly praised the song " Eula " , describing it as a " pure gem of sex @-@ on @-@ wax " .

= = Release and reception = =

The movie opened to good reviews but did not score a significant profit at the box office , grossing US \$ 3 @, @ 500 @, @ 000 . Billboard commended the acting as " first @-@ rate " and " robust " , with particular praise for Woodward , and also praised Ritt 's direction . Meanwhile , The Reporter highlighted the film 's similarities to the play Cat on a Hot Tin Roof and described the cast as " an impressive one " but remarked that the actors and characters " never seem to get together " . The

review called Welles ' " great " and " gusty " but described Woodward 's participation in the movie as a " poker bluff " .

Time described Newman 's performance as " mean and keen as a cackle @-@ edge scythe " . The publication also praised Woodward , valorating her acting delivered with " fire and grace not often seen in a movie queen " , but decried Welles ' acting as " scarcely an improvement " on his performance in his previous role , in Moby Dick . Variety praised the scriptwriters for the successful merging of the three Faulkner stories that inspired the film . The review also praised Martin Ritt , the camerawork by Joseph LaShelle , and the film 's musical score . Cosmopolitan called the movie a " gutsy melodrama " .

= = = Legacy = = =

The film reestablished the career of Martin Ritt , who had been on the blacklist for most of the decade for alleged associations with communists . Paul Newman 's performance as Ben Quick brought him national fame , as well as the Best Actor Award at the Cannes Film Festival . During the production , Newman married co @-@ star Joanne Woodward .

The film was remade as a television series of the same name , airing between 1965 and 1966 , featuring Dan O 'Herlihy , Roy Thinnes , Nancy Malone , Lana Wood , Ruth Roman , and Edmond O 'Brien . It was remade again for television in 1985 , featuring Jason Robards , Don Johnson , and Cybill Shepherd . This rendition received two Emmy nominations , for Outstanding Miniseries and Outstanding Art Direction for a Miniseries or a Special .