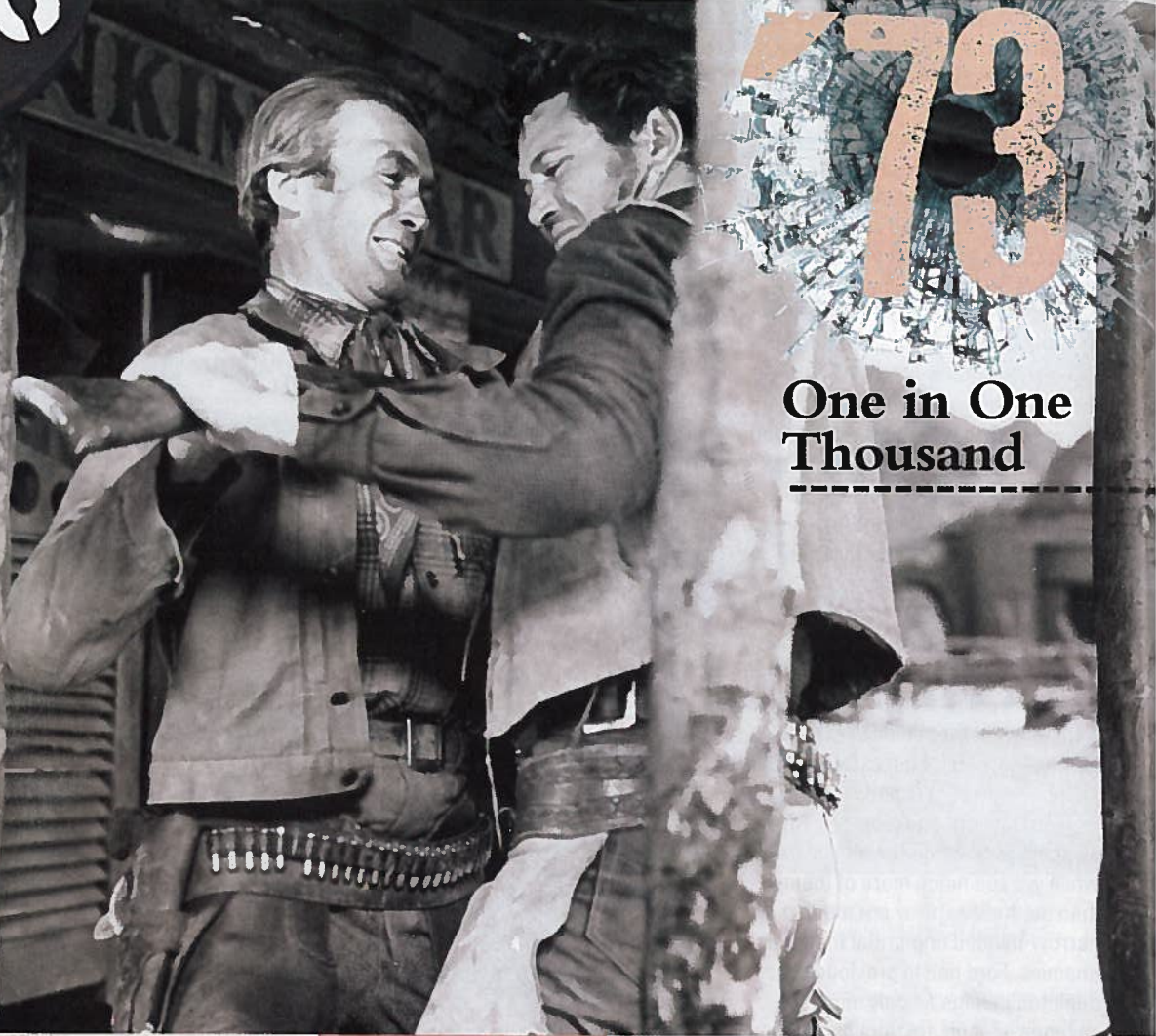




Winchester

'73

One in One Thousand



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By Nathan Lee Adamus

Winchester '73 is often credited with resurrecting Jimmy Stewart's career. The movie's primary focus, however, is not on Stewart but on a Western "celebrity" of far greater historical significance—a Winchester rifle.

The movie traces the prized rifle's journey across the frontier as it works its way through its various owners. *Winchester '73* explores the intersecting paths of gangsters, sheriffs, Indian chiefs and yellow-bellied cowards on their quest to obtain a rifle that is the envy of the plains. The film's focus isn't as much on individual characters as on the rifle's mystical ability to control their fates. Despite the film's occasional preachiness, it stands on its own as a fast-paced Western.

Winchester '73 follows Lin McAdam (James Stewart) and his gunslinging partner 'High-Spade'



BARTENDER:
Who would you be?

HIGH-SPADE:
High-Spade
Frankie Wilson ...
with a hyphen.
That's what I sit on
when I get tired.



Frankie Wilson (Millard Mitchell) as they attempt to track down the infamous outlaw 'Dutch Henry' Brown (Stephen McNally).

The pair chases Dutch to Dodge City, where Sheriff Wyatt Earp manages to keep Lin and Dutch from killing each other long enough for them to participate in a shooting competition for an 1873 "One in One Thousand" model Winchester rifle. Lin wins the competition with a miracle shot through a stamp centered on a piece of an Indian necklace. This is much to the dismay of Dutch, who has grown quite fond of the gun. When Lin returns to his room for the night, Dutch attacks him, takes the rifle, and manages to escape Dodge City before the Sheriff and High-Spade can come to Lin's rescue. This sets in motion a series of events in which the *Winchester '73* is sold, traded or stolen, frequently resulting in the untimely death of the gun's temporary owner.

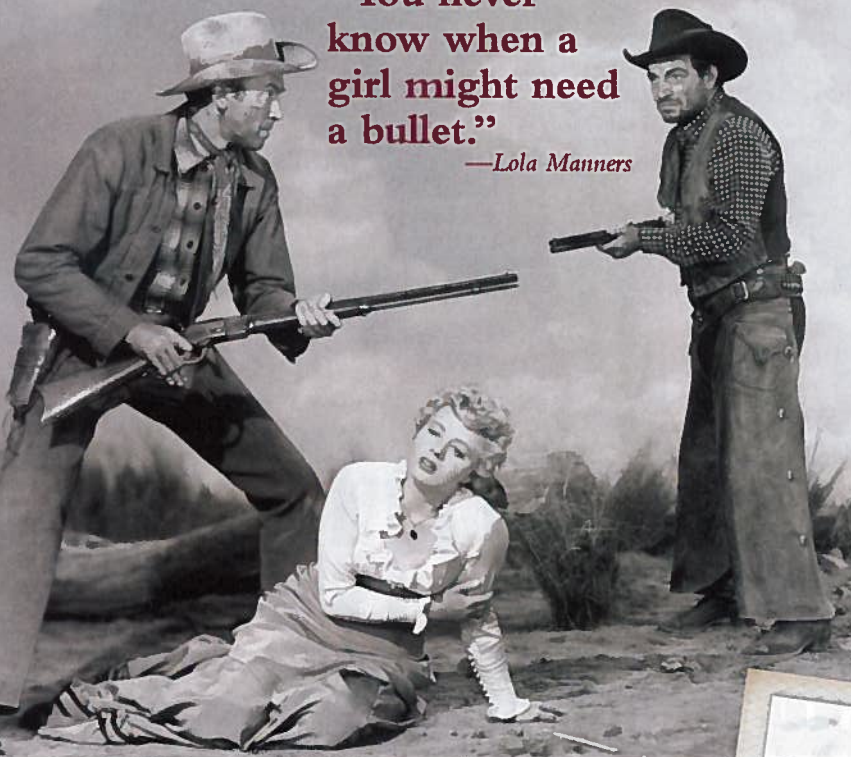
THE BIG PICTURE

Winchester '73 is often clever and amusing, yet also poignant. The movie questions a man's willingness to sacrifice his values and do the unthinkable for a prized possession. Ironically, the coveted gun that causes so much death and drama throughout the film is never used to kill anyone. Most of the owners never get a chance to fire it before their untimely demise.

We also see a more confident, calculated and mysterious James Stewart than the more awkward characters that were a trademark of his earlier films. Lin is frequently charming and calm under pressure, but he also has a dark side that seems to relish revenge. High-Spade even points out Lin's lust for the hunt, which Lin just dismisses as a necessary evil. It's natural to second-guess Lin's motives throughout the film. Is he really seeking out justice for Dutch, or has he become mesmerized by the mystique of "The Gun that Won the West"?

"You never know when a girl might need a bullet."

—Lola Manners



THE REPEATING RIFLE

The repeater, or repeating rifle, was a significant technical advancement that allowed troops to reload multiple rounds of ammunition using a hand-lever mechanism. Instead of wrestling with the slow reload times of muzzle loaders and hammer action rifles, frontier desperados were able to effortlessly rattle off several rounds in succession with the flick of a wrist. The Winchester Model 1873 repeating rifle was dubbed "The Gun that Won the West" for its widespread use among Western settlers and outlaws.

In 1875, Winchester released the One of One Thousand edition of its famous Winchester 1873 rifle, which is the model of the lead villain in *Winchester '73*. The barrels of each One of One Thousand rifle were meticulously tested to create extremely tight groupings, and in turn, a high rate of accuracy.

Two different barrel versions were released. The premium "above average accuracy" versions were labeled One of One Hundred and sold for \$20 more than the standard \$100 model. Roughly 130 of Winchester's One of One Thousand models were sold, but only eight One of One Hundred editions were purchased.

Left: Shelley Winters plays Lola Manners, a saloon girl. With Jimmy Stewart as Lin (left) and Stephen McNally as Dutch (right).

Right: Winchester Model 1873 Short Rifle.

WATCH FOR IT:

A young Rock Hudson plays Young Bull, who craves the firepower that Crazy Horse used to defeat Custer. Critics point to the role as one of the more laughable instances of non-Native Americans playing "Indian" roles in classic Westerns. "White people playing Native roles?" quips Cheyenne/Apapho filmmaker Chris Eyre, "I love it. Because it's funny." Know what else is funny? Burt Lancaster, Charles Bronson, Chuch Connors, Burt Reynolds and Boris Karloff as Hollywood "Indians."

WINCHESTER '73 (1950)

STUDIO:
Universal Pictures
DIRECTOR:
Anthony Mann
CAST MEMBERS:
James Stewart,
Millard Mitchell,
Stephen McNally,
Will Geer, Shelley
Winters, Rock
Hudson, Tony Curtis
SHOOTING LOCATIONS:
Mescal and Tucson,
Arizona.



Tony Curtis as Doan.

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