

# The Ballad of Josie

USA | 1967 | 102 minutes

## Credits

<b>Director</b>	Andrew McLaglen
<b>Screenplay</b>	Harold Swanton
<b>Photography</b>	Milton R. Krasner
<b>Music</b>	Frank De Vol

## Cast

<b>Josie Minick</b>	Doris Day
<b>Jason Meredith</b>	Peter Graves
<b>Arch Ogden</b>	George Kennedy
<b>Judge Tatum</b>	Andy Devine

As was the case with her recent films, Doris Day felt that "The Ballad of Josie" was far below the standard that a star of her magnitude should ever consider. However, aware that film is a permanent record and that her performance would forever be judged, she approached the part of Josie Minick with the same professionalism which had become her hallmark, and saved the film from being dismissed as just another western.

The conviction and energy which she brought to the role of an abused frontier wife with a small son (Teddy Quinn), made this innocuous oater a minor triumph. After the accidental death of abusive drunkard, Whit Minick (Robert Lowery), his wife, Josie, is accused of killing him with a billiard cue, brought to trial and is eventually acquitted by knowing members of a Wyoming Territory jury. Josie tearfully relinquishes her son to his grandfather until she determines what path to take as a widow with a young child. Independent and not eager to fall into another submissive relationship, she decides to raise sheep in order to provide for her small family.

Despite the fact that her town, Arapaho, is cattle country, Josie defies tradition, purchases herds of sheep, renovates a dilapidated ranch she owns, dons a pair of pants (cultural shock) and challenges the resistance of enraged cattle ranchers. Amidst Josie's plight, women's rights, Wyoming statehood and male/female relationships are material sub-themes covered in the picture.

Because no major male star was present for "Ballad of Josie", Doris Day took sole star billing above the title and Peter Graves, television star of "Mission Impossible", was cast as the male lead, Jace Meredith, who defends Josie against the cattle barons. Her major foe is Arch Ogden (George Kennedy, fresh from his Oscar win for "Cool Hand Luke"), a cattle rancher determined to organise and chase Josie out of the sheep business.

There are fights, gunfire, an all-out riot by the ladies of Arapaho who come to the aid of Josie against their own cattle-owning husbands and, eventual compromise with Josie entering the cattle business and marrying Jace, who is elected to public office. Producer, Norman MacDonnell, assembled a wonderful cast of character actors to support Doris Day. There was a virtual who's who in "Ballad of Josie". Andy Devine (his last film), William Talman ("Perry Mason"), David Hartman (Good Morning America), Audrey Christie ("Mame" "Splendour in the Grass"), Harry Carey, Paul Fix, Don Stroud, John Fiedler, Elisabeth Fraser ("Young at Heart" "Tunnel of Love") and starlet, Karen Jensen added authenticity to this period piece.

Doris Day had several good scenes. She clashed with her chauvinistic foes at a dinner invitation, proclaimed that she was independent and didn't need a man, used 'profanity' and instead of drinking 'lady-like' cherry, defiantly drank brandy, with amusing results. Also, in a showdown with Arch Ogden, Josie warns him that she would not be bullied and would stand her ground. The Techniscope photography was beautiful, the Frank DeVol score appropriate, Day's costumes by Jean Louis authentic and the direction by Andrew V. McLaglen was precise.

Unfortunately, "The Ballad of Josie" was not received in New York as a first class project. It opened as a double-bill with Charlton Heston's "Counterpoint" in wide release all over the state in neighbourhood theatres and on 42nd Street at the New Amsterdam, signalling the beginning of the end of Doris Day's great film career.

Ralph McKnight, New York, June 2000.



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