

Cambridge University Press  
0521586062 - Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*  
Edited by Stephen Prince  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*

Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* is one of the most influential films in American cinema. The intensity of its violence was unprecedented, while the director's use of multiple cameras, montage editing, and slow motion quickly became the normative style for rendering screen violence. Demonstrating to filmmakers the power of irony as a narrative voice and its effectiveness as a tool for exploring and portraying brutality, *The Wild Bunch* fundamentally changed the Western, moving it into a more brutal and psychopathic territory than it had ever inhabited before. This volume includes freshly commissioned essays by several leading scholars of Peckinpah's work. Examining the film's production history from script to screen, its rich and ambivalent vision of American society, and its relationship to the western genre, among other topics, it provides a definitive reinterpretation of an enduring film classic.

Stephen Prince is Associate Professor of Communication Studies at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. He is the author of *Savage Cinema: Sam Peckinpah and the Rise of Ultra-Violent Movies*; *Movies and Meaning: An Introduction to Film*; and *Visions of Empire: Political Imagery in Contemporary American Film*.

Cambridge University Press  
0521586062 - Sam Peckinpah's The Wild Bunch  
Edited by Stephen Prince  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

CAMBRIDGE FILM HANDBOOKS SERIES

---

*General Editor*

Andrew Horton, *University of Oklahoma*

Each CAMBRIDGE FILM HANDBOOK is intended to focus on a single film from a variety of theoretical, critical, and contextual perspectives. This “prism” approach is designed to give students and general readers valuable background and insight into the cinematic, artistic, cultural, and sociopolitical importance of individual films by including essays by leading film scholars and critics. Furthermore, these handbooks, by their very nature, are meant to help the reader better grasp the nature of the critical and theoretical discourse on cinema as an art form, as a visual medium, and as a cultural product. Filmographies and selected bibliographies are added to help the reader go further on his or her own exploration of the film under consideration.

Cambridge University Press  
0521586062 - Sam Peckinpah's The Wild Bunch  
Edited by Stephen Prince  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

---

# **Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch***

*Edited by*

**Stephen Prince**



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
 0521586062 - Sam Peckinpah's The Wild Bunch  
 Edited by Stephen Prince  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press  
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
 Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521584333](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521584333)

© Cambridge University Press 1999

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception  
 and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,  
 no reproduction of any part may take place without  
 the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1999

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Sam Peckinpah's The wild bunch / edited by Stephen Prince.

p. cm (Cambridge film handbook series)

Filmography: p.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-521-58433-7 (hardcover). ISBN 0-521-58606-2 (pbk.)

1. Wild bunch (Motion picture) I. Prince, Stephen, 1955 .

II. Series.

PN1997.W53613S26 1998

791.43'72 dc21

98-25117

CIP

ISBN-13 978-0-521-58433-3 hardback

ISBN-10 0-521-58433-7 hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-58606-1 paperback

ISBN-10 0-521-58606-2 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2006

All illustrations courtesy Jerry Ohlinger's.

Cambridge University Press  
0521586062 - Sam Peckinpah's The Wild Bunch  
Edited by Stephen Prince  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

For My Parents  
and Tami  
and Kim

---

## Contents

	<i>List of Contributors</i>	<i>page xi</i>
	<b>Introduction: Sam Peckinpah, Savage Poet of American Cinema</b>	1
	STEPHEN PRINCE	
<b>1</b>	<b><i>The Wild Bunch: The Screenplay</i></b>	37
	PAUL SEYDOR	
<b>2</b>	<b>Peckinpah the Radical: The Politics of <i>The Wild Bunch</i></b>	79
	CHRISTOPHER SHARRETT	
<b>3</b>	<b>“Back Off to What?” Enclosure, Violence, and Capitalism in Sam Peckinpah’s <i>The Wild Bunch</i></b>	105
	MICHAEL BLISS	
<b>4</b>	<b>Ballistic Balletics: Styles of Violent Representation in <i>The Wild Bunch</i> and After</b>	130
	DAVID A. COOK	
<b>5</b>	<b>Re-Visioning the Western: Code, Myth, and Genre in Peckinpah’s <i>The Wild Bunch</i></b>	155
	WHEELER WINSTON DIXON	
		ix

Cambridge University Press  
0521586062 - Sam Peckinpah's The Wild Bunch  
Edited by Stephen Prince  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

x

## CONTENTS

<b>6</b>	<b><i>The Wild Bunch: Innovation and Retreat</i></b>	175
	DEVIN MCKINNEY	
	<i>Reviews and Commentary</i>	201
	<i>Filmography</i>	213
	<i>Select Bibliography</i>	221
	<i>Index</i>	225

---

## Contributors

**Michael Bliss**, a teacher of English and film at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, is the author of *Justified Lives: Morality and Narrative in the Films of Sam Peckinpah*, coauthor (with Christina Banks) of *What Goes Around Comes Around: The Films of Jonathan Demme*, and editor of *Doing It Right: The Best Criticism of Sam Peckinpah's "The Wild Bunch."* Having just completed *Dreams Within a Dream: The Films of Peter Weir*, Bliss is now cowriting *A Sense of Loss: John Woo, Hong Kong Cinema, and 1997*.

**David A. Cook** directs the Film Studies Program at Emory University. He is the author of *A History of Narrative Film*, a major text in its field that is now in its third edition.

**Wheeler Winston Dixon** is Chair of the Film Studies Program and Professor of English at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. His books include *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard*, *It Looks at You: The Returned Gaze of Cinema*, and *The Early Film Criticism of François Truffaut*.

**Devin McKinney** is a freelance writer living in New York City. He is a frequent contributor to *Film Quarterly* and is currently writing a novel.



Cambridge University Press  
0521586062 - Sam Peckinpah's The Wild Bunch  
Edited by Stephen Prince  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

xii      CONTRIBUTORS

**Stephen Prince** is Associate Professor of Communication Studies at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. He is the author of *Savage Cinema: Sam Peckinpah and the Rise of Ultra-Violent Movies*, *Movies and Meaning: An Introduction to Film*, and *Visions of Empire: Political Imagery in Contemporary American Film*.

**Paul Seydor** is a film editor who lives in Los Angeles. His recent work includes *Tin Cup*, *Cobb*, *White Men Can't Jump*, and *Turner and Hooch*. He is the author of *Peckinpah: The Western Films: Reconsideration*.

**Christopher Sharrett** is Associate Professor of Communication at Seton Hall University. He is the editor of *Crisis Cinema: The Apocalyptic Idea in Postmodern Narrative Film*. His work has appeared in *Cineaste*, *Film Quarterly*, *Persistence of Vision*, *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, *Millennium*, *CineAction*, and elsewhere. His essays have been anthologized in *The Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film*, *Perspectives on German Cinema*, *The New American Cinema*, and other books. His book *Mythologies of Violence in Post-modern Media* is forthcoming from Wayne State University Press.