

ARCHERY IN THE MOVIES

By Andrew Wayland



We can all easily name a bunch of archery movies. The art of archery in one manner or another feature in so many a film. We all know well that there are many many **Robin Hood** films made since the evolution of the motion movie camera and if asked we would probably rant off another seven or eight cinematic productions without a breath... **Rambo, The Hunger Games, Brave, The Lord of the Rings, Alexander, Braveheart. Kingdom of Heaven, 300** to name but a few. However if we were to



recall how many western movies that depict Apache, Hopi, Cheyenne, Sioux or Camanche tribes on the frontier plains the number would increase steadily... So many of these were made in the 1950's and 60's. **She wore a yellow ribbon, The charge at Feather river, The Camancheros...** Although there are great Westerns there are so many bad ones that totally depict the native Americans as idiotic war maniacs with no battle sense. It is obvious that the directors and cast had little archery know how let alone actual archery experience. The way they shoot arrows is laughable especially the way arrows fly or rather tumble through the air. And of course the good guys usually depicted are the guys in stetsons where they are regularly shot in the back or leg by the



seemingly cowardly natives. Probably not a true representation! The movie **Geronimo** may balance the scale somewhat.

Then we think of all the historical, middle age and medieval war epics such as 300, **Attila the Hun**, **King Arthur**, and **Gladiator**. Some are positive in the way they depict archery scenes. But then there are others that for us archers, we would be better off to forget.

There are the modern hero movies such as **Hanna** starring Carlow woman Saoirse Ronan, Rambo, and of course The Hunger Games blockbusters. These movies do show the interesting and intriguing side of archery and how important bows were as a weapon and for survival.

Even Disney and Pixar seem to like the archery element in their productions. Animated movies such as Brave, **Tangled**, **Avatar** and **Epic**.

Then we may include family movies such as **The Chronicles of Narnia** series of films and **Toy Soldiers** where aptly named “Archer” one of the good gorgonites has a crossbow attached to his arm.

Even **Star Wars** deserves a mention as in Return of the Jedi, the Ewoks were armed with bows.

I have been compiling a list of movies that contain archery for a few years now and my number totals close to 300 so far. Some can be heavily archery oriented such as Chinese and Japanese epics **Hero** and **47 Ronin** but even Gizmo in



Gremlins makes the grade who having watched Sylvester Stallone

in action on tv during the movie, makes a

bow from a paper clip in order to defend himself!



A certain duelling banjo tune we will always

associate with hit American swamp and hillbilly movie **Deliverance**



featuring Burt Reynolds and Jon Voight but how many

people have heard of **The Osterman Weekend** with

Rutger Hauer or **The New World** starring Colin Farrell?

Has anyone even seen or heard of the 2013 movie

Killing Season starring John Travolta, I know I haven't!

How

about Natalie Portman in **Your Highness**? Not a bad movie but I

won't even mention **Cannibal Women in the Avocado jungle of death**

but I will counter with the funny

Grown ups where a bit of sky shooting quickly gets out of hand.

Assassins Creed, Electra, Macbeth, Reign of Fire.... the list just goes on.

Seeing archery in such movies inspires people to try their hand at

archery and take it up as a sporting pastime. We see it in clubs and

associations that when a well known movie featuring archery is released,

the interest in archery soars greatly. For example during The Hunger

Games lots of teenage girls showed up to shoot a bow. More recently

The Revenant which finally and deservedly won Leonardo Di Caprio his

Oscar again renewed awareness of archery round the globe.

So there is definitely an attraction / lure to archery by people of all ages...

New archers can then decide whether Target or Field archery or a mixture of both is for them.



Geena Davis -the American actress actually got into Target archery in 1997 and competed in US Olympic qualifiers not long after her role as an assassin in the movie The long Kiss goodnight (alas no archery in this one!) Although she didn't make the Sydney Olympics she did finish 24th from hundreds in the qualifying tournament and went on to compete at other archery events. She can even do a trick shot or two!

Russell Crowe and several other actors actively took up archery to enhance their role in films. Mel Gibson's directed and produced epic **Apocalypto** features Mayan tribes and there are several brutal archery scenes.



There are many tv programs that also feature archery. Bows appear in many Super hero storylines. In fact **Arrow** that is filmed in Vancouver and stars Stephen Amell and based on the "Green Arrow" hero character is enjoying its fifth /sixth season. We at 3d Archery Ireland were very



fortunate to have had the senior archery coach from that very show Patricia Gonzalves down with us at our range in Co. Wexford during her European

history of archery research tour in 2016. She was also greeted by many SIFA members who arrived to meet her and took part in the afternoons event. **Game of Thrones** and **Vikings** are two very well known and loved tv series where there are no shortage of flying arrows...

It seems that every few years the legend of Robin Hood is renewed with a new take on the English hero. Personally my favourite is **Robin Hood -Prince of Thieves** which starred Kevin Costner. However I do like the comedy **Robin Hood- Men in Tights** and some of the older swashbuckling and adventure versions such as **The Adventures of Robin Hood**



Errol Flynn's characterisation of Robin Hood comes to mind. Then there is Sean Connery in **Robin and Marian**. Most recently Russell Crowe played Robin but he seemed to favour his hammer in place of the traditional longbow in many scenes.

So as you can see from this compilation, archery influence is rife through the movie world. I've merely named about 40. I'm sure you may come up with many others that also feature on my full list.



How many of us as kids made a bow using twine and a tree branch? How many fancied / still fancy the various

Maid Marian actresses or Guinevere or Katniss Everdeen?

And the lady archers of our archery societies who wished to star alongside Kevin Costner, Liam Helmsworth or Sean Connery or emulate archer heroines played by Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Kiera Knightly, Natalie Portman, Jennifer Lawrence or Jennifer Garner.

And the kids I'm sure take inspiration from the likes of Merida, Katniss, Gale, Legolas, Neytiri, and Prince Caspian.



For us archers we may scoff at the shooting techniques or historical accuracy of the bows and arrows used but I'm sure we all secretly smile to ourselves as we think "I do that and (most times) I do it well.... and isn't it such a cool sport to see and do!"

So for those who have not yet tried it... what are you waiting for?



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