

Horse
operas
galloping
into sunset

greg lukow
key grip

Have current movie trends outgrown the great American western? The western tradition has become a prominent part of our culture over the years, but recently western productions have slowly wound down until they have nearly come to a halt. Even on TV, *Gunsmoke* remains a last sentinel; 10 or 15 years ago westerns ruled the tube.

It's been more than a year since the last major western (Sam Peckinpah's *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*) hit the screen. Even John Wayne, last and greatest member of the western's old guard, has ridden right on past the last sunset and into the city for his latest movie. The few new westerns turned out this past year have been dreary foreign productions (Mexican, Italian and even Israeli) that usually capitalize on one or two well known American stars stuck in among an unknown foreign cast.

New Yorker's film critic Pauline Kael has even gone so far as to say that the western is dead. But it's difficult to say whether we are seeing the end of a long movie era. The western probably has meant too much to the American public to be so easily forgotten.

The entire situation has, in fact, been seen before and for many of the same reasons. Between 1929 and 1935 when the gangster heroes were bringing movie patrons out their depression doldrums and into the movie houses, the production of major, big budget westerns was almost nil. The period was dominated by the low budget "B" westerns (even those weren't as good as the post-1935 Hopalong Cassidy, Gene Autry era) and one is hardpressed to name any major, big star westerns from that time.

But the western pulled out of near oblivion in the late '30s with stars like Gary Cooper, Errol Flynn and, of course, the rise of Wayne in John Ford's *Stagecoach*. The '40s saw westerns reach a stable peak in popularity, turning up such classics as *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, *Red River* and *Duel in the Sun*.

The '50s, on the other hand, saw the death of the "B" movies and the first signs of new insight into the field. The classic *High Noon* was created. Hollywood finally began dealing sympathetically with Indians in *Broken Arrow*, and *Shane*—perhaps the purest clear cut western myth on film—was produced.

Things really began to change in the '60s, and this period on up to the present has been a melting pot of westerns of every type. There were comedies, musicals, socially conscious westerns, epic westerns, sadistic westerns and more John Wayne. Films like *True Grit*, *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, *Paint Your Wagon*, *Little Big Man*, *The Good the Bad, and the Ugly*, and even the just-released *Blazing Saddles* are all branches that have little in common with each other.

The newest, most unique change in the western technique in many years was brought about by Italian director Sergio Leone's deliberate, vivacious yet fascinating spaghetti westerns. If Peckinpah flipped the western myth around, Leone dropped it completely. His movies have no heroes—only silent, deadly men who stay alive simply because they kill faster.

Indeed, in looking back on the past decade, Peckinpah and Leone have been our only important western directors. The great masters of frontier romance and action like directors Ford, Howard Hawks, Raoul Walsh and Henry Hathaway are now dead or inactive. These men had been making America's greatest westerns for a long, long time and it is the absence of heirs willing to seriously tackle the genre, that makes the current outlook so bleak.

'Road to Freedom' stimulating

By Diane Wanek

On the Road to Freedom, by Alvin Lee and Mylon Le Fevre

This album comes as a surprise, and the excellent quality is somewhat surprising as well.

Mylon Le Fevre and Alvin Lee are good musicians, but this album proves that, if they were good before, they are still capable of being dynamite.

The title cut is the best, and their rendition of George Harrison's "So Sad" is fine. Harrison proves he can write; it's a good song, and it's done well. Lee's own "Fallen Angel" and "Carry My Load" are two more fine cuts.

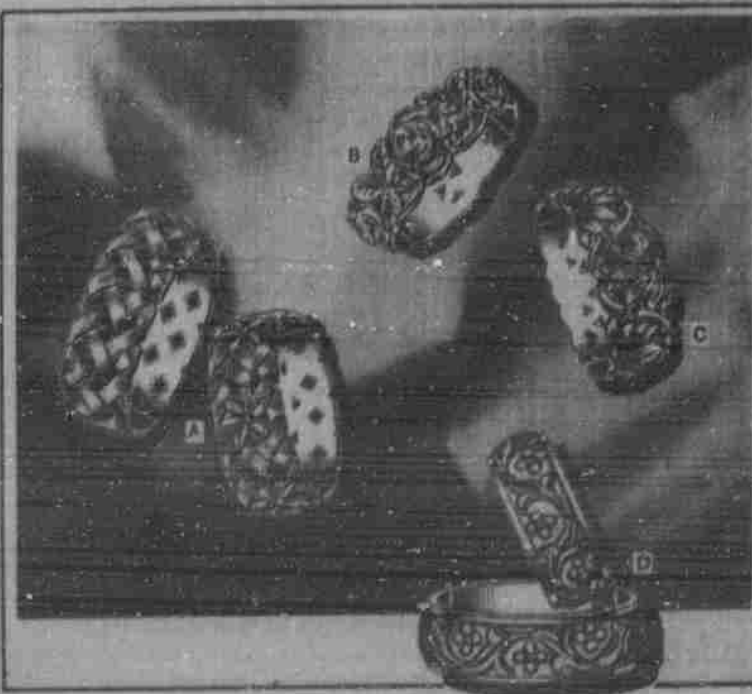
Let's hope this album isn't the last for this

partnership; it's stimulating for them as well as for the listener.

Etta James

The first time I ever saw Etta James was when I was in junior high school. She was, surprisingly enough, on one of those old bubble gum TV shows, "Where the Action Is." Her powerful gospel singing style struck me then, just as it does now.

This release contains some surprises. For example, she does Randy Newman's "God's Song," "Leave Your Hat On" and "Sail Away" better than their composer. Her style is bluesy and fervid. And the album is not less than great.



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flowers
bloom through
the years.

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Woodwind quintet
to perform tonight

A program of predominantly contemporary music will be presented by the Nebraska Woodwind Quintet in concert tonight at 8 p.m. at Kimbal Recital Hall.

The quintet is composed of woodwind instructors from the UNL School of Music.

Woodwind Quintet No. 3, the first selection by Alec Wilder, attempts to juxtapose jazz and elements of serious, academic style music. Wilder began his career writing popular tunes, many of which were recorded by singer Frank Sinatra.

Quintet in A Major, the second selection was composed by Franz Danzi, a contemporary of Beethoven.

According to Gary Echols, the quintet's assonist, the last selection, Quintet No. 1 by Alvin Eren, is "one of the best contemporary pieces for woodwind quintets." He added, however, that it is "harder than hell" to play.

The Nebraska Woodwind Quintet has done some touring this year. They have played at Peru State College and in some state high schools.

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