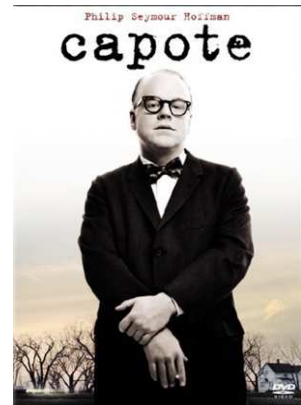


Capote

Director: Bennet Muller
2005 (98')



In *Cold Blood* was the book that secured Truman Capote's place as one of the most important novelists in US literary history. *Capote*, the film, dramatises the period in the author's life from the horrific murders which provided the inspiration for his tale to the executions which gave it closure. Hoffman gives a powerful performance of the artist in search of his defining work of art. And it is to what extent an artist will use and sacrifice others and himself to achieve his end that lies at the heart of this film.

Vocabulary and Expressions :

To figure: To think or believe something to be true

I figured you'd missed it. (i.e. the train)

To go through a rough patch: To go through a difficult time; have problems

Folks have been through a rough patch.

To work like mad: To work very hard

I'd work like mad all day long.

To be in bad shape: To be in a bad physical or mental condition

When I got to the apartment I could see that Joe was in even worse shape than I was.

You cut that out!: Stop that!

To curry favour with (somebody): To make a good impression on (somebody)

To waive: To relinquish; to give up claim to

He said we'd curry favour with the judge if we waived our rights.

A bundle: A lot of money

That's quite a bundle you sold your book for.

A stay of execution: A court order to temporarily suspend the execution of a court judgement

They got a stay of execution yesterday...

Fuss: Excessive activity, worry, bother or talk about something
I frankly don't know what the fuss is about.

Extracts from *Capote* film site (www.sonypictures.com/classics/capote/)

In November, 1959, Truman Capote (Philip Seymour Hoffman), the author of *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and a favourite figure in what is soon to be known as the Jet Set, reads an article on a back page of the *New York Times*.

It tells of the murders of four members of a well-known farm family—the Clutters—in Holcomb, Kansas. Similar stories appear in newspapers almost every day, but something about this one catches Capote's eye.

It presents an opportunity, he believes, to test his long-held theory that, in the hands of the right writer, non-fiction can be as compelling as fiction. What impact have the murders had on that tiny town on the wind-swept plains? With that as his subject—for his purpose, it does not matter if the murderers are never caught—he convinces *The New Yorker* magazine to give him an assignment and he sets out for Kansas. Accompanying him is a friend from his Alabama childhood: Harper Lee (Catherine Keener), who within a few months will win a Pulitzer Prize and achieve fame of her own as the author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

If he had known how long *In Cold Blood* would take, and what it would take out of him, he would not have stopped in Kansas, Truman later said. He would have driven on—"like a bat out of hell."

Opening lines from *In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote

The village of Holcomb stands on the high wheat plains of western Kansas, a lonesome area that other Kansans call "out there." Some seventy miles east of the Colorado border, the countryside, with its hard blue skies and desert-clear air, has an atmosphere that is rather more Far West than Middle West. The local accent is barbed with a prairie twang, a ranch-hand nasalness, and the men, many of them, wear narrow frontier trousers, Stetsons, and high-heeled boots with pointed toes. The land is flat, and the views are awesomely extensive; horses, herds of cattle, a white cluster of grain elevators rising as gracefully as Greek temples are visible long before a traveler reaches them.

Holcomb, too, can be seen from great distances. Not that there's much to see - simply an aimless congregation of buildings divided in the center by the

main-line tracks of the Santa Fe Rail-road, a haphazard hamlet bounded on the south by a brown stretch of the Arkansas (pronounced "Ar-kan-sas") River, on the north by a highway, Route 50, and on the east and west by prairie lands and wheat fields. After rain, or when snowfalls thaw, the streets, unnamed, unshaded, unpaved, turn from the thickest dust into the direst mud. At one end of the town stands a stark old stucco structure, the roof of which supports an electric sign - dance - but the dancing has ceased and the advertisement has been dark for several years. Nearby is another building with an irrelevant sign, this one in flaking gold on a dirty window - Holcomb bank. The bank closed in 1933, and its former counting rooms have been converted into apartments. It is one of the town's two "apartment houses," the second being a ramshackle mansion known, because a good part of the local school's faculty lives there, as the Teacherage. But the majority of Holcomb's homes are one-story frame affairs, with front porches.