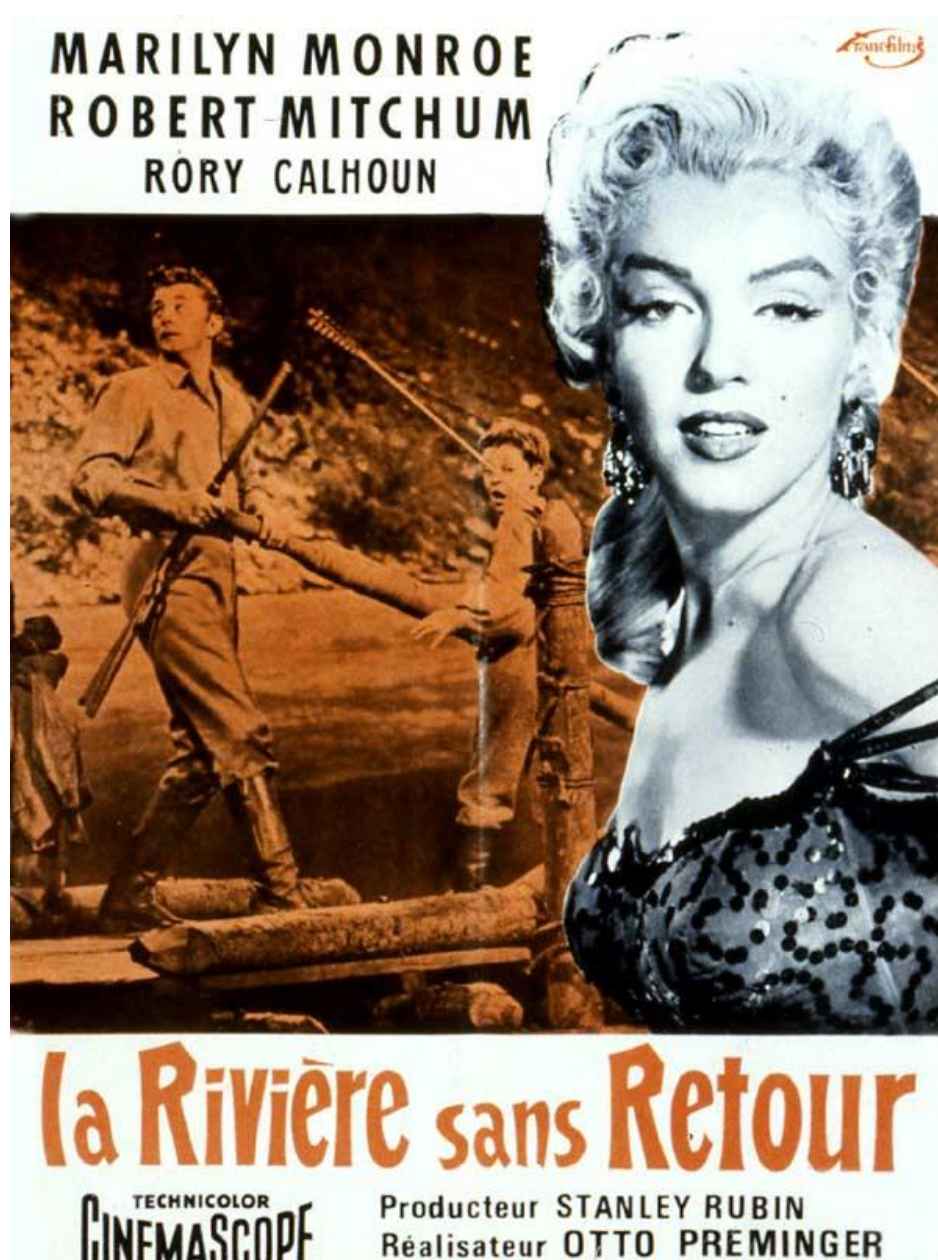


# The River of No Return

US : 1954 : dir. Otto Preminger : 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox : min  
 prod: Stanley Rubin : scr: Frank Fenton : dir.ph.:

[Tommy Rettig](#) .....  
 Robert Mitchum; Marilyn Monroe; Rory Calhoun; Murvyn Vye; Douglas Spencer;  
 Don Beddoe, Edmund Cobb, John Doucette, Barbara Nichols, Ralph Sanford, Will Wright

| Ref: | Pages | Sources | Stills | Words | Ω 8 ∅ M ∅ | Copy on VHS | Last Viewed |
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| 5935 | 10.5  | 10      | 25     | 5,905 | 3 - - 7 7 | No          | pre 1991    |



*Marilyn Monroe in the Old West. Robert Mitchum drank a lot. Tommy Rettig didn't. A sepia-tinted poster seems an odd way to promote a Technicolor film, but there it is.*



*People who drink fall over a lot. This is a proven fact.*

*Source: indeterminate*

Excerpt from **The Moving Picture Boy** entry on Nirumand, who starred the previous year in Naderi's "**DAWANDEH**" (or "The Runner"):

"He kept on running in Naderi's "**AAB, BAAD, KHAK**", a drama of drought set in the parched land of the Iranian-Afghan border. But the Iranian authorities, who had already castigated "**DAWANDEH**" as a slur on their country, and had failed to get Naderi to apologise for it, now banned the showing of both films. Naderi was granted political asylum in the USA, and Majid and his elder brother Mansur Nirumand fled into Pakistan."

Binary Flix.com website review:

"Of moderate interest to Marilyn Monroe fans, or aficionados of the late Robert Mitchum, or perhaps even director Otto Preminger completists, this western with a tired tale fills out the latest edition of Fox's Marilyn Monroe Diamond Collection.

The story (by Louis Lantz) is thin. Matt Calder (Mitchum) has just retrieved his son (Tommy Rettig) from a riotous western town. But back in the woods, they are assailed by gambler Harry Weston (Rory

Calhoun) and his companion Kay Weston (Monroe). After Calder rescues them from the wild river, Weston robs them, and leaves everyone to die. Calder goes after him, but is a little puzzled as to why Kay would remain so loyal to the liar and cheat, while his son, pulling a "**COURTSHIP OF EDDIE'S FATHER**", tries to get the man and woman together.

The movie is the western equivalent of a "road film", with Calder and Co. going up the river, stopping and starting, and suffering threats from lions and Indians. But this is no "**NAKED SPUR**" or "**THE RIVER WILD**". It's amateurish, ultimately boring stuff. We know where it's all going, and have to endure the ride with uninteresting, predictable people. The plot is mechanical... since Calder was once sent to prison for shooting a man in the back, we know that Calder will, in a "**HIGH NOON**" moment, have to do the same at the end of the film.

Part of the problem with the film is that it's in colour. That's probably not a nice thing to say when Fox has gone to a lot of trouble to restore the film to its Technicolor and CinemaScope splendour... but Preminger, who was usually a master of

framing was better in black and white, and here seems tired. The rear projection shots of the trio on the raft going down the river are ludicrous. On the other hand, Monroe was at the height of her beauty and voluptuousness, and the colour and the screen size flatter her endlessly. Another problem is that it's not a very good western. In reality, it's a story that just happens to be set in the west.

#### THE DISC:

Fox offers a superb transfer of the widescreen film (2.55:1), enhanced for widescreen televisions, and proves it with a restoration demonstration as one of the supplements. Sound is a good DD 4.0, with DD 2.0 Surround in French, with English and Spanish subtitles, and close captioning. Among the other supplements are the theatrical trailer in a squeezed full frame, and trailers for other Diamond collection films: **"LETS MAKE LOVE"**, **"MONKEY BUSINESS"**, **"DON'T BOTHER TO KNOCK"**, **"NIAGARA"**, The Diamond Collection in general, and a stills gallery.

#### SUMMARY

The volatile chemistry of Robert Mitchum and Marilyn Monroe ignites the screen when they are thrown together by fate during the wild days of California Gold Rush. Marilyn stars as a dancehall singer with a heart of gold who is aided by reluctant Mitchum in her futile search for the husband that abandoned her. Otto Preminger's heart-stopping river rafting sequences and panoramic vistas come to breath-taking life in this sweeping adventure.

#### DISC INFORMATION

##### Features:

- Photo Gallery
- Theatrical Trailers
- Restoration Featurette

##### Video Format:

Anamorphic Widescreen 2.55:1

##### Languages:

- English: Dolby Digital 4.0
- French: Dolby Digital Surround

Subtitles: English, Spanish

# Sides: 1

# Discs: 1

Layers: Dual

DVD Released On: 5/14/2002

Total Running Time: 91 min.

MOVIE: C (Average '50s colour fare)

DISC: B+ (As good a transfer as you would want of this film) "

– janderson@binaryflix.com

#### The Cinema Laser website review:

" **"RIVER OF NO RETURN"** is one of my favourite Marilyn Monroe movies. Let's face it, with the combined talents of Monroe, Robert Mitchum and Otto Preminger – how could this be anything but great old-style motion picture entertainment on the grand CinemaScope scale. **"RIVER OF NO RETURN"** fuses elements of the western and adventure genres into an entertaining little package that allows Monroe to perform two musical numbers. **"RIVER OF NO RETURN"** also makes the most of its Canadian locations, by utilising the CinemaScope frame to capture some incredible vistas.

Set in the Northwest Territory during the gold rush, **"RIVER OF NO RETURN"** tells the story of farmer Matt Calder (Mitchum), who is awaiting the arrival of his young son Mark (Tommy Rettig), whom he hasn't seen in years. Picking up the boy in a boomtown, Matt finds his son in the care of a beautiful saloon singer Kay Weston (Monroe), to whom the motherless boy has become instantly attached. After heading back to their home, Matt and Mark cross paths with Kay again, when she and her fiancé Harry Weston (Rory Calhoun) are rafting down the dangerous river that flows past Matt's farm.

As it turns out, Weston is taking Kay on this ill-advised journey in order to file a claim on a gold strike that he won in a card game. When Matt warns Weston about the dangers of travelling down this particular river by raft, the gambler thanks Matt by knocking him out and stealing both his horse and gun. Unwilling to leave the man that her fiancé injured, Kay stays behind to care for Matt and his son. However, when hostile Indians attack his farm, Matt is forced to climb on board the raft with Mark and Kay, fleeing down the river of no return.

20th Century Fox Home Entertainment has made **"RIVER OF NO RETURN"** available on DVD in a wide screen presentation that has been enhanced for 16:9 displays. **"RIVER OF NO RETURN"** is an early CinemaScope movie that

should have an aspect ratio of 2.55:1. However, the transfer comes up a bit short, around 2.35:1, cropping a small amount of information from the extreme edges of the frame. Other than the aspect ratio being off, the transfer of **"RIVER OF NO RETURN"** is quite pleasing – making this DVD a significant improvement on every home version of the movie ever released or broadcast.

The image on the DVD is sharper and better defined than I have ever seen. Of course, the clarity of the transfer brings out the significant deficiencies in the film rear screen projection and optical effects work. Colours are a little inconsistent, but most of the time they give a good idea what an original IB Technicolor print of **"RIVER OF NO RETURN"** might have looked like. Blacks appear accurate, contrast is pretty smooth and the level of shadow detail is more than respectable for a film from 1954. The restored film element used for the transfer appears free from age related blemishes, but there is a noticeable amount of film grain throughout most of the presentation. The cleanly authored DVD doesn't display any noticeable signs of digital compression artefacts.

**"RIVER OF NO RETURN"** is presented with a Dolby Digital 4.0 soundtrack that is representative of the film's original sound mix. This is that big, wide, exaggerated fifties stereo, designed for the cavernous movie palaces of yore and to complement super wide CinemaScope framing. There is plenty of directional information in the forward soundstage, including directional dialogue that follows the actors on screen positions. The surround channels are dead silent a lot of the time, except for a few climatic sequences on the river and to add musical fill to passages of Lionel Newman's score. Fidelity is pretty good on these nearly fifty-year-old stereo tracks, so you will want to add more than a bit of amplification. Background hiss and surface noise have been minimized to a great extent on the track, making for a fairly clean aural presentation. Dialogue is always crisp and completely understandable. An English Dolby Surround and French stereo track are also provided on the DVD, as are English and Spanish subtitles.

The basic interactive menus provide access to the standard scene selection

and set up features, as well as a few extras. As with the other titles in Fox's Marilyn Monroe series, **"RIVER OF NO RETURN"** includes a comparison of how the movie looked in previous video incarnations and how it looks now with both film and video restoration. Theatrical trailers for **"DON'T BOTHER TO KNOCK"**, **"MONKEY BUSINESS"**, **"NIAGARA"**, **"RIVER OF NO RETURN"** and **"LET'S MAKE LOVE"** have also been provided on the DVD. A still gallery closes out the DVD's extras. "

Digitally Obsessed.com website review:

" "I ransacked the town and there isn't a horse to be had for the crown jewels. But I got another idea. We can buy a raft and go to Council City on the river. You got any money?" – Matt Weston (Rory Calhoun)

Run Time: 01h:30m:51s  
Release Date: May 14, 2002  
UPC: 024543035206  
Genre: western

Set in Northwest Canadian Indian Territory, **"RIVER OF NO RETURN"** is an adventure tale of the gold rush days. Photographed in Technicolor and CinemaScope, the film was designed to exploit the splendours of the mountains, trees, rapid rivers and Marilyn Monroe, who was riding the crest of several successful films. It is really the people that make it memorable, rather than the fairly routine story or flawed production of the film.

Directed by the eccentric Otto Preminger, River occupies a lesser rung in his career ladder. Having distinguished himself with the 1944 thriller **"LAURA"** (starring Gene Tierney, and garnering an Oscar nomination for Best Director), in the '50s Preminger produced and directed such films as the controversial **"THE MOON IS BLUE"**, the all-black musicals **"CARMEN JONES"** and **"PORGY AND BESS"**, the chilling drama **"THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN ARM"** starring Frank Sinatra, and the Bernard Shaw version of Joan of Arc, **"SAINT JOAN"**.

Later, he would take on more ambitious projects, like the well-regarded courtroom melodrama **"ANATOMY OF A MURDER"** in 1959, **"EXODUS"** in 1960, and **"ADVISE"**

**AND CONSENT**" from 1962. Legendary back story has him as a dictatorial director who insisted that his stars in River do their own stunts, although the poorly realised rear-screen projection and long river shots make this rumour suspect.

The story has Matt Calder (Robert Mitchum) arriving in a rough-and-tumble mining camp to pick up his son Mark (Tommy Rettig), who has come to live with his estranged father following the death of his mother. The boy has met up with a singer, Kay Weston (Marilyn Monroe), who has been helping him as he has wandered the camp looking for his father. Finally finding each other, the father and son head out to Calder's farm to begin new life together.

The situation is quickly upset by the arrival of Kay and her gambler husband, Harry Weston (Rory Calhoun), on a raft. They are attempting to ride the river to Council City and file a claim on a gold mine that was won in a card game under dubious circumstances. Deciding that stealing Calder's horse and rifle is a better bet for making the trip quickly, Weston does just that by knocking Calder out after getting the drop on him.

Kay stays with the injured Calder and his boy when Weston leaves them defenceless. The local Indians arrive, bent on driving the settlers out, and they are forced to flee the farm on the raft.

This is somewhat of a musical adventure as Marilyn's character is a saloon singer in a mining camp and, unfortunately, looks impossibly sweet and beautiful to be what was basically a travelling prostitute. She sings four songs in the film very pleasantly, including: "*One Silver Dollar*", "*I'm Gonna File My Claim*" (particularly scintillating), "*Down in the Meadow*" and "*The River of No Return*". Her performance is acceptable but not particularly believable. In a period Western and a story line that requires her to do such "adventuresome" physical work, she very much seems a fish out of water.

This one is destined to remain a short clip in retrospectives of her career between "**HOW TO MARRY A MILLIONAIRE**" and "**THE SEVEN-YEAR ITCH**"; one has to wonder what the powers-that-be at Fox were thinking (other than cashing in, I

suppose). Although her scenes before leaving the mining camp show a Marilyn as attractive as she would ever be, she generally flounders in the last two-thirds of the film.

Mitchum once joked that he had three expressions and they all feature, looking in a particular direction. The actor, lionised for the economy of his acting, is particularly stingy with his technique in this outing – he gets by on one disinterested expression for this whole film! – and just fails to achieve a level of believability in his role. In 1945, Mitchum had been Lt. Walker in "**THE STORY OF G.I. JOE**", and received an Oscar nomination as Best Supporting Actor. He had previously worked with Preminger on "**ANGEL FACE**" in 1952 with Jean Simmons.

After a decade at RKO, he moved to 20th Century Fox, and starred in "**WHITE WITCH DOCTOR**", opposite Susan Hayward, in the year prior to River. Mitchum was to achieve a new level of stardom a year later when he took on the role as a psychotic religious fanatic who plots to murder two children in "**NIGHT OF THE HUNTER**". He also turned in an awesome performance as a vicious criminal in "**CAPE FEAR**" opposite Gregory Peck in 1962. Interestingly, Mitchum sang the title song for "**RIVER OF NO RETURN**".

Tommy Rettig plays the young boy who has come west to join his father. Another mostly unbelievable, if inoffensive performance, there seems to be an attempt to capture some of the magic that made "**SHANE**" such a big success the previous year for Paramount. But the chemistry between Rettig and his adult co-stars is barely existent; he would enjoy much better success when he went on to star as "**Lassie**"'s pal in four years on the television series. Rettig's troubles growing up were legendary tabloid fodder and in later life, he overcame his difficulties as a "child star"<sup>1</sup> and became a successful software developer.

The one believable performance in the film is by western movie journeyman, Rory Calhoun, as the gambler husband to

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<sup>1</sup> The quotation marks are strangely insulting. Rettig was a child star (if a minor one) – in the same sense Monroe was an actress (if a minor one).

Monroe's singer. He at least provokes some feelings from the viewer in his dirty dealing obsession with the big score. Reported to have been discovered by Alan Ladd and signed to Fox, Calhoun later achieved fame in the TV Series "**The Texan**" and in the latter years of his career, he appeared in two of the Angel revenge movies as a character called Kit Carson.

There are many fatal flaws in "**RIVER OF NO RETURN**" that make it a lesser effort by all involved. Still, the film is reasonably enjoyable and would certainly make for decent children's entertainment.<sup>2</sup> The suspense is not too intense, nor is the violence too graphic and younger viewers would most likely not notice that the rafting scenes often look just terrible, with the actors cringing in expectation of the next bucket of cold water being thrown on them by a stagehand.

Rating for Style: C+

Rating for Substance: C

The image transfer is quite remarkable in many instances and some of the scenes look fantastic. Particularly impressive scenes are Marilyn singing in the gambling tent and the awesome vistas of the Canadian Rockies. The widescreen adds much to the movie and makes it more interesting with a chance to observe Preminger's experiments with the still relatively new medium of Cinemascope. Unfortunately, the rafting sequences benefited from the blurry, scratchy versions and here look even less realistic. Some other special effects come off less well.

Image Transfer Grade: A-

The disc provides a 4.0 Dolby soundtrack in English and French stereo. Both are quite sufficient and a nice technical job is done in enhancing the original stereo to something that will sound pretty good in a home theatre. All the films in the Diamond Collection have shown nice efforts to properly place characters' speaking positions in the stereo spectrum and this is no exception.

Audio Transfer Grade: B+

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<sup>2</sup> Another insulting remark, but it conforms to the conventional idiotic premise that lower standards all round are perfectly acceptable in films for child audiences.

Not much in the way of extras for this disc. The Still Gallery has a couple of pretty good pictures and a few really lousy ones. There is a Restoration Comparison that shows the excellent work done in restoring the quality of this film.

Extras Grade: C

#### Final Comments

Not the best film by any one involved, "**RIVER OF NO RETURN**" is even less than the sum of its parts. Still, it is a Monroe film, it is directed by Preminger and it has Robert Mitchum; so it remains an interesting curiosity of a studio era that is thankfully long gone by."

– Jesse Shanks

#### DVD Corner.net website review:

"This second set of Marilyn discs from Fox is a mixture of films that Marilyn made for Fox from 1952-1960. In these films, Marilyn plays a variety of roles. In some of the films, Marilyn really only has supporting roles, such as in "**MONKEY BUSINESS**". Still, this collection also shows how versatile an actress she was, although she never seemed to think that about herself.

Each disc has been restored somewhat – more on that later. A demo of the restoration is included as an extra on each disc. A short stills gallery is also included on each disc. Below is a brief description of each film and comments about the picture and soundtrack on each disc.

"**RIVER OF NO RETURN**" – Colour – Anamorphic widescreen (2.55:1), 1954. Sound is Dolby English 4.0, 2.0, French Stereo. In this western action adventure, Marilyn co-stars with tough guy farmer Robert Mitchum, Rory Calhoun, and a young Tommy Rettig ("**Lassie**"). Filmed on location in the Pacific Northwest, the film has some rugged shots of rafting a river, and Marilyn singing and strumming a guitar. Mitchum goes after Marilyn's fiancée (Calhoun), after he steals his horse and rifle, leaving his family defenceless against the Indians. Directed by Otto Preminger. Restoration tones down the Technicolor print, cleans it up but colour shifts remain during reel changes. Annoying.

Summary – if you are a Marilyn fan like me, these movies are a must have set. Not on the same par as the original Diamond Collection but still worthy for purchase either individually or in the set. Extras are few and restoration could have been better but it is still the best these films have ever looked on video.

Overall Grades-Picture B, Sound B, Content B, Extras C ”

DVD Movie Guide website review:

“When confronted with the sight of Marilyn Monroe in the 1954 Western **“RIVER OF NO RETURN”**, I immediately flashed back to a different film: 1956’s **“BUS STOP”**. No, that flick wasn’t a Western, but it did feature a cowboy, which led to my connection. I didn’t like **“BUS STOP”**, so despite the lack of any true similarities it shared with Return, I must admit I didn’t look forward to my screening of the latter.

As it happened, the two movies actually had more in common than I expected, mainly due to Monroe’s role. In both flicks, she played barroom singers of potentially loose morals. A rugged cowboy then comes along to rescue her and make her an upstanding sort.

In Return, Monroe plays Kay, the wife of sleazy gold prospector Harry Weston (Rory Calhoun). She views him as a ticket out of her seedy situation, and when he finds a big lode, they plan to stake his claim and live happily ever after. However, events transpire to send things off course, and then run into Matt Calder (Robert Mitchum), a farmer who recently got out of prison. He killed a man to defend a friend, and he now returns to be with his young son Mark (Tommy Rettig).

In desperate need of transportation and protection, Weston steals a horse and a gun from Calder. This leaves them unprotected against the local Indians, so they have to split to survive. Calder also wants to go after Weston, so the threesome takes a chance and proceeds [sic] on a raft down a turbulent river. There they get to know each other and also learn more about themselves and their behaviour.

Overall, Return seems like a pretty average Western. Frankly, though I just watched it four days ago, I find it hard to remember much about it. The movie did little wrong, but it also failed to provide any sparks or energy.

Some of that stems from the bland relationship between the leads. From minute one, it seems inevitable that Kay will lose Weston and hook up with Calder. The only question revolves around the way in which this relationship will evolve. Like many movie couples, the two appear to be total opposites at the start, and they bicker frequently. Of course, they slowly start to develop respect for each other as we move toward their preordained pairing.

I won’t quibble too much about the blandness of this concept, but the lack of chemistry between Mitchum and Monroe seems problematic. They simply don’t synch well together, so the inevitability of their relationship appears due to movie convention more than any form of connection.

Otherwise, **“RIVER OF NO RETURN”** provides a competent and sporadically engaging Western but nothing more. Nothing about it seems to elevate the genre or allow the actors to stand out from the crowd. Were it not for the presence of Monroe and Mitchum, I think this one would have vanished from sight years ago.” – Colin Jacobson

“ **“RIVER OF NO RETURN”** appears in an aspect ratio of approximately 2.55:1 on this single-sided, dual-layered DVD; the image has been enhanced for 16X9 televisions. Through the five DVDs that make up the new Marilyn Monroe “Diamond Collection 2”, I saw erratic visuals. Without question, Return presented the strongest flick of the five, as it offered a consistently solid picture.

For the most part, sharpness appeared very good. A few wide shots betrayed some modest softness, but those instances occurred infrequently. Otherwise, the movie seemed nicely crisp and well defined. Jagged edges and moiré effects caused no concerns, and unlike its three “Diamond Collection 2” predecessors, Return suffered from no obvious edge enhancement. It also

seemed almost shockingly free of flaws. A few speckles and a smidgen of grain appeared, but otherwise, this nearly 50-year-old flick looked wonderfully clean and fresh.

Colours seemed terrific. The movie used the lush and vibrant tones of Technicolor to good advantage, as it consistently presented a lovely palette. The colours looked bright and vivid throughout the film, and they often were quite stunning to behold. Black levels also appeared acceptably deep and dense, while shadow detail seemed clear and appropriately opaque. Overall, this was a very fine visual presentation that lost only a few points due to some minor softness. Otherwise, it offered a great image.

While the Dolby Surround 4.0 soundtrack of "**RIVER OF NO RETURN**" couldn't hope to live up to the excellent visuals, it still seemed fine for its age. The soundfield worked fairly well for the most part, with only one periodic exception: speech. Stereo films of this area [sic] often used very hard placement of lines, which meant dialogue could appear strongly in one of the side speakers. That technique occurred during Return, which was fine except for some ill definition at times. Most lines came from fairly appropriate domains, but at times the words emanated from illogical positions. On occasion, the speech tended to bleed and float across the forward spectrum, which became a moderate distraction.

However, Marilyn Monroe's singing showed none of these problems, and the rest of the mix demonstrated good spread and localization. Effects created a nice sense of atmosphere and ambience, and music offered a reasonable stereo presence. The surrounds also kicked in with some light elements at times; for instance, river effects popped up from the rear to help bolster the presentation. However, the track remained fairly heavily anchored in the front, as the surrounds remained passive partners.

Audio quality showed its age but seemed decent. As with its "Diamond Collection 2" predecessors, speech offered the weakest parts. At times the lines appeared thin and unnatural, as they demonstrated excessive reverberation. The dialogue remained intelligible, though; it just

sounded less distinct than I'd expect, even for this era. Music appeared reasonably bright and vivid, though, and some Indian drumming actually manifested fairly good depth. Effects were somewhat thin and lifeless, but they appeared clean and acceptably well defined considering the age of the film. I heard a little hiss at times throughout the movie, but not to a tremendous degree. Ultimately, "**RIVER OF NO RETURN**" provided a listenable but unexceptional audio experience.

For the five DVDs that come as part of Fox's "Diamond Collection 2", we find very similar extras. All five include the same set of trailers. We discover ads for River as well as "Diamond 2" mates "**DON'T BOTHER TO KNOCK**", "**MONKEY BUSINESS**", "**NIAGARA**" and "**LETS MAKE LOVE**". In addition, we get an ad for the original "Diamond Collection".

After that we locate a Still Gallery. This domain includes 20 images. Those consist of publicity photos and shots from the set. None of these appear fascinating, but they're moderately interesting.

As with all of the discs in the original "Diamond Collection", River and the other "Diamond 2" release offer a Restoration Comparison. This lets us see the changes from older releases of the film and the current one. I think these seem somewhat self-serving and a little pointless, but it can be interesting to note the improvements.

"**RIVER OF NO RETURN**" feels like one of Marilyn Monroe's more forgettable efforts. The movie provides a very average Western that suffers from few obvious failings. It simply never manages to become anything terribly interesting or provocative. On the other hand, the DVD offers absolutely terrific picture quality along with fairly good sound and the usual roster of insubstantial extras. I didn't like the movie enough to strongly recommend it, but Monroe fans should give it a look, especially since they'll likely be very pleased with the quality of the presentation.

Note that "**RIVER OF NO RETURN**" can be purchased on its own or as part of Fox's Marilyn Monroe "Diamond Collection 2" set. The latter includes four other movies: "**DON'T BOTHER TO KNOCK**", "**MONKEY BUSINESS**", "**NIAGARA**", and

**"LETS MAKE LOVE"**. For dedicated fans of Marilyn, the "Diamond Collection 2" offers a nice bargain. It costs only \$79.98 list as opposed to a total of \$99.90 for the five films on their own. Granted, you'd need to really love Marilyn to want that much of her material, but if you fall into that category, it's a great idea. "

Glamournet.com website review:

"The Canadian wilderness is the backdrop for Marilyn's second and final western (the first was **"A TICKET TO TOMAHAWK"** in 1950). She and Robert Mitchum did their own stunts in this film, resulting in several mishaps that delayed production. Released May 1954. Directed by Otto Preminger. Twentieth Century-Fox. Technicolor CinemaScope. Tommy Rettig (1941-1996), the child actor who played opposite Marilyn, was perhaps better known as Jeff Miller on TV's first **"Lassie"** series. "

|                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| Robert Mitchum | (Matt Calder)  |
| Marilyn Monroe | (Kay Weston)   |
| Rory Calhoun   | (Harry Weston) |
| Tommy Rettig   | (Mark Calder)  |

The History Of.co.uk website review:

**"RIVER OF NO RETURN"** was set in Northwest Canada, in savage Indian Territory, in the goldrush days. The plot was weak but the scenery was spectacular and the action of the river dramatically powerful. Otto Preminger knew how to create tension and threat in the grandeur and menace of the Canadian Rockies.. Photographed in Technicolor and CinemaScope, the film was designed to exploit the splendours of the mountains, trees and rapid rivers plus the magnetic pleasant figure of Marilyn Monroe. She was the only charming woman surrounded by two handsome men, Robert Mitchum and Rory Calhoun, and a little boy, Tommy Rettig. Marilyn sang 4 numbers in the film: *"One Silver Dollar"*, *"I'm Gonna File My Claim"*, *"Down in the Meadow"* and *"The River of No Return"*.

Robert Mitchum's major period of popularity began in the mid-'50s with **"RIVER OF NO RETURN"** and **"NOT AS A STRANGER"** (55). None of the Westerns made by Rory Calhoun is memorable:

**"WAY OF GAUCHO"** (52), **"POWDER RIVER"** (53) and **"APACHE TERRITORY"** (58). Tommy Rettig, as you may know, played another big-scale western, **"THE LAST WAGON"** (60) with Richard Widmark. "

Movies Unlimited website review:

"Gripping Gold Rush saga stars Marilyn Monroe as a saloon singer searching for her runaway husband with the aid of widowed trail-hand Robert Mitchum. Spectacular rafting action sequences are not to be missed. Rory Calhoun, Tommy Rettig co-star under Otto Preminger's direction."

Indeterminate Western movies website review:

"Matt Calder is a widower with a young son. Their peace is shattered when Matt is robbed and beat senseless by Harry Weston, a no good gambler. Harry's girlfriend stays behind to help care for Matt. When he is well enough they start on a journey by raft which takes in one crisis after another. A brilliant film well worth a watch. The film was made in Canada's Banff and Jasper National parks and the scenery is fantastic. Stars Robert Mitchum, Marilyn Monroe, Rory Calhoun and Tommy Rettig. "

Chez.com French website review - awaiting adequate translation (the auto-translate facility on most browsers is all but worthless):

"Le Petit Tommy:

Marilyn a rencontré le petit Tommy Rettig en 1953, avant le tournage de **"LA RIVIÈRE SANS RETOUR"** lors de la première du film **"THE 5000 FINGERS OF Dr T."** dans lequel il jouait. "Mon curé m'a dit que je ne devais pas parler à une femme telle que vous..."

"Alors que Tommy devait tourner une scène avec moi, raconte Marilyn, il s'est brusquement précipité vers sa mère sans dire un mot. J'en ai été très peinée. Le troisième jour, sa mère n'étant pas là, je me suis approchée de lui et je lui ai demandé : "Tommy, puis-je te parler une minute ? Tu m'as évitée pendant trois

jours. Comme nous ne nous sommes jamais rencontrés avant ce film, je n'ai rien pu faire qui t'ai blessé. Qu'est-ce qu'il y a ?" Il m'a regardée d'un air vraiment effrayé, puis m'a avoué : "C'est mon curé, mon curé m'a dit que je ne devais pas parler à une femme telle que vous en dehors du tournage"... J'ai eu l'impression de recevoir un formidable coup de pied dans l'estomac. Mais, la semaine suivante, lorsque Joe est venu me voir sur le plateau, Tommy s'est dit que, comme lui était génial, moi aussi je devais être OK."

Après Marilyn, "**Lassie**".

Dans les Rocheuses Canadiennes, lorsque Marilyn ne tourne pas, elle accompagne Joe DiMaggio à la pêche. Ils emmènent avec eux le petit Tommy. L'année après le tournage de "**LA RIVIÈRE SANS RETOUR**", Tommy devient le maître du chien "**Lassie**" dans la série télévisée.

Arrivé à l'âge adulte, la carrière de Tommy s'effondre. Né en 1941, celui qui donna le temps d'un film une âme de maman à Marilyn, s'éteint en 1996 à la suite d'une overdose de drogue.

La scène du radeau.

Pour les scènes difficiles sur le radeau, Marilyn est doublée par la cascadeuse Dorothy Skelton.

Marilyn ne veut pas tourner ces scènes et s'enferme dans sa loge.

"Preminger était un autocrate sur le plateau, raconte le producteur du film Stanley Rubin, mais Marilyn s'en est vengée. Elle retardait sans cesse le travail. D'abord, elle détestait ces prises parce qu'elles étaient désagréables et fatigantes. Ensuite, ses lenteurs calculées servaient à ennuyer Preminger, en le poussant à dépasser les délais. Je me souviens d'un jour où il fallait faire quelques prises pour les scènes tournées dans le réservoir d'eau. Elle s'était recluse dans sa loge et Preminger n'arrivait pas à l'en faire sortir. L'assistant non plus. J'ai dû parlementer avec elle pendant trois quarts d'heure, d'abord à la porte de la loge, puis à l'intérieur. Elle disait qu'elle ne voulait pas tourner ces plans parce qu'ils étaient physiquement désagréables à faire, qu'elle avait peur de ressembler à un

rat en train de se noyer. Mais mon intime conviction est qu'elle rendait la monnaie de sa pièce à Preminger."

"On a tourné cette scène cinq ou six fois".

Le plateau comporte un grand réservoir représentant la rivière, avec dedans le radeau. D'énormes tuyaux déversent des trombes d'eau pour secouer le tout et fouetter les trois acteurs que l'on filme en gros plan. Robert Mitchum se souvient : "Dans une des scènes tournées en studio, je devais me tenir debout sur le radeau pendant qu'on projetait derrière l'image du torrent furieux. Et pendant ce temps les gars des effets spéciaux devaient tirer des flèches à pointes d'acier autour de moi et entre mes jambes. Elles se fichaient si profondément dans le chêne du radeau qu'il fallait les enlever avec des tenailles. On a tourné cette scène cinq ou six fois avant que Preminger se déclare satisfait."

Le "bain de Marilyn" coupé au montage.

Cette scène ne vous dit rien ? Normal, elle a été coupée au montage. On devait y voir Marilyn prendre une douche dans une cascade et laver son chemisier à fleurs. Cette scène se serait située juste avant que Mitchum embrasse sauvagement Marilyn dans la forêt. La scène est réduite à une simple allusion : (voir Story Board, chapitre : "Les chasseurs de prime".) On peut voir Marilyn qui revient de la cascade et rejoint le campement. Elle étend son chemisier sur la branche d'un arbre.

Mitchum buvait trop !

Malgré son visage d'ange, le beau Robert Mitchum est, à l'époque, un buveur de bonne réputation. Si bien que Preminger a de nombreux heurts avec lui quand l'acteur demande, par exemple, à des assistants d'aller lui chercher verre sur verre de Vodka, sa boisson préférée. A la fin, dompté, Preminger, qui appréciait beaucoup le talent de Mitchum, explique que celui-ci buvait trop mais qu'il l'acceptait "parce que c'était lui !" "

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the

Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993",

"Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

No further information currently available

See also "**BADKONAK-E SEFID**" and "**BASHU**" - both recent Iranian films, and subject index under **ARAB WORLD / MIDDLE EAST**.