

Have Gun - Will Travel (TV Milestones Series)

Gaylyn Studlar



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One of the most successful series of its time, *Have Gun-Will Travel* became a cultural phenomenon in the late 1950s and made its star, Richard Boone, a nationwide celebrity. The series offered viewers an unusual hero in the mysterious, Shakespeare-spouting gunfighter known only as "Paladin" and garnered a loyal fan base, including a large female following. In *Have Gun-Will Travel*, film scholar Gaylyn Studlar draws on a remarkably wide range of episodes from the series' six seasons to show its sophisticated experimentation with many established conventions of the Western.

Studlar begins by exploring how the series made the television Western sexy, speaking to mid-twentieth century anxieties and aspirations in the sexual realm through its "dandy" protagonist and more liberal expectations of female sexuality. She also explores the show's interest in a variety of historical issues and contemporaneous concerns-including differing notions of justice and the meaning of racial and cultural difference in an era marked by the civil rights movement. Through a production history of *Have Gun-Will Travel*, Studlar provides insight into the television industry of the late 1950s and early 1960s, showing how, in this transition period in which programming was moving from sponsor to network control, the series' star exercised controversial influence on his show's aesthetics.

Because *Have Gun-Will Travel* was both so popular and so different from its predecessors and rivals, it presents a unique opportunity to examine what pleasures and challenges television Westerns could offer their audiences. Fans of the show as well as scholars of TV history and the Western genre will enjoy this insightful volume.

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