

Actor Rod Steiger enjoys role in latest 'Desperado' Western

From Associated Press reports

LOS ANGELES — Academy Award-winner Rod Steiger says it was his character's "Lolita"-like relationship with a young girl that attracted him to the latest "Desperado" movie.

Steiger plays Silas Slaten, a mine owner who offers to free roving cowboy Duell McCall from jail and a trumped-up murder charge if McCall will lead the search party to find Slaten's abducted "daughter."

McCall, played by Alex McArthur, is the "Desperado" in this third movie in the series. Author Elmore Leonard wrote the first movie about a young cowboy who's a fugitive from a phony charge. The latest film, "Desperado: Avalanche at Devil's Ridge," aired recently on NBC.

"My character has an obsession with this girl," said Steiger.

"That's what interested me the most, this relationship with the girl. It made me think of 'Lolita.' Every-

body thinks the girl's my daughter, but she's not."

Slaten is the heavy of the film, but Steiger said he doesn't play him that way.

"I just think of him as a character to play," he said. "Let the audience be the judge. I think the mistake a lot of actors make when they play a heavy is to go through the boards."

"Every human being has something he wants. If the something I want makes me a criminal, then I become the heavy. I wonder how many times I've been killed in films. I know it's at least 60 times. In early live television I was killed every week, it seems."

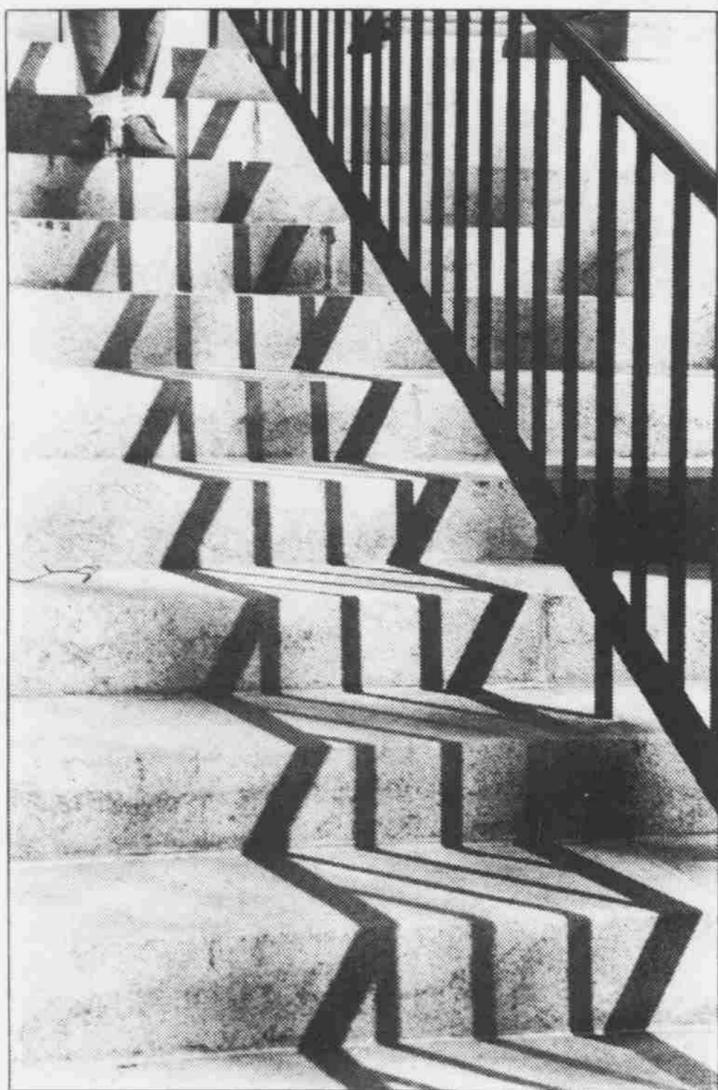
Steiger, who won an Oscar as best actor in 1967 for "In the Heat of the Night," has been in only a few Westerns, although he professes a

love for the genre. He starred in "A Fistful of Dynamite," "Jubal" and "Cattle Annie and Little Britches." He also starred in the 1955 movie version of the musical "Oklahoma" playing Jud Fry, the bad guy in conflict with cowhand Curly, played by Gordon MacRae.

He acted both on Broadway and in the "golden age" of live television drama. He was "Marty" on television, the drama that as a movie brought an Oscar to Ernest Borgnine.

"I thought I was going to do the movie," Steiger said, "but they wanted me to sign a seven-year contract. I said no. Two days later I got the part of Jud in 'Oklahoma.' I'd tested for the role of Curly with an unknown actor named Paul Newman. Then I tested in the afternoon with James Dean for Jud."

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