|  |
| --- |
| **Copyright © 1999 Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture All rights reserved.ISSN 1070-8286***Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, 6(2) (1999) 35-45**Film, law and the delivery of justice: The case of Judge Dredd and the disappearing courtroom [****[1](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22one)]**bySteve Greenfield and Guy OsbornCentre for the Study of Law, Society & Popular CultureUniversity of WestminsterLONDON, UKIN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM, THE WORLD CHANGED. CLIMATE, NATIONS, ALL WERE IN UPHEAVAL...THE EARTH TRANSFORMED INTO A POISONOUS SCORCHED DESERT, KNOWN AS "THE CURSED EARTH"MILLIONS OF PEOPLE CROWDED INTO A FEW MEGA CITIES CITIES WHERE ROVING BANDS OF STREET SAVAGES CREATED VIOLENCE THE JUSTICE SYSTEM COULD NOT CONTROL LAW AS WE KNOW IT COLLAPSED. FROM THE DECAY ROSE A NEW ORDER. A SOCIETY RULED BY A NEW ELITE FORCE.....A FORCE WITH THE POWER TO DISPENSE BOTH JUSTICE AND PUNISHMENT.... THEY WERE THE POLICE. JURY AND EXECUTIONER ALL IN ONE.THEY WERE THE JUDGES.James Olmeyer III, History of the Megacities, Chapter II 'Justice' (Barrett, 1995)This essay examines depictions of law and the delivery of justice within legal films. More specifically, it centres upon those films that have developed themes of 'technological' criminal justice. A key point is whether such films share the characteristics of the more traditional courtroom drama, or whether their roots lie more within the genre of 'street justice' films. Essentially, this is part of the debate about 'what is a law film?' If the only attribute of films concerning law, legal procedure and lawyers was one of pure entertainment then the categorisation of films might be safely left to the cataloguers. However, it has long been argued that film offers an insight into the workings of the justice system. Whether or not these depictions are in fact accurate, or useful, is a different matter as films will centre on the extraordinary or dramatic rather than the mundane. As Friedman has observed: 'Popular culture is . involved with law; and some of the more obvious aspects of law are exceedingly prominent in popular culture. But of course not **all** of law. No songs have been composed about the Robinson- Patman Act, no movies about capital gains tax' ([Friedman](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22friedman), 1989, p.1588).The question of whether such depiction is accurate, influential or indeed accepted raises an allied set of questions. The continuing public fascination with the workings of the justice system is amplified by the introduction of the televised trial. The apparent attraction of even the most mundane elements of the OJ Simpson trial suggests an ongoing **[End page 35]** appeal that has been a factor behind the production of courtroom drama. Similarly, the Louise Woodward trial attracted enormous attention in Great Britain with nightly analysis of the day's events. If the news channels can provide direct experience of courtroom proceedings will the desire for the courtroom drama dissipate or will law become a topic of heightened interest? This latter question may be answered over time, but it seems clear that the tried and trusted formula is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. It will, however, take an imaginative screenwriter to produce a film as dramatic as the events that led to the arrest and trial of OJ Simpson. One point that is clear is that public perception of legal personnel and the legal process may now be formed through different outlets. There are a number of Court television programmes in addition to the televised trials and, contrary to cinematic law films, these often focus on minor everyday matters. In short, this paper poses many more questions than it may answer. Hopefully, the very fact that these questions are posed will stimulate debate and response at the parameters of the central theme we tackle. The main upshot is whether we are witnessing an expansion of the law film into other areas, and whether this has any ramifications for the integrity of the legal process.The Theatre of LawThe courtroom has long been used as a vehicle for drama. It is an arena in which dramatic tension can easily be built, and with the added ease of constructing grand soliloquy and speech. This trend is echoed in film portrayals and advocacy offers the chance for an actor to display great oratory. Historically, the classic law film has revolved around a formal and serious courtroom drama with clear identification of the search for justice. Prime examples of the genre include *Young Mr Lincoln* ,*To Kill A Mocking Bird*, *Inherit the Wind*, and through to more contemporary examples such as *Suspect*, *The Verdict* and *Philadelphia*. In addition, films such as *Brothers in Law* and *My Cousin Vinny* have ploughed the comedic quality of lawyers and legal process. The exploration of law has further moved towards the ethics of lawyers in films such as *Devil's Advocate*, and the internal workings of the law practice; *The Firm*. In previous work we have also identified certain common characteristics of the main participants which have spanned a range of films over a period of time ([Greenfield and Osborn](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22greenfield), 1995). Interestingly judges have tended to have a rather limited role within legal films with the major roles occupied by the lawyers, although *Let Him Have It* and *And Justice For All*provide examples of judges occupying a more central role. [[2](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22two)]What is also apparent, from a perusal of films such as those noted above, is that whilst all may be identifiable as courtroom dramas, they are open to broader meanings and interpretations. *Witness for the Prosecution* for example can be seen as a story of love and betrayal; *Young Mr Lincoln* as the creation of a mythical idea of a man who became President; *Inherit the Wind* as a vehicle for the science/religion debate **[End page 36]** and *Philadelphia* as a film that confronts collective and individual perceptions of homosexuality and HIV. In these examples it could be said that the courtroom is merely the theatre in which the substance is aired - much in the same way that the courtroom is the space in which law is delivered. That is, however, not to detract from the point that all these films use the courtroom as the prime focus for the action and much feet of film that is expended is based within a court. The definition of the courtroom can be stretched to include films such as *Twelve Angry Men*which is centred on the jury room, with Henry Fonda effectively performing the function of defence counsel. There are many reasons why the courtroom has proved such a durable and attractive place for film making but it is not the only arena in which disputes of a legal or quasi-legal nature can be aired and settled. A very good example of this notion is Scorsese's remake of *Cape Fear* where the boat, at the conclusion of the film, can be viewed as a courtroom stripped of its ornaments and ceremony. *Cape Fear* is a good example of a film that has all the hallmarks of a law film and supports our contention that the question 'what is a courtroom drama' is not such an obvious question to ask after all. Part of the premise of this essay is that we are witnessing a shift of the courtroom and legal values to other situ. Indeed, while we concentrate upon movement within film portrayals, the actual process of justice in the real world has altered to some degree with greater moves towards mediation and other forms of alternative dispute resolution.The issue becomes even more complicated when emerging types of law films are considered. Fundamental to many law films is the concept of justice, regardless of the actual arena in which the justice is delivered. In westerns for example, law is a means of providing justice for those wronged against in disputes, between people or over property, and sentence is often passed in the Coral or saloon bar, without any formal legal procedure. The Sheriff's badge legitimises the events and Law is in a pre developed state and reducible to simple notions of right and wrong, a concept that Lincoln observes is the crux of law in *Young Mr Lincoln*. In addition, the process of delivering justice is of concern. The idea of going beyond the written law and appealing to some higher unwritten law is one that has been utilised in many law films. From Cher's fraternisation with a member of the jury in *Suspect*, to Henry Fonda's cross examination of a prosecution witness in *Young Mr Lincoln*, film lawyers have never been scared to go beyond legal procedure in order to achieve some higher notion of justice. Indeed, as Lincoln (Henry Fonda) replied to his opposite number in *Young Mr Lincoln*; 'I may not know so much about the law, but I know what's right and what's wrong'. It is of course not only lawyers that may search for higher ideals of justice, the deliverance of justice may arise from a number of other sources and occur in a number of arenas. Indeed, central within our analysis is that the idea of 'who is a lawyer' is not immutable, with many figures evincing such characteristics and 'legal' traits. In addition, recent depictions perhaps show a move back towards more primitive versions of delivery of justice **[End page 37]** that may have profound effects upon how actual delivery is perceived.The focus of this essay is the law film outside of the courtroom and more particularly the notion of justice delivered on the street. In many ways this phenomena has its roots in vigilante films that have witnessed both civilian (the *Deathwish* series) and 'flesh and blood' police (*Dirty Harry*) examples of direct justice. This 'procession' is completed by *Judge Dredd* in which formal judicial power is taken from the court to the streets of Mega City by judges who convict and sentence offenders instantaneously with due process replaced by a blast from Dredd's Lawgiver. [[3](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22three)] Whilst Judge Dredd would not obviously appear to be a law film in terms of our traditional expectations of what that denotes, [[4](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22four)] it does share common themes with more conventional law films with central issues of right and wrong, justice and injustice, law and lawlessness. This essay seeks to explore the cinematic view of informal justice and will show that the development of such films indicate that the issue within postmodern filmic justice is not the question of '*what* is a legal film?'; rather a less spatially defined notion of '*where* is justice delivered?' Once outside of the traditional courtroom and without the formal legal procedures, law has been portrayed as subjective reductionism; any suggestion of an objective impartial process is removed. However there may still be rules and procedures that need to be followed and it is this particular element of *Judge Dredd* that draws it back within the more traditional law film boundaries.Street Justice I - Police & Vigilantes The most disturbing aspect of the G-Man cycle was their unashamedly vigilante spirit. All encouragement was given to violations of due process and contempt for the law by the supposed enforcers. This is encapsulated in some titles: Let 'Em Have It, Muss 'Em up, don't turn 'em loose, show them no mercy. The fascist ethos of such pictures was noted by contemporary critic Milton Meyer: ' It is the spirit that seeks order at the expense of justice. It advocates "treating 'em rough", whether 'em are labourers on strike, communists at talk, or criminals in flight. It embraces the creation of a police army to fight crime, with the general view that police armies may be put to a number of uses' ([Reiner](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22reiner), 1981)In a contemporary sense, the most obvious examples of external (to the courtroom) justice are those films that deal with the concept of street justice - sidewalk law enforcement. There is an obvious link to the western with the latter-day sheriff being represented by the homicide detective. The issue is not to enforce the rule book of arrest but to ensure that perpetrators pay for their crimes even if this includes an element of summary 'smoking gun' justice. The key is the perceived guilt and unworthiness of the offender who may escape formal justice, in the courtroom, through evidential problems or technicalities. Within such films the procedure of arrest and trial is ignored in much the same way as the lawyers avoid the strict rules of the courtroom in **[End page 38]** films such as *Suspect*, *A Few Good Men* and *Young Mr Lincoln*. In *Suspect*, Cher not only colludes with a juror [[5](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22five)] in order to try and obtain the 'right result', but also employs a series of debatable courtroom tactics in order to make her points. In both *Young Mr Lincoln* and *A Few Good Men*, the inexperienced trial lawyers risk all by attempting to force a confession out of a mere witness whilst giving evidence and again resort to a series of 'showy' and ostentatious tricks. Each is trying to represent their own constituency on a subjective basis with an appeal to some sort of higher justice the underpinning for their (often illegal or unethical) actions. Often in police justice films there is the need for a contrast, the straight 'man', who doesn't bend the rule book and points out the error of a cavalier approach to law enforcement. Some may be won over, others retain a lofty principled distance so that by the end of the picture the roles may be reversed as the right result embraces the loose cannon to the establishment, albeit grudgingly, whilst the formalist becomes the other, the outsider. Non-police legal vigilantes are not new to film, *The Star Chamber* shows how a disillusioned judge played by Michael Douglas is invited to join a clandestine group of judges who dispense their own brand of justice in 'messy' cases. Their method of remedying deficiencies in the legal system is to employ hitmen to dispense 'real' justice. The theme of disillusionment and helplessness in the face of an inert legal system is carried on in *Criminal Law* where Gary Oldman turns from lawyer to vigilante to pursue a wealthy client who he has been acquitted but who Oldman later discovers to be guilty. Apart from extra legal and police vigilantism, the closest we get to civilian direct action, given the antipathy towards mob justice [[6](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22six)], are the vigilante movies which portray the (usually lone and sometimes ex-police officer) wronged individual who decides that it is payback time in response to a personal incident, e.g. *Deathwish*. What then of such vigilantism in the post modern surveillance society of the future?Street Justice II: 'Techno Law'.With the advent of what we have called the 'techno law' series of films we see a slightly different approach to the delivery of justice, although at the same time there are many common motifs and approaches. The vision of futuristic society effects the nature of the law enforcement; as the initial quote from the *Judge Dredd* screenplay notes 'millions of people crowded into a few megacities where roving bands of street savages created violence the justice system could not control'. This is street justice taken a stage further; the films operate in a curious hinterland between traditional courtroom drama (they are vested with legal duties, the street is their courtroom) and vigilantism (they may be judge, jury and executioner all in one). In fact, whilst we have put *Judge Dredd* and the *Robocop* series together under the umbrella of techno law films, in some ways *Robocop* has more in common with the traditional 'good cop' bound to the rule of law. The cyborg policeman star *Robocop* is created to counter the spiralling crime crisis in Detroit City. Constructed from the remains of a mortal police officer fatally wounded by **[End page 39]**a gang of robbers, he is transformed into a 'techno cop' by a private law company, Omni Consumer Products (OCP). Unfortunately for the Corporation who run the police force, he has retained some of his human traits, and in particular fragments of his memory, which lead him to turn against the organisation itself. He is originally programmed by OCP with four prime directives:i) Serve the public trustii) Protect the innocentiii) Uphold the Lawiv) RESTRICTEDThe fourth directive is designed to prevent Robocop from arresting senior officers of the company, a failsafe mechanism imparted from the manufacturers to protect their own potential illegal activities. The crucial element in the film is the enforcement of justice; and Robocop has his own battle to fight against his very creators. Within the Company there is an internal battle to produce a completely robotic officer, not affected by any moral dimension. In fact, the film shows a personal battle being waged, by Murphy/Robocop and his former partner, to reclaim some of the human spirit that has been erased from his memory. As with the earlier films noted above, there is a strong moral story concerning the relationship between man and technology and how the latter has the potential for evil that may be conquered by the human spirit.The man versus machine battle is resumed in *Robocop 2 & 3*. The latter develops an interesting notion as Robocop turns against the formal mechanisms of law in search for a higher truth. In many ways Robocop is the ultimate in vigilante policemen. He is, however, not the hardheaded Dirty Harry, whose ultimate motivation is almost vengeance. Robocop is, in fact, imbued with humanity. Witness his first two Directives: upholding the Law comes in a measly third. This has echoes of John Ford's *Young Mr Lincoln*, where Lincoln is prepared to go beyond the law if justice were best served in this way. This ploughs a line that denotes that one person's impression of justice can be more important than the formal law. *Robocop* does then have some similarities with the cop against the system notion, more so as he is programmed by the system to act corruptly and must fight this urge in order to serve the public trust. Robocop does show some measure of desire for vengeance in *Robocop 2*, when he actively pursues the murderers of his partner and attempts to rid Detroit of drug baron, Tom Noonan. The shift from techno cop to techno judge is an important distinction. As we have noted above judges have rarely been at the heart of legal films unlike other personnel within the criminal justice system. Here we witness a judge emerging boldly from the shadow of the courtroom and occupy centre stage.The film, *Judge Dredd*, was based on the very successful comic of the same name. Dredd is a clone who, having excelled at the Academy, becomes a full judge in 2079. He has some of the physical attributes of Robocop; although he is totally human, he has an automaton and dogmatic approach to law enforcement; **[End page 40]** Robocop is almost the alternative; an automaton with added humanity. In an early scene, Dredd announces his presence to a group of squatters with the aphorism; 'I am the Law'. This is a neat encapsulation of his perceived role and duty; to arrest, sentence, and if necessary execute:"All right!" Purple Ears raised his hands. "I gives up. You bes takin' me in!""Niner-eight-zero-four. Assault on a Judge with a deadly weapon..."Purple Ears forced a weak grin through his bloody teeth. "Don't tell me. Life, right?""No," Dredd said. "Death."He squeezed the trigger of his weapon. Squeezed it and didn't stop. Purple Ears began to sizzle like bacon in a pan. ([Barrett](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22barrett), 1995)Whilst Dredd operates as a judge empowered to dispense justice on the street, he is simultaneously bound to the strict formality of the Mega City law book. This is neatly exemplified by his speech to student judges at the Academy:Helmet and body armour. Yours, *when* you graduate. Lawgiver 2, 25 rounds side arm with mission variable voice programmed ammunition. Yours, *if* you graduate. Mark 4 Law Master. Improved model, with dual arm based lazer cannon, vertical take-off and landing capabilities, range 500 km. Yours, if you can get it to work. All of these things you see here are toys. At the end of the day, when you're all alone in the dark, the only thing that counts is this......**The Law**. And you will be alone when you swear to uphold these ideals. For most of us its only death in the streets, with a few of us that survive to old age, the proud loneliness of the long walk. A walk that every judge must take outside these city walls into the unknown of the cursed earth and there spend your last remaining days taking law to the lawless. This is what it means to be a Judge and this is the commitment I expect. Class Dismissed. (From Screenplay)Dredd's adherence to the letter of the law is seen early on in the film when he arrests Herman Ferguson following a block riot in Megacity One. Dredd's suggestion that Ferguson should have jumped from the window of the block to protect himself rather than commandeer a food unit (and hence commit a legal violation) is met with Ferguson's reply that as it was 40 floors up it would have been a suicidal move. Dredd's riposte is merely that it may well have been fatal, but at least it would have been legal. This formality perhaps best described as an overly literal and black letter approach to the law is relaxed as Dredd himself relaxes. He becomes more at ease with his own humanity as a result of his growing relationship with one of his female colleagues, Judge Hershey. As Dredd is searching for companionship outside of the law, the strict letter of the law becomes less important and justice dominates. Dredd even kills guards, albeit they are trying to kill him, **[End page 41]** in his pursuit of the truth. Law is given a vestige of humanity, as is Dredd, when it is shown that errors can be made, a concept that Dredd doesn't at first accept. That Dredd himself is framed and wrongly convicted forces him to confront his belief in the infallibility of the law.As noted above, Dredd is located in a hinterland between the formalism of the law and a quest for (higher) justice. Judge Dredd switches the 'action' from the courtroom to the sidewalk but unlike the vigilantism of police or civilians, his sidewalk justice is given with the full backing of the law - the sidewalk becomes Dredd's own legitimised courtroom. However, unlike many of the legal films based within the courtroom, Dredd's obedience to the law and belief in the sanctity of the law is absolute - law being more important than justice. Effectively, Judge Dredd operates within a contradiction of informalism (of arena) and formalism (of law), although he is finally forced to confront his black letter approach to the law when he is wrongly convicted.ConclusionInitially, the major difference between the techno enforcement law films and the more traditional film appears to be the manner in which justice is delivered. In films such as *My Cousin Vinny* (a film in which a recently qualified lawyer is called upon to defend his cousin and his friend on a murder charge for his first case) the Judge requires the lawyer to learn the procedure of the Alabama State, where all the rules and procedures of 'the law' are contained. Dredd has reference to his 'own' book, the law of Mega City, which figures several times. Homage is paid to it as the source of law that must be upheld. Dredd is far more rule bound that many of the attorneys whose duty to the court is overlooked in the pursuit of justice. Law is revered in the Mega City that Judge Dredd inhabits. Senior Judges must eventually take the 'long walk to the cursed earth' to take law to the lawless, a task of high honour showing the importance of upholding the law - those who will not uphold such law are excluded from the city boundaries. Dredd's heritage is in fact not so much *Dirty Harry* as *Young Mr Lincoln*. Dredd has many of the traits of the film lawyer, battling against all odds to deliver justice he is in a more powerful position but has to originally keep within the letter of the law. The end goal though is the same and it is further legitimised because of his position within the legal hierarchy. In short Dredd is street cop, lawyer and judge - or as Shelley might have put it 'I am God, and King, and Law'. Interestingly, this omnipotent notion of the lawyer is reflected in the mythical portrayal of Abraham Lincoln in the classic law film *Young Mr Lincoln*. At times, this mythical Lincoln is portrayed as superhuman, seemingly a god with the power of life and death and marrying physical strength with cerebral agility. Even Henry Fonda, the actor who played Lincoln in Ford's film, baulked initially at taking on such a figure with the historical and mythical baggage that it carried. Indeed, Fonda felt that playing Lincoln was tantamount to playing God. **[End page 42]**Whilst *Judge Dredd* might, at first sight, appear to signal a departure from the courtroom drama, it can in fact be seen as part of that very tradition while simultaneously perhaps developing a sub genre of techno-law films. Dredd is as much the master of his 'courtroom' as any previous cinema judge, the change is the arena not the authority, his judicial robes are signposted as clearly as those historically trimmed with ermine. When Dredd indicates his judicial supremacy by declaring 'I am the Law' he is still acknowledging the legal process albeit it one vested within him, only that the parameters of the courtroom are no longer fixed. What then of the effect of such depiction. Whilst historical portrayals mined many of the themes covered in the techno law films, the depiction was far removed in terms of decorum and ceremony. Dredd, and to a lesser extent Robocop, show judicial pronouncements disrobed of such ceremony and stripped bare of deference or reverence. This may have one of two effects, both to demystify the law and show its upshot without its inherent disguise, or place the law and legal process in disrepute, with a loss of respect for the law that might have been engendered by contact with more traditional law films.Whilst films such as *Judge Dredd* show that the arenas of representations of law are changing, we are also beginning to see a growing fascination for the 'real'. Support for the continuing dramatic importance of court proceedings can indeed be seen in the increasing appeal with live televised trials; witness the coverage of the cases of the Menendez brothers and, of course, OJ Simpson. The Simpson criminal trial did undoubtedly contain moments of high drama such as the melodramatic fitting of the glove, yet much remained extremely dull based on seemingly endless points of procedure and legal minutiae. However, the viewers remained engrossed by the playing out of real life living (court)room drama. This insatiable consumer fascination for legal theatre is also reflected by the increasing use of legal themes for television fiction: where *Rumpole* once ruled we now have, amongst others, *Madson* and *Murder One*. What though of the effects of this seemingly new found fascination? Has it become the case as theorists such as [Strinati](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22strinati) (1995: 224) have argued that our own perceptions of reality have become defined by representations from popular culture where 'the mass media, for example, were once thought of as holding up a mirror to, and thereby reflecting, a wider social reality. Now reality can only be defined by the surface reflections of this mirror'? Certainly it appears that the lines of demarcation between the unreal and the real have become blurred and it is no longer easy to make the distinction between fact and fiction where law is concerned:Perhaps more than any other institution, the courtroom has been put into crisis by postmodern conditions. Politicians and preachers have always known that the truths that matter are those which can be made to work in specific conditions, educators have always known that their curriculum includes and excludes according to the balance of power that can be achieved in the conditions of its writing, but courts, **[End page 43]** whose immediate effects are emphatically real (imprisonment or freedom, uprisings or stability) are premised upon the achievability of an objective truth and the effectiveness of rationality, as a human universal, as a means of achieving it. When both truth and reasoning are contingent rather than objective, the legal system experiences crisis. Tabloid television and the Rodney King video was surely the nadir of tabloidism, is part of that crisis, part symptom, part cause, partly a move toward coping with it, partly a move toward continuing it, but inescapably part of it. ([Fiske & Glynn](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22fiske) 1995: 521)**ENDNOTES**[[1](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22one%20ref)] Previous incarnations of this paper were presented at the both the Law & Society Association Annual Meeting (*Justice and Civilisation in Mega City: At the Beginning and Ends of Cinematic Law?*) and at the Screen Studies Conference (*Techno Cops and Techno Judges: the death of the Courtroom drama*) in Glasgow in June and July 1996 respectively. Thanks in particular to the University of Strathclyde film students for their constructive comments and hospitality. In addition, we would like to extend our thanks to the three anonymous peer reviewers, who made valuable and cogent points that we have attempted to expand upon.[[2](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22two%20ref)] Professor Peter Robson, University of Strathclyde, UK, is engaged in a fascinating ongoing study of the role of judges in legal films.[[3](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22three%20ref)] The Lawgiver, the Judge's standard issue handgun in Mega-City One, is a deadly multi-faceted weapon, featuring manual and automatic focusing and targeting, plus an in-built computer capable of controlling its operation. It can, however, only be operated by its designated Judge owner, whose palm print is programmed into the gun's computer memory' ([Butcher](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22butcher) 1995:97)[[4](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22four%20ref)] Commenting upon the lack of chapters based on courtroom films in *Legal Reelism*, [John Denvir](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22denvir) (1996: xiii) felt that this was because of 'the pluralism that has broken law from its narrow institutional bindings, allowing it to spill out into the larger culture, reflecting and creating that culture.'[[5](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22five%20ref)] The juror is of course male (Dennis Quaid). It is an example of a film where the lead lawyer is female and yet she cannot win the case without the help of a man.[[6](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22six%20ref)] Lincoln's physical qualities and his belief in the rule of law is emphasised when he saves his two innocent clients from a lynch mob who wish to dispense some automatic justice.**BIBLIOGRAPHY**[Barrett, N.](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22barrett%20ref) (1995) *Dredd in the Future. One Man is Law*. Boxtree: London. **[End page 44]**[Butcher, M.](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22butcher%20ref) (1995) *The A-Z of Judge Dredd*. Hamlyn: London.[Denvir, J.](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22denvir%20ref) Ed (1996) *Legal Reelism. Movies as Legal Texts*. University of Illinois Press.[Fiske, J. & Glynn, K.](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22fiske%20ref) (1995) 'Trials of the Postmodern' *Cultural Studies* *9*(3) 505.[Friedman, L.](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22friedman%20ref) (1989) 'Law, lawyers and popular culture.' *Yale Law Journal 98* 1579.[Greenfield, S. & Osborn, G.](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22greenfield%20ref) (1995) 'Where Cultures Collide: The Characterisation of Law and Lawyers in Film' *International Journal of the Sociology of Law 23* 107.[Reiner, R.](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22reiner%20ref) (1981) 'Keystone to Kojak: the Hollywood cop' in P.J. Davies and B. Neve, Eds. *Cinema, Politics and Society in America*. Manchester, England: Manchester University Press.[Strinati, D.](http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcjpc/vol6is2/greenfield.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22strinati%20ref) (1995) *An introduction to theories of popular culture*. Routledge: London.**FILMOGRAPHY***And Justice For All* (Jewison, 1979)*Cape Fear* (Scorsese, 1991)*The Client* (Schumacher, 1994)*Criminal Law* (Campbell, 1989)*Death Wish* (Winner, 1974)*Devil's Advocate* (Taylor Hackford, 1997)*Dirty Harry* (Seigel, 1971)*A Few Good Men* (Reiner, 1992)*The Firm* (Pollack, 1993)*Inherit the Wind* (Kramer, 1960) *Judge Dredd* (Cannon, 1995) *Murder in the First* (Rocco, 1995)*My Cousin Vinny* (Lynn, 1992)*The Pelican Brief* (Pakula, 1993)*Philadelphia* (Demme, 1993)*Robocop* (Verhoeven, 1987)*Robocop 2* (Kershner, 1990)*Star Chamber* (Hyams, 1983) *Suspect* (Yates, 1987)*To Kill a Mockingbird* (Mulligan, 1962)*Twelve Angry Men* (Lumet, 1957)*The Verdict* (Lumet, 1982)*Witness for the Prosecution* (Wilder, 1957)*Young Mr Lincoln* (Ford, 1939)**[End page 45]** |