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DVD Review

Remake of classic western reinvigorates genre

3:10 to Yuma resurrects cinematic form

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The western, an essential genre in American film history, has been undergoing a resurrection. With films such as *There Will Be Blood* and *No Country For Old Men*, it seems cowboy hats and shootouts are back in vogue.

In his latest film, released on DVD Jan. 8, director James Mangold attempts to remake the 1957 western classic *3:10 to Yuma*. Dan Evans (Christian Bale) is a rancher who goes into the town of Bisbee to settle matters concerning payments for his land. While riding to town with his two sons, he witnesses a stagecoach robbery conducted by the infamous outlaw Ben Wade (Russell Crowe). Wade goes into town as well and is captured by the law enforcement in Bisbee. For a monetary reward, Evans agrees to escort Wade to the 3:10 train to Yuma, which will take Wade to prison. The film follows their journey, which is made perilous by Wade's gang who follows in pursuit, ready to kill anyone to save their boss.

The suspense in the film is what keeps the plot going. The movie opens with a scene where Evan's barn is being burned down because he did not pay his bills. His eldest son, William Evans (Logan Lerman), runs to the barn, and nearly gets caught in the fire attempting to save his family's method of income. This type of scene helps draw the viewer in straight away, and demonstrates why Dan Evans strives so hard to obtain money to help his family thrive. Scenes such as this are scattered throughout the film, and cause anticipation for viewers by keeping them at the edge of their seats.

As any western would be, the film is littered with shootouts, chases on horseback, countless deaths and, of course, saloons. However, the film does not completely stick to conventions of a western. In many westerns, the story arch consists of good versus bad, with good triumphing in the end; however, in *3:10 to Yuma*, good and bad are not as easily defined, and "good" does not always triumph. In the beginning of the film, it is easy to define Wade as the "bad guy" and Evans as the "good guy," yet this setup doesn't work throughout the entire film, as at certain points we see the two characters merging into the other's psychological territory.

The leading actors, Crowe and Bale, give great performances as their complex characters. However, two less-known actors outshine them: Lerman, who plays Evan's oldest son, and Ben Foster, who plays Charlie Prince, a member of Wade's gang. Lerman's emotion and commitment to playing an angst-ridden fourteen year old who feels blame towards his father is what compels the viewer to feel more pity for Dan Evan's situation, and at the end helps to make sense of why Evan's continues on his journey. On the other hand, Foster plays the true villain in the film, and manages to do so without causing the character to become one-dimensional; as much as he is a villain, he still remains loyal to his boss.

Despite the acting and suspense, the film did have its low points. Scenes containing shooting and killing were, of course, frequent throughout the film; however, sometimes they became too long and seemed meaningless. The scenes that stick out in this movie are ones containing the intriguing conversations amongst the characters, while the shooting scenes become forgettable because they are indistinguishable from one another.

The special features included with the DVD examine the era in which the film was set. One feature included is a making-of documentary entitled *Destination Yuma*. The documentary follows the making of the film and includes commentary with the actors and director. The DVD also includes the featurette *An Epic Explored* and a documentary called *Outlaws, Gangs, and Posses*. Both these extras explore how the remake incorporates history, along with classic western elements to create a modern version of the film.

Mangold's remake doesn't necessarily reinvent the genre, but it is set to help rejuvenate this generation's interest in western films.

