

Despite Daring Genre, '3:10 to Yuma' Packs Powerhouse Acting With Fragmentary Story

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CHICAGO – Had you asked me to tag “3:10 to Yuma” before I screened it, you’d think me a bumbling idiot because I had absolutely no clue what to expect.

I was scratching my head not because of lice but because I knew shooting a western in this day and age was either brilliant because it hasn’t been done in so long or Hollywood suicide. It turned out to be bit of both.



Russell Crowe (left) in “3:10 to Yuma”.

Photo courtesy of IMDb

Shot in New Mexico at ranches laden with dirt, guns, spurs and tumbleweed, “3:10 to Yuma” (which references the time of a train en route to a prison) is the Russell Crowe show that’s complemented by [Christian Bale](#) [14] and Ben Foster (from “Six Feet Under” and “The Dead Zone”).

Crowe plays the deadly-quick desperado Ben Wade who has no remorse for the men, women and children he kills, all the money he pilfers and all the families he destroys. Or does he?

Bale’s family man character, Dan Evans, grows on Wade and forces him to have a conscience.



Christian Bale (center) in "3:10 to Yuma".

Photo courtesy of IMDb

While Bale has been in Chicago shooting "[The Dark Knight](#) [15]" to play a dominant Batman character for that 2008 film, in "3:10 to Yuma" I initially cursed director James Mangold for making him into such a seemingly weak leading man.

Give the film its full 117 minutes, though, as you'll see Bale indeed has stirring qualities of sound character up his sleeve.

Crowe, by the way, was Mangold's first selection for the Wade role. After Tom Cruise considered the project but then declined, casting Crowe gave the production new life. Early on, there was talk of Eric Bana starring opposite Cruise.



Russell Crowe in "3:10 to Yuma".

Photo courtesy of IMDb

Crowe, Mangold and producer Cathy Konrad all wanted Bale as the film's co-lead. In the [1957 version](#) [16] of "3:10 to Yuma," Glenn Ford played Wade and Van Heflin played Evans.

This day and age, the film packs the music, sights and sound you'd expect in a classic western with quality acting and a story that's just *comme çï, comme çã* (ahem: so-so).

Actors are prisoners to their scripts. While jailing Crowe turns out to be anything but a picnic in the park, this simple feature-length film story leaves me unsatiated and wanting much more plot oomph.

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