

Blu-Ray Review: 'Buried' With Ryan Reynolds Benefits From Own Limitations

Submitted by [mattmovieman](#) [1] on January 19, 2011 - 11:14am

- [Blu-ray Review](#) [2]
- [Buried](#) [3]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [4]
- [Lionsgate Entertainment](#) [5]
- [Matt Fagerholm](#) [6]
- [Rodrigo Cortes](#) [7]
- [Ryan Reynolds](#) [8]
- [Sorry Wrong Number](#) [9]
- [Stephen Tobolowsky](#) [10]
- [The Vanishing](#) [11]
- [Theater, TV, DVD & Blu-Ray](#) [12]

CHICAGO – Many films have attempted to portray the unimaginably terrifying experience of being buried alive, from George Sluizer's bone-chillingly bleak thriller, "The Vanishing," to Quentin Tarantino's crowd-pleaser, "Kill Bill Vol. 2." Yet Rodrigo Cortés' "Buried" is the first film in cinema history to take place entirely within the rectangular confines of a coffin.

Claustrophobic thrillers such as "Phone Booth" and "127 Hours" utilized cutaways to flashbacks, fantasies and supporting players to break up the monotony of the protagonist's immobility. But Cortés has the audacity to make his audience feel as trapped as his main character. He refused to compromise his vision in order to make the film more marketable to the mainstream, and the resulting picture is a staggering feat of filmmaking ingenuity and artistic conviction. It's also a hell of a good thriller.



Blu-Ray Rating: **4.0/5.0**

After making a handful of obnoxious comedies over the past decade, Ryan Reynolds was believed to be the sort of actor whose potential was buried under a landfill of mediocrity. Yet Cortés unearths an uninhibited adventurousness in Reynolds that enables him to deliver what is easily his best work to date. He plays Paul Conroy, an American contractor working in "the Diyala province in Baquba" (a.k.a. Iraq) when his convoy is attacked by insurgents. He awakens in the suffocating darkness of a wooden coffin accompanied only by a Zippo lighter, a cell phone with limited battery power and ever-diminishing oxygen. As he makes frantic attempts to call for help, he hears the voice of his captor, Jabir (José Luis García Pérez), who demands that 5 million dollars be sent to him within the next two hours. Paul may be no more responsible for the occupation of Iraq than Jabir is for 9/11, yet he finds himself paying the price for his country's misdeeds merely because he 'fits the profile.' There are a few echoes of "The Tillman Story" when Paul reaches out to members of the government he risked his life to serve, and discovers that they are less worried about his survival than they are about the danger of his incarceration turning into an "international incident."



Ryan Reynolds stars in Rodrigo Cortés' Buried.

Photo credit: Lionsgate Entertainment

Yet regardless of its political subtext, the film is first and foremost a visceral entertainment. Cinematographer Eduard Grau does a remarkable

job of finding endless fresh and effective ways to photograph the space, while allowing the audience to share in Paul's terror until their breathing rhythm begins to match his own. There's an unforgettable establishing shot where Grau pans up from Paul's face to the wooden wall a few inches above his head, and then down to his feet, illustrating his surroundings with squirm-inducing detail. Cortés' editing is skilled, yet he has a tendency to needlessly chop up the action during moments of extreme tension (Victor Reyes' score is efficient but unnecessary). The superb supporting cast of voice-over talent includes Stephen Tobolowsky, the wonderful character actor best known for his dweebish characters (both named Ryerson) in "Groundhog Day" and "Glee." His chilling cameo as a cold-blooded drone is one of many dramatic high points in "Buried," which Reynolds tackles with a skill and raw authenticity that anchors the film in urgent realism.



Buried was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on Jan. 18, 2011.

Photo credit: Lionsgate Entertainment

Right when the film begins with its Saul Bass-inspired opening credit sequence, it's clear that Cortés intends the film to be on the level of a Hitchcockian thriller. Yet structurally and thematically, "Buried" is more evocative of the 1943 radio show-turned-film noir, "Sorry Wrong Number," in which a bedridden invalid flails for help in the face of impending doom.

"Buried" is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 2.35:1 aspect ratio), accompanied by English and French audio tracks, and includes a DVD copy of the film. A brief featurette chronicles the film's 17-day shoot in a Barcelona soundstage.

Reynolds says that Cortés functioned more as an architect than a director, and singles him out as the one person who pushed for keeping the film "entirely within the box." This decision caused screenwriter Chris Sparling to restructure his script until it only featured one onscreen speaking role. There are brief glimpses of the seven different coffins used during production and their various functions. One coffin was built like a wooden tunnel to allow for a few frightening shots in which the camera pans back, making Reynolds appear as if he may be closer to the center of the Earth rather than its surface. A super-limber crew member demonstrates how Reynolds would manage the seemingly impossible task of turning himself around in the coffin, switching the placement of his head and feet. After filming the final shot, Reynolds appears to be visibly emotional during his "thank you" speech to the crew. Perhaps he realized that this was the first film in his career that truly allowed him to show what he's made of as an actor. Hopefully Hollywood will take note.

'Buried' is released by Lionsgate Entertainment and stars Ryan Reynolds. It was written by Chris Sparling and directed by Rodrigo Cortés. It was released on Jan. 18, 2011. It is rated R.



[13]

By [MATT FAGERHOLM](#) [14]

Staff Writer

HollywoodChicago.com

matt@hollywoodchicago.com [13]

Source URL (retrieved on *Mar 28 2024 - 8:35pm*):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/13137/blu-ray-review-buried-benefits-from-its-limitations>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/mattmovieman>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/blu-ray-review>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/buried>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/lionsgate-entertainment>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/matt-fagerholm>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/rodrigo-cortes>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/ryan-reynolds>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/sorry-wrong-number>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/stephen-tobolowsky>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/the-vanishing>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/dvd-theater-tv-news>
- [13] <mailto:matt@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#MATT>