

## Film Review: Incomprehensible Story, Uninteresting Characters Sink in ‘Texas Killing Fields’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 21, 2011 - 6:17pm

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Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Ami Canaan Mann’s “Texas Killing Fields” is further proof of just how difficult it is to do what David Fincher does so well. “TKF” may have echoes of “Seven” and “Zodiac” but none of the character, mood, or even cohesion of those films. The best word to describe this misstep is a “mess” as the movie jumps around between plotlines and characters and never gives the viewer the footing that would make them resonate as something worth caring about or entertaining.

“Texas Killing Fields” is a procedural without structure. It’s a mood piece with no definable mood. It’s a thriller without clear villains or even threats. It’s almost remarkable how lost Mann seems with the directorial duties of her feature debut. She was clearly so engrossed in her own material that she forgot one of her most important duties – make it engrossing to us. What I mean by that is that while Mann may be able to follow these characters, know their back stories, and find their fates fascinating, her main job was to translate that to the viewer and it’s there that she fails completely. She works well with actors but can’t manage the structure of a complex film. There are dozens of movies a year in which the director was lazy or incompetent and I don’t believe Mann to be either but she got as lost in the “Fields” as her characters, never showing us the way in or out.



[Read Brian Tallerico's full review of "Texas Killing Fields" in our reviews section.](#) [13]

“Texas Killing Fields” is based loosely on a real location, a part of the South where dead bodies have been turning up without much evidence, rhyme, or reason. Is there a serial killer near Texas City? The potential for a dark, foreboding thriller about a madman who leaves little trace and the people who try to find him was the clear draw, even intriguing Oscar winner Danny Boyle enough to attract him to the material at one point. Writer Don Ferrarone (also making his debut and displaying many of the rookie flaws of his director) took the real life location and crafted a dark tale of a corner of the country that seems awash in potential danger and pure evil. Innocence has no hope and the police have no chance to stop impending disaster.

The two men tasked with trying to stop said evil are Officers Heigh (Jeffrey Dean Morgan) and Souder (Sam Worthington). The former is a NYC man, but even the Big Apple couldn’t prepare him for trying to stop men from turning 14-year-old girls into prostitutes or receiving phone calls from brutal murderers. When a local officer (Jessica Chastain) asks Heigh for help in solving and stopping the dumping of bodies in an area called “The Killing Fields” for all the remains found there, he becomes obsessed with the case. Meanwhile, Souder investigates a child prostitution ring that may or not be related and both men work to protect a local girl (Chloe Grace Moretz) who might as well be wearing a sign that says “manipulative killer bait.”



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*“Texas Killing Fields” stars Jeffrey Dean Morgan, Sam Worthington, Chloe Grace Moretz, and Jessica Chastain. It was written by Don Ferrarone and directed by Ami Canaan Mann. It opens in Chicago on October 21st, 2011 and is rated R.*



Texas Killing Fields  
*Photo credit: Anchor Bay Pictures*

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