

Film Review: 'The Magnificent Seven' is How the Western Was Lost

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on September 23, 2016 - 6:20pm

- [Byung-hun Lee](#) [2]
- [Chris Pratt](#) [3]
- [Denzel Washington](#) [4]
- [Ethan Hawke](#) [5]
- [Haley Bennett](#) [6]
- [HollywoodChicago.com](#) [7]
- [Jon Espino](#) [8]
- [Luke Grimes](#) [9]
- [Manuel Garcia-Rulfo](#) [10]
- [Martin Sensmeier](#) [11]
- [Matt Bomer](#) [12]
- [Movie Review](#) [13]
- [Peter Sarsgaard](#) [14]
- [Sony Pictures Releasing](#) [15]
- [The Magnificent Seven](#) [16]
- [Vincent D'Onofrio](#) [17]

CHICAGO – The appeal of Westerns was mostly lost on me when I was younger. The tales of these hypermasculine wanderers, answering every problem with a gun, never appealed to me. When I got older, I discovered their messages of honor and self-defense against corruption. The genre proved it could be more than one-liners and shootouts, but “The Magnificent Seven” set out to be only that.



Rating: **2.0/5.0**

“The Magnificent Seven” has all of the feel of a period-piece version of “The Expendables” and only half of its bombastic attitude. “The Expendables 2” writer Richard Wenk, alongside co-writer Nic Pizzolatto (HBO’s “True Detective” showrunner), failed to ignite the magic between the seven anti-heroes that made its superior predecessors such an enthralling experience. Aside from the on-screen chemistry between Denzel Washington and Chris Pratt, the rest of this ensemble group felt muddled and ill-developed. As we see Washington’s character hurriedly round up his band of misfits, we don’t feel invested in the characters because they come off as hollow and their motivations don’t make sense.

There is no point in investing in character who value their lives so little that they unnecessarily go into certain death for a stranger they just met. Their decision-making process stems to little more than: “Well, it’s a Tuesday and I don’t have anything planned, so it’s a good a day as any to go die for a stranger I just met a few minutes ago.” Knowing the little we have come to realize about each character, they are financially driven and prone to being interested in self-preservation above most things, so casually putting their lives on the line for money they know they’ll never get to spend is out of character. Instead, we are force fed some schlock about the power of brotherhood when team-up films like “The Avengers” do a much better job establishing that comradery much more believably.

The problem with ensemble films like these is that if the story is weak, then the entire film feels inundated with seemingly disposable characters. Relying on the audience’s knowledge of well-worn tropes as a form of exposition is lazy and ineffective. We’ve encountered all of these archetypes before, but even then “The Magnificent Seven” doesn’t feel the need to go through the motions of developing all but two of its characters. That turns every other aspect of this film into less of an homage to Westerns and more of a cash-grab playing on our nostalgic sensibilities.

“The Magnificent Seven” opens everywhere on September 23rd. Featuring Denzel Washington, Chris Pratt, Ethan Hawke, Vincent D’Onofrio, Byung-hun Lee, Manuel Garcia-Rulfo, Martin Sensmeier, Haley Bennett, Peter Sarsgaard, Luke Grimes and Matt Bomer. Screenplay by Richard Wenk and Nic Pizzolatto. Directed by Antoine Fuqua. Rated “PG-13”



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Denzel Washington and Chris Pratt in ‘The Magnificent Seven’
Photo credit: Sony Pictures Releasing

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