

## Saoirse Ronan Rocks in Joe Wright's Riveting 'Hanna'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 7, 2011 - 3:10pm

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Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – You won't be able to take your eyes off Saoirse Ronan in Joe Wright's action film "Hanna," a visceral thrill ride that's likely to be a more satisfying experience than most of the action blockbusters that will fill the multiplex as the temperatures rise. With an A-list cast and incredible production values, "Hanna" is a speeding train. Hop on and hold on tight.

From the beginning, Hanna (Ronan) is not your ordinary 16-year-old girl. She is introduced, stealthily moving through a snowy woods as she hunts for food, clothing, and practice. Her father Erik (Eric Bana) approaches behind her and admonishes the girl for not realizing he was nearby. Quickly, we realize that young Hanna is not just a skilled hunter and fighter, but a killing machine. Her striking blue eyes are always trained on the target, whether it be shooting practice or sparring with her father. The mystery begins — Who is Hanna? Why is her father training her? Where did these strange people come from and where are they going?



Hanna

*Photo credit: Focus Features*

There are many surprises in "Hanna" that only cynical critics would ruin but I will say that the film is essentially an elaborate chase movie. Hanna and her father have hatched a plot to kill a woman named Marisa (Cate Blanchett) and then meet up in Berlin. Hanna kills the wrong woman but believes she has accomplished her mission and heads to meet her beloved father with Marisa chasing behind her.

Between the chase-action scenes, the mystery of "Hanna" also unfolds like a modern fairy tale. With references to the Brothers Grimm throughout, we learn why this heroine lives in a little cottage in the woods and the true story behind the big bad wolf in this dynamic. "Hanna" may be the first fairy tale-inspired modern action movie. It's a hybrid between "The Bourne Identity," "Kill Bill," and "Hansel & Gretel."

Naturally, with that description, "Hanna" gets major points for innovation. This is as unique a thriller as you're going to see this year — it's like "Salt" with personality. Wright proves that he can do much more than the period chamber pieces of "Pride & Prejudice" and "Atonement" by staging some of the best action scenes in a long time and they're all set to a simply fantastic score by The Chemical Brothers, one that gives the piece a driving rhythm that so many movies like "Hanna" lack. Technically, "Hanna" can be jaw-dropping as The Chemical Brothers' music pounds through the speakers and Ms. Ronan runs for her life.



Hanna

Photo credit: Focus Features

And runs and runs and runs. To her credit, Saoirse Ronan delivers a fantastic performance in the spaces in between her many chase scenes. With her piercing eyes and blonde hair, she's an incredibly unique heroine, but she never overplays the vulnerable girl aspect of her character except in a few coming-of-age scenes with a friend she makes along the way. It's fascinating how Hanna seems more comfortable snapping a neck than when she's about to kill a boy and Ronan nails that complex nature of this character. Bana and Blanchett add incredible personality to supporting characters that could have been bland plot devices, but the movie belongs to Ronan all the way.

But that shouldn't diminish the technical accomplishments. This piece is incredibly well-edited and conceived, as Wright proves his versatility as a director as much as anyone has in a long time. I do think there's a slightly stronger version of "Hanna" that runs a few minutes shorter. There are a few too many shots of Hanna running; a few too many shots of Hanna discovering music; a few too many shots of Hanna meeting a cute boy. There's a tighter, more streamlined version of "Hanna" that could have been a masterpiece.

The fact that "Hanna" falls just short of that magical m-word means a lot, especially in a year that has been as lackluster as 2011 has been through its first quarter. With stellar performances and well-above-average technical elements, telling a story that gets better the more it lingers in the memory, "Hanna" is one of the few memorable movies of the year to date. It's the kind of cult-hit-in-the-making that I expect will have fans who absolutely adore it. Jump on the bandwagon early and hold on tight.

*"Hanna" stars Saoirse Ronan, Eric Bana, and Cate Blanchett. It was written by Seth Lochhead and David Farr and directed by Joe Wright. It is rated PG-13 and runs 111 minutes. It opens on April 8th, 2011.*



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