

Dull ‘Homefront’ Can’t Get Action into an Action Movie

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on November 27, 2013 - 6:22am

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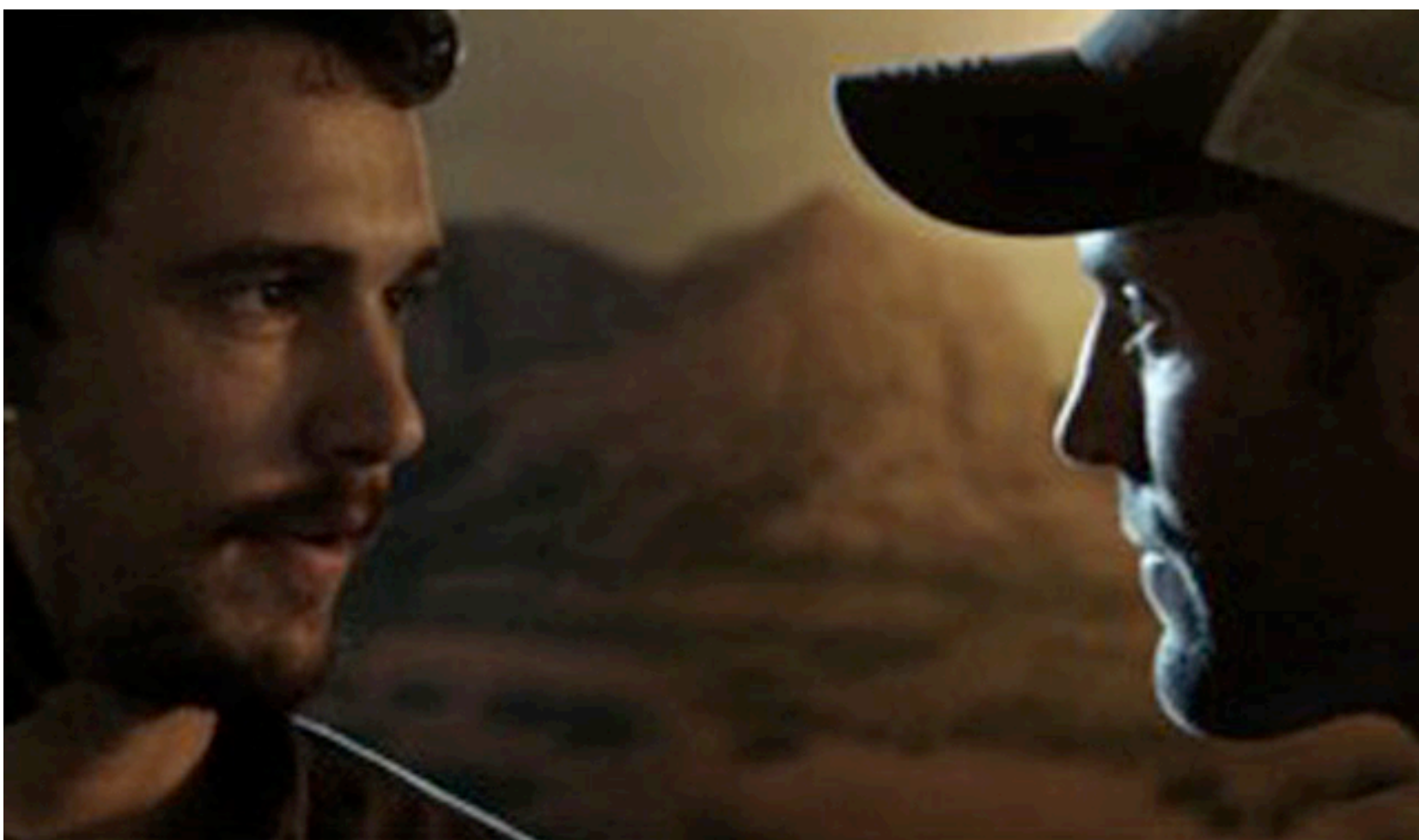


Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Sylvester Stallone is a difficult man to comprehend, unless if doing a thesis on male menopause. The one time screenwriter of gritty soul pictures like “Rocky,” “Paradise Alley” and “First Blood” is spending his later years pumping out undistinguished boom-boom pictures like “Homefront.”

This film – which Stallone adapted from a novel – has been on the shelf for a number of years, as Sly himself had passed the appropriate age to portray the main character. So “Expendables” costar Jason Statham has stepped up, and the taciturn British action star can’t breath any life into the ex-DEA agent role, now undercover as a single Daddy in a small Louisiana town. In what looks like a takeoff of 1970s southern-fried action movies like “Gator” and “Walking Tall” lacks any air of that culture or grindhouse energy. It feels like a high school production, carefully costumed and slickly produced, but with none of the atmosphere that makes it feel southern. But don’t worry, beatings are applied and stuff blows up.

The film begins with a huge drug bust in New Orleans. Broker (Jason Statham) is a undercover DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) agent, having infiltrated a bike gang that distributes crystal meth. He betrays the trust of the gang once the bust goes down, incurring the wrath of leader Danny T. (Chuck Zito). The government wants Broker to lay low for awhile, so they install him in a small southern town in Louisiana. There we learn that Broker is a single Daddy, raising a daughter while trying to remain low key.



Face Off: Gator (James Franco) Versus Broker (Jason Statham) in ‘Homefront’
Photo credit: Open Road Films(II)

That position gets upended when the daughter gets into a fight at school, and the boy she confronts has a nasty southern Momma named Cassie Bodine Klum (Kate Bosworth). The trouble she causes leaks all the way to her brother Gator Bodine (James Franco), who sees an opportunity – with his girlfriend Sheryl (Winona Ryder) – to export his Crystal Meth statewide through Danny T's old network. This clash of the law and the lawless is about to generate some old fashion butt kicking and fireballs exploding.

First off, there is nary a southerner in the film to add authenticity. Statham (a Brit) doesn't even attempt a Louisiana favoring, but the supposed natives of the town each have their own interpretation of what a southern accent sounds like, which fade in and out during the course of the film. Kate Bosworth is a prime scenery chewer with her white trash rants. To quote John McClane from the first "Die Hard" film, "...you should be on TV with that accent."

Just like it's hard to understand screenwriter Stallone, it's more of a mystery as to why James Franco took on this southern meth lab villain role. He's about as "Gator Bodine" as you'd expect from a native Californian, and he seems to be sleepwalking through the character, with the anticipation that it will be over with soon – he gives no spark to the bad guy. And Winona Ryder as his girlfriend doesn't fare too well either, playing the role as a bit too young for her fortysomething reality and having no idea where her loyalties lie in the story.

If Stallone and director Gary Fleder ("The Express") were trying to recreate the southern grindhouse films of the 1970s, the story, look and slickness of the film fails to communicate that attitude. The single Daddy angle is unbearable, and the cute moppet (Izabela Vidovic) that is supposedly Statham's daughter belongs in a Disney Channel sitcom. Atmosphere is so important in establishing the mood of something like this, and slow motion shots of Daddy and Daughter riding horses just doesn't do it.



Daddy and Daughter (Izabela Vidovic) Horse Day in 'Homefront'
Photo credit: Open Road Films(II)

The hero-as-indestructible-superhero is getting tiresome as well. Statham produces most of the expected action with his fists of steel, and endures an amazing pounding himself, but always manages to escape an impossible situation – ten against one, for example – and dole out some butt kicking of his own. Even the most ardent action picture fan must think, "well, he will take care of everything by the end." So even though James Franco is doing his best evil laugh, his meth lab is not long for this world.

Jason Statham has made some decent high octane movies of late – "Bank Job" and "Parker" come to mind – but the law of diminishing character returns is catching up to his act, and he best not take any more scripts from Sly Stallone, unless maybe they can meet in the boxing ring and Statham can exact some revenge. I can hear Franco's evil laugh from ringside.

'Homefront' opens everywhere on November 27th. Featuring Jason Statham, James Franco, Kate Bosworth, Winona Ryder, Frank Grillo, Chuck Zito and Izabela Vidovic. Screenplay adapted by Sylvester Stallone. Directed by Gary Fleder. Rated "R"



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