'Free Fire' Knows That Happiness is a Warm Gun

Submitted by PatrickMcD [1] on April 26, 2017 - 2:21pm

- 1970s [2]
- A24 [3]
- Amy Jump [4]
- Armie Hammer [5]
- Babou Ceesay [6]
- Ben Wheatley [7]
- Brie Larson [8]
- Cillian Murphy [9]
- Free Fire [10]
- Guns [11]
- HollywoodChicago.com Content [12]
- Jack Reynor [13]
- John Denver [14]
- Michael Smiley [15]
- Movie Review [16]
- Noah Taylor [17]
- Patrick Bergin [18]
- Patrick McDonald [19]
- Sam Riley [20]
- Sharito Copley [21]



Rating: **4.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – In a film that had a sassy, arbitrary perspective on its own flipped-out story, “Free Fire” sought to out-Quentin Tarantino in freaky funny characters and ammo-splurging gun battles. Director Ben Wheatley (“High-Rise”) took an ensemble cast to rarified heights of insult comedy, revenge dynamics and bullets that hit the bone.

It’s basically an arms sale that goes bad, and it’s set in 1978. The rogue cast of characters include stand-outs Sharito Copley (the South African actor from “District 9”), Armie Hammer and Brie Larson. The film is shot in straightforward real time, and the gun battle that takes place after the deal falls apart was a relentless point-of-view survival story that devolved into an unrelenting necessity for humans to wreak havoc on each other. Under director Wheatley, there is a bit of winking at the camera, symbolic statements on the futility of battle, and film class comparisons to genres/themes that will have geeks and grad students analyzing it for years. But it’s not overstuffed in the least, it’s damned entertaining, and works almost poetically on a number of different levels.

In the disco days of 1978, two gangs are about to meet in an abandoned Boston warehouse. One gang represents gun-runners to the Irish Republican Army, the other gun sellers. The buy will take place simply, with the facilitator Justine (Brie Larson) making sure that head representatives Ord (Armie Hammer) and Chris (Cillian Murphy) make the purchase (briefcase of cash) from a group of arms dealers represented by Vernon (Sharito Copley).



Armie Hammer, Brie Larson and Cillian Murphy in ‘Free Fire’
Photo credit: A24

What is unknown to both gangs is that Stevo (Sam Riley), a hot-headed member of the buyer crew, had met seller rep Harry (Jack Reynor) the previous night, and had abused Harry’s cousin to the point of hospitalizing her. When they see each other, an escalation occurs, followed by the first shots fired. Soon it becomes a gun battle between the two factions, and it comes down to who survives and, of course, the money.

The creative way that director Wheatley expresses the gun battle is the guts and glory of the film (which he co-wrote with his wife Amy Jump). There are many inventive ways the combatants use the various weapons, and the abandoned warehouse setting allows for some amazing toxic chemical explosions and use of factory implements to create destruction. Wheatley and Jump also throw in a couple of old assassins (Mark Menro and Patrick Bergin), who start firing at both groups, hoping to steal the money.

The ensemble cast almost had too much fun, especially Armie Hammer as Ord, the joke-cracking and cynical representative of the Irish buying gang. He clearly wants no part of the shenanigans, but reluctantly and cooly becomes the main wiseacre at the scene. Sharito Copley, turning on his South African accent – which perplexes the other participants – was like a used car salesmen trying to make things right, but failing with every negotiation.



Cast Photo For ‘Free Fire’
Photo credit: A24

The background characters all get their moments. Jack Reynor’s character of Harry – the hapless guy who started the gun battle – tries to escape in a 1970s van, complete with an 8-Track stuck on a ironically placed John Denver song, and ends up perpetuating one of the gorier moments with Stevo. The old assassins, not knowing what they got into, are hilarious when they realize their fate. Babou Ceesay as Martin (the muscle protecting the cash briefcase) had the most redemptive moment, but it was completely unexpected, in a very spiritual way. The movie is a creative and refreshing “fire” of pure cinema.

Ben Wheatley will be a director to keep considering, as the stories that filter through his lens are mind-bending and almost joyful celebrations of the strange places humans tend to go, both physically and morally. “Free Fire” has more going for it than meets the eye, and that will always be a “blast.”

For an interview of director Ben Wheatley of “Free Fire,” by Patrick McDonald of HollywoodChicago.com, CLICK HERE. **[22]**

“Free Fire” opened nationwide on April 21st. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Sharito Copley, Brie Larson, Armie Hammer, Sam Riley, Michael Smiley, Cillian Murphy, Jack Reynor, Noah Taylor, Babou Ceesay and Patrick Bergin. Written by Ben Wheatley and Amy Jump. Directed by Ben Wheatley. Rated “R”

[23]

By PATRICK McDONALD [24]
Writer, Editorial Coordinator
HollywoodChicago.com
pat@hollywoodchicago.com [23]

© 2017 Patrick McDonald, HollywoodChicago.com

Source URL (retrieved on *Mar 28 2024 - 9:19am*):
http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/27465/free-fire-knows-that-happiness-is-a-warm-gun

Links:
[1] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq
[2] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/1970s
[3] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/a24
[4] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/amy-jump
[5] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/armie-hammer
[6] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/babou-ceesay
[7] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/ben-wheatley
[8] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/brie-larson
[9] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/cillian-murphy
[10] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/free-fire
[11] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/guns

[12] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content
[13] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/jack-reynor
[14] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/john-denver
[15] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/michael-smiley
[16] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html
[17] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/noah-taylor
[18] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/patrick-bergin
[19] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/patrick-mcdonald
[20] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/sam-riley
[21] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/sharito-copley
[22] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/27444/interview-director-ben-wheatley-ignites-his-new-film-free-fire
[23] mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com
[24] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT