

Emotionally Perfect Cowboy Elegy in ‘The Hero’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on June 20, 2017 - 12:25pm

- [Brett Haley](#) [2]
- [Cowboy](#) [3]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [4]
- [Katherine Ross](#) [5]
- [Krysten Ritter](#) [6]
- [Laura Prepon](#) [7]
- [Marc Basch](#) [8]
- [Max Gail](#) [9]
- [Movie Review](#) [10]
- [Nick Offerman](#) [11]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [12]
- [Sam Elliott](#) [13]
- [The Hero](#) [14]
- [The Orchard](#) [15]



Rating: **5.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – The great character actor Sam Elliott – known mostly for his cowboy roles in film/TV and his unique bass sounding voiceovers – gets an opportunity to deliver a nuanced and emotional performance as a hyper-realized version of himself. There is virtue and truth in this character journey.

The screenplay, by director Brett Haley and Marc Basch, is brilliantly in line with Elliott’s particular breed of Hollywood character actor. In addition, Elliott’s character has some regrets, and buries it under a cloud of marijuana smoke. All of the tics and situations are handled expertly by Elliott, showing a range of performance that had never been seen from him before... it is his greatest role. Also, the vulnerability of his persona is on full display, which creates a subtlety in the story that is welcome – life isn’t predictable, and it’s refreshing to see the cinema reflect that value. Brett Haley will be a director to watch for many years, as he ponders the expectations of life.

Lee Hayden (Elliott) is a 72-year-old character actor – known mostly for playing cowboys over the years. He is a bit washed up, but can supplement his divorced man lifestyle with voiceover gigs. His leisure includes pot smoking, so conveniently his dealer Jeremy (Nick Offerman) lives in his apartment complex. His life takes a turn when he gets some bad health news, and simultaneously meets Charlotte (Laura Prepon), a stand-up comic.



The Future is Nigh for Lee Hayden (Sam Elliott) in ‘The Hero’

Photo credit: The Orchard

He takes Charlotte to a low-rent Cowboy Honoree event, where he receives a Lifetime Achievement Award. High on dope and Ecstasy, Lee makes an amazing acceptance speech that goes viral. He's suddenly a hot commodity again, and uses the notoriety to ignore his health issues... part of which involves his estranged daughter Lucy (Krysten Ritter). The next phase is assessment and acceptance of his life.

The whole film rises with the performance behind the famous mustache of Sam Elliott. He completely understands the character and is able to deliver him in times of stress, under the influence, joy, love and misery, among other emotions. And the script allows him to play with those emotions, and is so dignified with it's character and in its storytelling, including the modern memes of "viral videos" and texting (and that stuff can be distracting).

The supporting cast is also on top of their games, again the script does all of them favors. The surprise casting of Laura Prepon ("That '70s Show") is a jackpot. Her conflicted stand-up comic is rendered with all the contradictions those types possess. Nick Offerman takes a break from his know-it-all cynicism to protect Lee through his character Jeremy – their exchange about a cowboy TV show they both appeared on is a key moment in the film. Elliott's real-life spouse Katharine Ross portrays his ex-wife, and their familiarity is expressed essentially.



Life is a Dream: The Cowboy Lee in 'The Hero'

Photo credit: The Orchard

But mostly, the film speaks volumes about the conflicts that everyone has when making decisions about their relationships, which is the essence of our lives. Lee does have regrets, and they are manifested in his dreams, an epic cowboy film-within-the-film that plays out among the circumstances in his life. Elliott's performance, the situations and the emotions are nearly perfect in this film, which is more that you can ever ask for in a story, that reflects back to you.

I've met Sam Elliott, and because of his reputation there is a tendency to snap to attention in respect. The precision of his type of image authority is fast fading into the background, which is the entire point of "The Hero." We may not need a cowboy anymore, but that doesn't mean we don't need what they are.

"The Hero" was released in Chicago on June 16th, nationwide by July 4th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Sam Elliott, Laura Prepon, Krysten Ritter, Nick Offerman and Katherine Ross. Written by Brett Haley and Marc Basch. Directed by Brett Haley. Rated "R"



[16]

By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [17]
Writer, Editorial Coordinator
HollywoodChicago.com
pat@hollywoodchicago.com [16]

© 2017 Patrick McDonald, HollywoodChicago.com

Source URL (retrieved on **Apr 20 2024 - 12:58am**):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/27649/emotionally-perfect-cowboy-elegy-in-the-hero>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/brett-haley>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/cowboy>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/katherine-ross>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/krysten-ritter>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/laura-prepon>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/marc-basch>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/max-gail>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/nick-offerman>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/patrick-mcdonald>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/sam-elliott>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/the-hero>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/the-orchard>
- [16] <mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT>