

‘Hostiles’ with Christian Bale is a Big Bad Bore

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on January 5, 2018 - 9:49am

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Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – “Hostiles” is an exercise in prestige western boredom. It’s competently made, but its as lifeless as a scalped corpse on the prairie. It’s long on pretty western locales and impressive facial hair, but short on story, characters, or much of anything else to help keep your eyelids from closing.

Christian Bale is a revered U.S. Army Indian fighter who is assigned to escort a dying chief (Wes Studi) from New Mexico to his ancestral homeland in Montana. Bale stays mostly stoic, along with everyone else. “Hostiles” comes from the grunting “Revenant” school of filmmaking... the journey through the Old West seemed to take place in real time and took so long I half expected to develop saddle sores.



Christian Bale in ‘Hostiles’

Photo credit: Entertainment Studios Motion Pictures

The endless shots of Bale leading a train of horses through the sagebrush are punctuated by flashes of violence... an ambush here, a Comanche raid there. But they seem to spring up simply to give Bale’s character something to do, and the scenes aren’t particularly thrilling. Even the addition of a mentally deranged prisoner (Ben Foster) – who used to be one of Bale’s loyal soldiers – does little to liven things up.

Rosamund Pike fares better as a prairie widow, who we meet as her husband and three children are slaughtered by Comanche warriors out to steal their horses. She's the center of one of the film's biggest set pieces, but it comes off as rote as a cattle rustling out of an old B-Western. She gives a good performance as she struggles with grief which eventually hardens into resolve, but her big scene of empowerment – with a shotgun in her hands – seems thrown in merely to extend the already torturous running time.

This is a movie where I didn't give two shakes of a headdress feather about any of the characters, as they traveled on their well worn and predictable path. Bale's crew is filled out with Jesse Plemons, Jonathan Majors, and Timothée Chalamet (who seems to be in every indie festival darling this year). But none of them make much of an impression before they're killed off. If you guessed the famed Army Indian fighter and dying Indian chief would come to a place of respect and admiration by the end of this excruciating journey, well then you're just like everyone else in the audience.



Rosamund Pike in 'Hostiles'

Photo credit: Entertainment Studios Motion Pictures

It takes something to make a scalping seem boring, but "Hostiles" manages it. Apart from a few extra F-Bombs, this is a wannabe "prestige" picture that has no real reason to exist, and no idea how to how to communicate its point. Not to say that writer/director Scott Cooper is incompetent in any way – it's just that "Hostiles" is bereft of ideas or anything actually entertaining, and it lacks a fire in the belly to breathe any kind of life into the story. Instead, it simply moseys along, hoping the scenery will be enough to keep its audience interested. It's not.

"Hostiles" releases in Chicago on January 5th, nationwide January 19th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Christian Bale, Rosamund Pike, Stephen Lang, Bill Camp, Timothée Chalamet and Ben Foster. Screenplay by and directed by Scott Cooper. Rated "R"



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By [SPIKE WALTERS](#) [18]

Contributor

HollywoodChicago.com

spike@hollywoodchicago.com [17]

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