

## ‘Vice’ Proves It’s Okay to Laugh at Dick Cheney

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on December 27, 2018 - 6:46pm

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Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – “Vice” is an occasionally very funny attempt to demystify the life and legacy of former Vice President of the United States, Dick Cheney. Using some of the same gimmicks and narrative trickery he employed to great effect in “The Big Short,” writer/director Adam McKay goes deep into the weeds to try to explain how Cheney made it to the second highest office in the land.

Packing on 40 extra pounds and some remarkable makeup, Christian Bale has Cheney’s mannerisms and characterization down pat. Amy Adams is the Lady Macbeth-like figure Lynne Cheney, whose own strength of will and ambition force her husband to get whipped into shape, mentally at least although never physically. But for my money, Steve Carell steals the show as George W. Bush-era Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Playing the longtime Washington figure as a refugee from “Anchorman” or “Animal House” is an inspired choice and he gets a lot of the films best laughs.



Christian Bale is Dick Cheney in 'Vice'

Photo credit: Annupura Pictures

In between we see Cheney as the political operative who flunked out of Yale, a congressional intern attaching himself to Rumsfeld – as he ascends In the Nixon White House – and then the two of them running things in the Ford administration. After a break retreating in the Carter years, they both rise again with Reagan and later both Bush presidencies.

Bale's Cheney is not a political hatchet job. He's not entirely the boogeyman and Bale makes efforts to get inside what makes this overweight politician with a bum ticker tick. This is best expressed in Cheney's relationship with his lesbian daughter Mary (Alison Pill). He's still pragmatic and playing the political game but largely takes his daughter's well being and safety into his paramount concern (with one complicated late in the game exception). Sam Rockwell's portrayal of George W actually doesn't come off half bad here... he's depicted as the Bush family black sheep eager to win his father's approval, and all too willing to delegate authority to a former top adviser to the elder Bush (Cheney served as H.W.'s Secretary of Defense).

As for those farcical narrative tics from Adam McKay, some work better than others. A mid-film credits gag is the best of the bunch, while the sequence involving the omnipresent narrator telling Cheney's story is groan inducing at best and a bit baffling. A sequence with Alfred Molina as a waiter explaining a menu of tactics employed against suspects in The War On Terror is somewhere in between.



Behind the Man: Amy Adams is Lynne Cheney in 'Vice'

Photo credit: Annupura Pictures

But McKay never turns "Vice" into a Michael Moore-like diatribe against Cheney and the right wing republicans, even as the former VP gets rightfully blamed for America's involvement in Iraq. It's clear where McKay sits politically, but I thought he got his point across well while wringing real humor out of just how screwed up the situation was, and how we look at it now.

The overall structure of "Vice" isn't the filmmaking eye opener that "The Big Short" was, but it's still a reasonably interesting and entertaining look at a man far more complex than he's been made out to be.

*"Vice" opened everywhere on December 25th. Featuring Christian Bale, Amy Adams, Steve Carell, Sam Rockwell, Alison Pill, Bill Camp, Lily Rabe, Tyler Perry, Alfred Molina. Written and directed by Adam McKay. Rated "R"*



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