

Film Review: Unfocused 'Rust and Bone' Wastes Marion Cotillard

Submitted by [mattmovieman](#) [1] on December 20, 2012 - 9:12am

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CHICAGO – It's been three years since Jacques Audiard made a sizable splash in American art houses with "A Prophet," a spellbinding picture that certainly ranks as one of the great crime films of the last decade. By following an Arab youth through his punishing sentence in a French prison, it provided audiences with an unforgettable portrait of corrupted innocence.



Rating: **2.0/5.0**

Devoid of escapist shortcuts, Audiard's anti-hero was forced to commit acts of unspeakable evil in order to ensure his survival. By the time he was freed, the once vulnerable subordinate was a formidable mafia kingpin, thus inferring that the prison system creates criminals rather than cures them. Prison stuck to the film's protagonist like an irreparable wound. The question wasn't how to remedy the wound, it was how to live with it.



[Read Matt Fagerholm's full review of "Rust and Bone" in our reviews section.](#) [12]

That same question lingers over Audiard's follow-up, "Rust and Bone," a morose drama fatally marred by its cluttered collage of disconnected subplots. Though Marion Cotillard has garnered a fair amount of Oscar buzz for her attention-grabbing role as a killer whale trainer, it's too small and distressingly shallow to register as a serious Best Actress contender. The film's real subject is Matthias Schoenaerts, star of Michael R. Roskam's "Bullhead," which might as well be the title of this film (it certainly would've been an upgrade from "Rust and Bone"). Yet "bullhead" is too kind a name for Schoenaerts' character of Alain, a loathsome screw-up who drifts through a series of odd jobs while treating his five-year-old son, Sam (Armand Verdure), like unwanted collateral. After coming upon Sam playing in the dirt, he sprays him down like a dog, and later throws him to the ground, banging his head on a table. One of Audiard's gravest errors is attempting to sentimentalize the supposed bond between Alain and Sam in the film's final reel, after doing such a convincing job of illustrating that no such bond exists. Schoenaerts plays Alain as such a repugnant brute that any threat of redemption rings spectacularly false. Devoid of a salvageable heart or soul, Alain views the world purely in physical terms. No wonder why the profession of kickboxing fits him like a battered glove.

'Rust and Bone' stars Matthias Schoenaerts, Marion Cotillard, Armand Verdure, Céline Sallette, Corinne Masiero and Bouli Lanners. It was written by Jacques Audiard and Thomas Bidegain and directed by Jacques Audiard. It was released December 21st at the Landmark Century Centre Cinema. It is rated R.



[Continue reading for Matt Fagerholm's full "Rust and Bone" review.](#) [12]



Matthias Schoenaerts and Marion Cotillard star in Jacques Audiard's *Rust and Bone*.
Photo credit: Roger Arpajou/Why Not Productions, Courtesy of Sony Pictures Classics

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