The Revered. The Revolutionary. The Revenant.

- Matthew Porro
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An arrow to the jugular, a roaring avalanche down the mountainside, a man and his will to survive. From the first scene to the last, *The Revenant* serves to be a cinematic masterpiece to behold. Director Alejandro G. Iñárritu follows up his Oscar winning film *Birdman* with another that is likely to challenge for picture of the year.

*The Revenant* takes place in 1823, somewhere in the northwestern United States. Hugh Glass (Leonardo DiCaprio), a fur trapper and tracker, heads an expedition into the wilderness in search of pelts but is gruesomely mauled by a bear along the way. Now completely immobile, the crew decides Glass is too heavy to be carried and must be left behind. Three men decide to stay with him until he passes, but after little deliberation, Glass is left to die alone in the freezing backcountry. What follows is the epic tale of Glass’ rage-invoked quest back to civilization.
At its core, *The Revenant* is simply a story of anger and vengeance. Glass feels inexplicably wronged for what happened to him and is determined to make those responsible pay. The depth of the storyline pretty much ends there. Personally, as I sat in a crowded theatre shoving popcorn in my face, I wasn’t bothered in the least bit. With that being said, others may still have a problem with the somewhat shallow plot.

Visually, what Iñárritu and lead cinematographer Emmanuel “Chivo” Lubezki do with the landscape is incredible. Several scenes are carried solely by the beautiful surroundings in which they are shot in. For example, the scene in which Glass is attacked by a bear stands as one of the most realistic and chilling moments in my cinematic memory. Just watching the grizzly throw Glass around like a rag doll made me cringe. Afterwards, the image of his shredded body only went on to reinforce the concept of how difficult it was to make the journey he made. The majority of the film is shot on locations in Canada and Argentina.
creating a very strong sense of solitude and wilderness. If anyone is to have any major issues with this movie, “it wasn’t aesthetically pleasing” should not be one of them.

Although the journey itself is amazing, certain factual discrepancies took away from the credibility of the movie. Keep in mind, the movie is loosely based on Michael Punke’s 2002 novel of the same name. So while the film may be based on a true story, it’s actually far from it. For instance, the majority of the movie Glass is depicted to be a lone traveler braving the elements, but in reality, he lived with numerous Native American tribes who help take care of him. This means his brutal journey wasn’t quite as impressive considering he had food, clothes, weapons and medical attention for much of the time.

The finale of the movie is also entirely falsified. A spectacular knife fight between Glass and the main man responsible for his abandonment, John Fitzgerald (Tom Hardy), never really happened. In actuality, by the time Glass reached his destination he was so exhausted from the trek he didn’t even act upon his once burning rage. He just let it go. I understand most movies based on actual events don’t always stick entirely to the script, but certain scenes felt just a bit too far-fetched to completely buy into.

As far as DiCaprio’s performance, I say bravo. Will this be the film in which he finally wins an Oscar? I don’t know, but I do know his portrayal of Hugh Glass is one to be remembered. Since he was mauled by a bear and left completely inaudible from the beginning of the film, only a handful of lines escape his lips. This in my opinion, only makes his job as an actor much more difficult. The fact that he is able to depict such a vast range of emotion purely through his eyes is truly incredible and a testament to the sheer depth of his craft.

Overall, The Revenant is an excellent film handicapped only by its own factual limitations. Had Iñárritu followed Hugh Glass’ story a tad bit more meticulously, I’d be writing this in an even more complementary manner. I would advise anyone who loves movies to take the 156 minutes to experience The Revenant in its glorious entirety, I know you’ll be glad you did.

Rating: R
Starring: Leonardo DiCaprio, John Hardy, Will Poulter
Stars: **** out of 5

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