



No Country in Oscar country

filmreview

No Country For Old Men

Now Playing
Directed by Joel and Ethan Coen
Starring Tommy Lee Jones, Javier Bardem, Josh Brolin, Woody Harrelson, and Kelly MacDonald

MATT HUBERT
Arts & Entertainment Staff

There's something so wry and merily morose about Anton Chigurh (Javier Bardem) that hordes of Coen brothers faithful will be getting that warm, fuzzy feeling of familiarity again in *No Country For Old Men*. Just like *Fargo*, *Miller's Crossing*, and *Blood Simple* before it, *No Country* has those singularly "Coen brothers" moments, when the most brutal and demoralized character is rounded out by an endearing comic punch.

Chigurh (Javier Bardem) receives the same sardonic touch here, stumbling along on his merciless killing spree with both an abysmal haircut and pissy witticisms in tow. Every time Chigurh checks the bottom of

his boots for blood or flips a coin, the film becomes less about tempering the despair with a laugh and more about everything in us that is sick and wrong. The Coen brothers have walked us down this road before, but in this adaptation of the Cormac McCarthy novel, the view has never been so mesmerizing or austere.

No Country For Old Men is a re-hashing of the wrong-place-at-the-wrong-time motif, somewhat displaced from gunslinger times. It's rural, dustbowl Texas in 1980, and Llewelyn Moss (Josh Brolin) stumbles upon a cache of drugs and \$2 million after a drug deal gone wrong; like any good and sane opportunist, he takes the money and high-tails it home.

Moss' acquisition of the cash and drugs quickly becomes known to Chigurh, who's already arbitrarily stalking the Texas plains with an air gun designed for killing cattle. He makes Moss his next target, and the cat and mouse games these two get into is of the classic kind—like Lee Van Cleef and Clint Eastwood, but with uncompromising brutality and contempt. The lawman trying to tie it all together is Sheriff Ed Tom Bell, played by Tommy Lee Jones at his

absolute best.

If *No Country For Old Men* needs to be seen for any other reason than being an adaptation of the work of a Pulitzer-winning author by a screenwriter/director duo in their absolute prime and with a stellar cast, it's for Roger Deakins' incredible cinematography: at times both wistfully spare and eerily confined, every frame is essential to developing the explosive interplay of Moss, Chigurh, and Bell.

Moss and Chigurh's country is one where moral right and wrong is met with a measured indifference; one does what one does simply because he either wishes to or has no other option. It's no country for Bell, who hangs on to his fractured nostalgia for the "sir and ma'am" days, where the moral thrust of right and wrong was still relevant—where one does what one must.

This is the Coens' best film and the best of 2007, with the brothers striking a delicate balance of revelry and misery better than they ever have before. Audiences should be so lucky that a film can look this good and be so entertaining, but they have to decide whether or not they can stomach its uncomfortable truths.

Control tells a troubled tale with grace

Despite bleak subject matter, Corbijn's film paints a vivid picture of Ian Curtis

filmreview

Control

Now Playing
Directed by Anton Corbijn
Starring Sam Riley, Samantha Morton, and Alexandria Maria Lara
Princess Theatre

ELENI LOUTAS
Arts & Entertainment Writer

How many youth have found themselves alone in their bedroom, listening to a record they know by heart, engaging in an internal monologue about the questionable state of existence? Anton Corbijn, director of the *Control* and former Joy Division photographer, knows many of us have, and fittingly, his film begins with the camera circling a still, black and white, solemn Ian Curtis (Sam Riley) sitting alone in his bedroom.

This image of Curtis recurs throughout the film, but that's not the only side of the troubled Joy Division singer we're shown: the point of *Control* seems to be to present the contrasting fragments that made up the complicated whole of Curtis, as opposed to the typical troubled youth whose suicide easily fills in its own blanks for us.

Based on *Touching From a Distance*, a book penned by Deborah Curtis, Ian's

wife, the film introduces us to a 17-year-old Ian Curtis in 1973, trapped and bored in the small town of Macclesfield, England. Curtis escapes his prim family and the dull, grey industrialism of the town through poetry, cigarettes, petty drug use, and the superstar glitter of Lou Reed, David Bowie, and New York City. Meeting Deborah (Samantha Morton) through a mutual friend, he woos her by quoting poetry, and their young love seems to be of the wordless, consuming variety.

The point of *Control* seems to be to present the contrasting fragments that made up the complicated whole of Curtis.

But their marriage signals the beginning of Curtis' struggle between his commitment to an idealized married life and his true personal desires; shortly after the wedding, he begins to shut himself away in their home, writing lyrics and ignoring Deborah while she prepares for the birth of their first daughter.

Curtis meets the future members of Joy Division at a Sex Pistols concert;

they form a band and catch the attention of Factory Records co-founder and television host Tony Wilson and DJ Rob Gratten, quickly securing a record deal—with Wilson signing the contract in his own blood.

While the band's popularity continues to rise, Curtis deals with his trial-by-error medicated epileptic seizures, the creative limitations of his band, the demands of his wife and daughter, and his extramarital affair with Belgian journalist Annik Honoré. Then, one day before Joy Division is supposed to embark on their first American tour, Deborah returns home to find that Ian has committed suicide.

Riley is eerily accurate as Curtis, from his sharp, seizure-like dancing to expressions ranging from crestfallen (upon hearing about the death of epileptic girl's who inspired his song "She's Lost Control") to strangely blank (at the sight of his baby daughter) to heartbreakingly tender and loving (upon first meeting Honoré).

Corbijn's cinematography is spare, gritty, and elegant, allowing the brilliant ensemble of actors to build the honest story and one another. Corbijn is almost loving in his direction and careful to not portray Curtis as a two-dimensional rock & roll casualty, but instead as a troubled, sensitive young man caught physically and creatively, and spiralling beyond his admittedly youthful control.

STUDIOTHEATRE.CA

SOPHOCLES' **ANTIGONE**
ADAPTED BY KATHLEEN WEISS

29 NOVEMBER - 8 DECEMBER 2007
7:30PM

ADVANCED TICKETS @ TIX ON THE SQUARE
www.tixonthesquare.com 420.1757

student tix ALWAYS \$10

walk up tickets available at TIMMS BOX OFFICE one hour before the show

TIMMS CENTRE FOR THE ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA
FACULTY OF ARTS

ckua
radionetwork

SEE

discover TOURISM **Win a Dream Job**
with

SUN PEAKS RESORT
Three Mountains - One Village

Enter to Win a Dream Job and experience the work & play culture at Sun Peaks Resort!
www.discovertourism.ca

Photo by Corey Wheeler