

'News of the World' features excellent cast, great cinematography

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Thursday, 31 December 2020 07:21



Rating: ««« out of ««««

Running Time: 118 minutes

This feature from Universal Pictures opens Dec. 25 at operating cinemas. It will also be available for streaming on demand Jan. 15.

While 2020 has been a quiet year for many of us, that certainly hasn't been the case for Tom Hanks. In addition to some personal events that wound up garnering media attention, he recently wrote and starred in the submarine thriller, *Greyhound*. And to close out the season, the performer has taken on the lead role in

News of the World

, a new western from director Paul Greengrass (

Captain Phillips

,
Jason Bourne

,
22 July

). The movie may feel a bit old-fashioned and measured in some respects, but it is a well-acted and beautifully shot feature that displays some scenic natural locations.

Captain Jefferson Kidd (Hanks) is a Civil War veteran who makes his living traveling around

'News of the World' features excellent cast, great cinematography

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Thursday, 31 December 2020 07:21

Texas reading news stories to paying customers. While on the way to his next stop, he comes across a stranded girl named Johanna Leonburger (Helena Zengel). It appears that the unruly youngster's family was killed by the Kiowa people several years earlier and that she was adopted by them. Now, her new guardians have been slaughtered, leaving her completely alone and unable to communicate in English.

Initially, Kidd attempts to drop her off with government agents hoping they'll locate her next of kin. However, after being informed that the proper official is away for three months, the performer decides to take the child himself. They travel over 400 miles toward her aunt and uncle, making stops along the way to read to audiences. But as the route proves dangerous, the pair must deal with numerous threats.

This film is centered largely around Kidd and his own personal loss, depending wholly on the lead performances to work. Obviously, Hanks is fine in the role of a veteran struggling to deal with an unctuous child while quietly coming to grips with the loss of his wife (who died while he was away fighting in the Civil War). His character is remarkably even-tempered, perhaps even too much so, but the performer's natural onscreen charm does endear viewers. Kidd's calm disposition also helps viewers get accustomed to his young companion.

Zengel is also very good as the angry child, at first violently fighting her companion's attempts to help before slowly forming a tight bond with him.

The focus also addresses the various communication issues between Kidd and Johanna and their interpersonal conflict as, without realizing it, they both attempt to process loss and move forward with their lives. Over the running time it also becomes clear how much they need each other's assistance to survive, especially as the frontier becomes more dangerous. Threats include the Old West equivalent of human traffickers, a corrupt town mayor and even a brutal sandstorm. For action fans, there are a few notable moments, including a lengthy shootout between Kidd and a trio of thugs that stands out as the most tension-filled sequence in the film.

It's also gorgeous to look at. Many of the location features which were shot outside of Santa Fe, N. M., look stunning. The interiors and nighttime shots are also strikingly lit by cinematographer Dariusz Wolski (*Prometheus*, *The Martian*). While it is clear that the movie isn't attempting to do anything radical, the film manages to subtly imply how much better these two tragic figures are together than apart, as they attempt to find closure for past events. It's also exceptional on a technical level.

'News of the World' features excellent cast, great cinematography

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Thursday, 31 December 2020 07:21

News of the World is a low-key feature that puts its star in a familiar role and doesn't reinvent the genre. Still, it is an earnest and impressively made effort. In the end, it won't offer viewers any jaw-dropping surprises or big headlines, but remains a compelling and interesting Western worth your attention.

VISIT: WWW.CINEMASTANCE.COM

By Glenn Kay
For the Sun