

'Gold' looks more like bronze

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: «« out of 4 stars

Running Time: 121 min.

Based on the posters, you might think that *Gold* is some sort of an adventure movie. In fact, it's a drama from Stephen Gaghan (*Syriana*) that spends far less time prospecting and searching than it does with behind-the-scenes business dealings. This is certainly a competent production and I admired aspects of it, but strangely enough, it all feels a little flat.

Loosely based on the Bre-X company in the 1990s, the story follows Kenny Wells (Matthew McConaughey), a mining prospector looking to make it rich by finding gold deposits. Unfortunately, after many years, he finds himself still struggling to make an impact. Eventually, Wells takes a risk and teams up with geologist Mike Acosta (Edgar Ramirez), who believes that there is a motherlode hidden beneath the Indonesian jungle. The protagonist scrounges every last cent from his bank account and ropes in investors in a last ditch attempt to go out there and find his claim. Indeed, they do discover something remarkable.

But as the pair soon learn, there's more to the process than just locating the fortune. Over the course of the film, Wells must deal with everything from land ownership issues, government interference and hostile takeovers, to a deteriorating personal relationship with Kay (Bryce Dallas Howard), the lady in his life. There's a lot of intriguing material here, but despite all of the conflict present onscreen, the movie itself never builds a head of steam and the filmmaking isn't as energized as it should be.

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There's a strange, muted look to the entire movie. It may have been the particular screening that I attended, but the movie is quite dark and without much in the way of striking images. We jump around from the vast jungles to the boardroom environments, but none of the visuals really pop and the editing feels, well, perfunctory. The low energy level left this viewer less invested in the characters than expected. Twists and turns do occur, but they never startle the way they should.

McConaughey and Ramirez are fine in their roles. The former has put on some weight for his part and displays a receding hairline, making him look like a rundown, used car salesman. He's deeply flawed, but we're still supposed to respond to him as a go-getter striving and pursuing the American dream and being stymied at every turn by corporations.

It's a difficult job, seeing that as written, Wells still doesn't come across as particularly likable. However, one must give the star credit for embodying a character described as a "drunken raccoon" and making him interesting enough to watch. And Ramirez is likable as the partner forced to put up with his pal's brash personality and faulty sense of pride, which gets him into issues later in the feature.

Yet, as problem after problem arises and dangers occur, the tension never seems to rise or bubble over. I must admit to also have some issues with the finale, which attempts to tie all of the events up in a very neat little bow. Given what has transpired over the course of the feature, the final reveal doesn't feel particularly convincing.

The movie is certainly well-acted, but the editing and photography appears more mechanical than exciting or invigorating. It's a reasonable film, but one that could have been much better had a higher energy level been applied to the final product; in a manner similar to, say, Martin Scorsese's *The Wolf of Wall Street*. As a result, *Gold* ends up looking a little more like bronze.

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