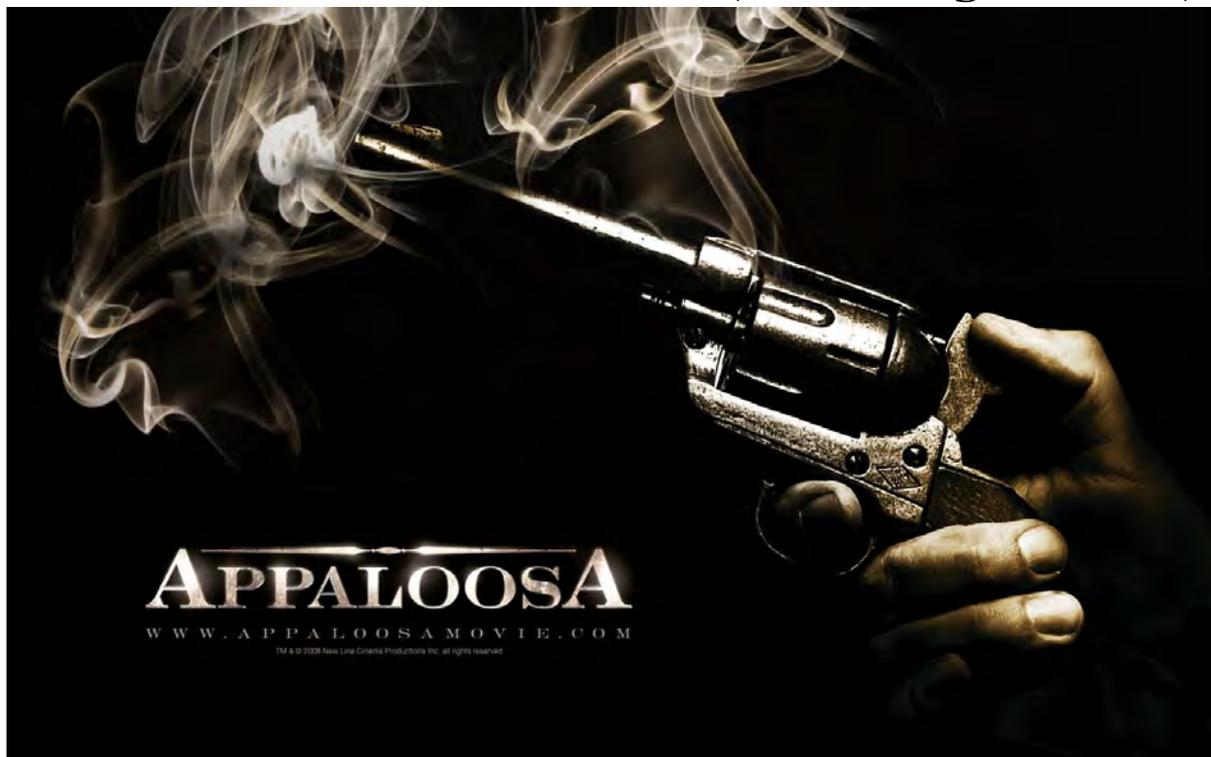


The Main Feature



Season 31 - Issue 11 (screening 24.2.11)



USA 2008 115 minutes Cert 15 (UK release 19.9.08)

Director: Ed Harris

Screenplay: Robert Knott & Ed Harris

Cinematography: Dean Semler

Music: Jeff Beal

Actor and role:

Robert Jauregui	Marshall Jack Bell (as Bobby Jauregui)	Gabriel Marantz	Joe Whitfield
Jeremy Irons	Randall Bragg	Ed Harris	Virgil Cole
Timothy V. Murphy	Vince	Viggo Mortensen	Everett Hitch
Luce Rains	Dean	Cerris Morgan-Moyer	Tilda
James Tarwater	Chalk (as Jim Tarwater)	James Gammon	Earl May
Boyd Kestner	Bronc	Renee Zellweger	Allison French
Timothy Spall	Phil Olson	Benjamin Rosenshein	Town Boy

One of the most evident signs of the shift in movie-goers' tastes over the years has been the decline of the Western. Once among the most popular of film genres, it now ranks near the bottom. If there's a benefit to this downturn, it's that modern Westerns rarely go into production unless they possess a complex or challenging quality. Perhaps the critical success of the recently released Coen brothers' version of *True Grit* offers hope for the future of the Western genre?

The budget for *Appaloosa* was \$20 million and filming took place from October 1, 2007 to November 24, 2007 around Albuquerque and Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Austin, Texas. Harris was drawn to Robert B. Parker's bestselling novel because it was constructed like a classic Western, but included crime themes still relevant to contemporary society. He purchased the rights to the novel and hired Parker to adapt his book into a screenplay.

Harris also acknowledged the challenge of making a successful Western movie, saying, "You can count on one hand, or maybe half a hand, the number of Westerns that were box office successes in the recent past."

Production of *Appaloosa* slowed when New Line Cinema and producers became concerned with the box office prospects of a Western during a season with such anticipated blockbusters as *The Dark Knight*. The movie got back on track due to the success of the *Deadwood* series on HBO and the film remake of *3:10 to Yuma*.



Harris handed Mortensen a copy of the novel and asked him to read it and consider playing the part. Harris said it was "a totally awkward proposition, handing another actor a book like that," but Mortensen agreed to take the part after responding well to the character and the relationship dynamic between the two characters. Harris said he wanted to make the film because he was drawn to the "unspoken comradeship" of Virgil Cole and Everett Hitch. "Though they've been hanging out for years, they're not too intimate, but they know each other. Aside from in sports, or being a cop, I can't think of any other situation where a friendship like that is called for." Mortensen felt similarly, saying, "I like to ride horses, and I like Westerns, but there are a lot of bad ones. What set this one apart is just how the characters are a little more guarded."

Magnificently shot by Australian photographer Dean Semler (he worked on *Dances With Wolves*) the film has an authentic feel without the corrosive cynicism that often tarnishes revisionist westerns. And it's a clean piece of storytelling that dispenses with narrative bridges: the passing of a considerable stretch of time, for instance, is conveyed by the skeleton of a house Cole is building for Mrs French suddenly becoming a comfortable home.

Appaloosa marks Ed Harris's second outing as director, following the 2000 biopic *Pollock*, which he also starred in; but with tonight's film he's also co-scriptwriter and producer, and sings a Willie Nelson-style song over the final credits. In addition, he's cast his father Bob as a grizzled frontier judge who presides over a murder trial in an improvised court and has one of the film's best lines. 'You got a horse, son?' he asks a witness who's just testified against a ruthless killer. 'Then you better get on it now, ride fast and don't look back.' Yet this is no vanity project. It's a handsome, subtle, sober film, well acted all around, that plays interesting variations on familiar themes, deliberately alluding to *High Noon*, *Rio Bravo*, *My Darling Clementine* and *Unforgiven*.



A couple of interesting "behind the scene" pieces:

- Because the only remaining 8 gauge shotguns on the market were either too antique or too valuable to use, the movie's armourer, Gibbons Ltd., had to specially contract for replicas. Gunsmith Steve Karnes purchased three replica Colt 1878 shotguns and modified the barrels so that all three sets would have bore sizes equal to that of a real 8 gauge shotgun. The first two shotguns were designed to fire full-load 12 gauge blank rounds (one gun could be used while the other was cleaned or repaired from a previous film shoot.) The third shotgun was designed to chamber 8 gauge inert rounds, and was used for reloading scenes. All three were then given identical, 'aged' finishes, to make them appear old and used. (*Just goes to show the lengths movie makers go to!*)
- One of the producers is named Ginger Sledge (*made me smile!*)

With the movie industry producing more 3D films, recent safety advice has said 3D TV is not suitable for children, but does that mean the technology is a health risk?

The Nintendo 3DS portable console, to be unveiled in Japan on 26 February, is the first major release to allow 3D images to be seen without the need for glasses.

But last year, Reggie Fils-Aime of Nintendo said he would "recommend that very young children not look at 3D images" and that was "standard protocol" within the industry.

When this advice was formally released this month, many articles appeared about "the dangers of 3D" and how viewers, particularly children, could be affected. Mr Fils-Aime described the reaction as "a bit over the top".

Mark Pesce, an early pioneer in virtual reality, said last year that children "could potentially suffer permanent damage from regular and extensive exposure [to 3D images on a screen]".

His main critique was that he believed "none of the television manufacturers have done any health and safety testing".

Sony, Samsung, LG and other manufacturers have now released health and safety guidance with their products. Most echo Nintendo's advice about young children but advice also extends as far to those who have been drinking alcohol, pregnant women, senior citizens, people with heart problems, those who experience frequent drowsiness or are in need of sleep.

FEARS 3D TV COULD INFLUENCE:

Eye fatigue

Development of children's eyes

Lazy eyes or squints

Perhaps above anything else, this seems to clash with the big effort to get 3D TVs into pubs - over 1,000 establishments have signed up in the UK alone.

Sony, according to a spokesperson, has conducted research and evaluation concerning the effects on health by watching 3D under the influence of alcohol. Its report indicated that "while some people may experience discomfort - such as eye strain, fatigue, or nausea - no evidence was found which may cause health problems for normal use of 3D contents".

An LG spokesperson said that there has been no issue with people drinking and watching 3D TV in pubs.

All stressed that anyone worried or experiencing symptoms should seek professional advice.

'Low risk'

"Companies are just erring on the side of caution and covering all the bases," said Karen Sparrow, education adviser at the Association of Optometrists.

"It very much depends on the individual but, because 3D technology only really burst on to the high street in the last two or three years, the research hasn't really been done yet.

"Especially with children, you need lots of years of data before you can know for sure whether it's a problem or not." Jeffery Katzenberg, CEO of DreamWorks Animation, has more reason than most to hope that the technology really takes off - his company now produces all its films in 3D. He said he did not believe that it was harmful whatsoever.

"It does not seem to be based on any meaningful research or medical advice," he said.

"What people have said is that for very, very early eye development - which we were told is three years and younger by the way, not six years - there is some concern that there might be some issue of... straining the eyes."

So could these reports mean that 3D could be finished before it has really begun? Mr Katzenberg does not think so.

"For a five or six-year-old child to go in and see an 82-minute movie once every month, I have to say there is not anybody legitimate in the medical profession who has suggested that we're jeopardising the health of our children," he said. "No-one, not a single solitary person, so I don't understand it."

And perhaps the one thing that could mute any further health warnings is that, at least currently, 3D is not being used as the "normal" way to consume everyday viewing.

"Not all programmes work in 3D," said Geoff Slaughter, editor of 3DTV Watcher.

"Even in the medium term, it is not going to be everyday viewing. It's good for movies and for some sports events or documentaries but I can't imagine seeing EastEnders in 3D anytime soon."

Reactions toCherry Blossom – 11th February 2011

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Votes	~	~	~	~	~	3	10	10	7	1	1
Total received	– 32			Average Score – 6.88							

Your Comments

Really enjoyable and thought provoking
 An excellent film – very enjoyable: very unusual
 The kindness of strangers
 Very sad, but in the end uplifting – a fine film
 One film and two stories – very sensitively done, but sad
 A very moving, lovely film
 All that will survive of us is love
 Absorbing, often very poignant work, beautifully written and photographed – Wepper is excellent
 Very much a film of two parts – appreciated the first part – not so sure of the 2nd
 Too drawn out and unbelievable in parts

Beautiful!
 Spellbinding
 A very beautiful, unusual film
 Excellent choice
 Quite a journey
 A little bit too long
 What a strange film

Position	Film	Average Score
1 st	Invictus	8.02
2 nd	An Education	7.83
3 rd	Le premier jour de reste de ta vie	7.54
4 th	Kongekabale (<i>King's Game</i>)	7.36
5 th	The Hurt Locker	7.09
6 th	A Touch of Class	6.97
7 th	Cherry Blossom	6.88
8 th	Europa, Europa	6.59
9 th	Ushpizin	5.94
10 th	Paranormal Activity	2.75

Our next presentation at 8pm on Thursday 10 March:

The Oyster Farmer

A love story about a young man who runs away up an isolated Australian river and gets a job with eighth generation oyster farmers.



sponsors photocopying of *the main feature*

