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Brokeback Mountain Review

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Brokeback Mountain

Timothy Nunes



I've seen a number of movies recently, some that I liked and some that I didn't. None inspired me to write a review, however, until tonight. Tonight I saw a film that took me somewhere I'd never gone before, up the slopes of a beautiful yet perilous precipice called *Brokeback Mountain*.

Before anyone stops reading, first let me quickly say that this was not the movie I expected to see. Between the admiration of the critics and the controversy surrounding the film's subject matter, I was unsure of what to expect. And I got just that—the unexpected.

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Brokeback Mountain is the fictional account of two modern cowboys, Ennis Del Mar (Heath Ledger) and Jack Twist (Jake Gyllenhaal), who meet while applying to tend a rancher's sheep herd high up on a Wyoming mountain called Brokeback. Amidst pristine mountain scenery and weather so harsh as to be life threatening, Ennis and Jack forge a friendship that, one bitterly cold night, turns into something more intimate. The rest of the film deals with how Ennis' and Jack's relationship ends up influencing the rest of their lives, as well as the lives of others.

Yet to simply call *Brokeback Mountain* "a romance" is to soft-sell the hard realities that the film's two main protagonists are forced to deal with. Yes, there's a romance, but the hard truths each man is faced with make for a story as equally tragic as romantic. And, as has been the case in past tragic film romances (*West Side Story*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Gone with the Wind*, etc.), the lovers' choices often lead to additional tragedy for those around them.

Further, to focus entirely on the nature of the romance (the fact that these particular "star-crossed lovers" are both men) pays disservice to the poignant emotions, the passion, the devotion, and yes, the tragedy so effectively portrayed on-screen. That said, one would have to be naïve in the extreme to believe that many who view the film won't be offended with the premise, a premise physically acted out on-screen.

No, *Brokeback Mountain* is a film that doesn't come along often (though this year's seen another film with similar impact, *A History of Violence*): a film that grabs us by the collar,

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shakes us up a bit, and then leaves us uncomfortable about the hard truths forced upon us. Such films become all the more effective when couched in (seemingly) idyllic surrounds, such as the image of "small-town America" depicted in *A History of Violence*, or the breathtaking natural beauty in *Brokeback Mountain*. Such settings lull us into a comfortable place, making the jerk back to reality all the more unsettling when it occurs.



This leaves me to answer the inevitable questions: Did I like *Brokeback Mountain*? Would I recommend it to others? Perhaps. The acting was superb throughout (particularly Ledger's), and the story plucked at the emotional heartstrings quite effectively.

If you go, though, don't expect a comfortable "popcorn movie." And, if you're a hopeless romantic like me, don't forget to bring along a few extra tissues, just in case.

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