



Forsaken – The Outlaw Returns Home for a Chance at Redemption

Forsaken was the perfect film to watch with my father over the Easter weekend since it matched the theme of ‘new beginnings’. Kiefer Sutherland’s character, John Henry Clayton, in returning home, wants to put his gun slinging days behind him and reconcile with his estranged father, played by real-life father, Donald Sutherland who is the town’s Reverend.

The challenge to remain a pacifist becomes increasingly difficult as the community of frontier families deal with the likes of James McCurdy (Brian Cox) and his gang of thugs, who intimidate them in order to extort their property. The option to fight violence with violence, becomes a not-so-black-and-white issue. I’m admittedly not a watcher of Westerns, however, with the recent terror attacks around the world, this classic ode to the genre reflects the relevancy of our human condition and the endeavour for good to triumph of over evil.

The quintessential ‘strong silent type haunted by his past’ portrayed by Kiefer conveys a strong performance with raw, pained expressions forming his character rather than relying on much dialogue. He manages to honour the cowboy code of ‘standing by your word’ in his choice to selectively *not* answer questions. Donald’s character, although brash and attempting to evoke a dialogue with his son, also reveals so much more with the bare, conflicting emotion in his face and eyes: love, anger, loss, betrayal, fear and pride. Even the bad guys, played by Aaron Poole and Michael Wincott draw from a strong repertoire of looks that could kill.

Father and son have a particularly touching and potent scene that occurs in the church, where, for a moment, they drop their macho persona and confess each other’s most vulnerable moments, ultimately allowing their relationship to heal. My father thought it was out of place and too gushy...but I felt it was essential and allowed us to understand the deep level of scars that war and violence had inflicted on John Henry.

The stunning beauty of Alberta was the ideal backdrop for a story that reminds us that all is not as it seems. The harshness and lawlessness of the land, produces characters that leap to unfounded harsh judgments. By the end, there is a satisfying return to order that allows all misjudged characters their redemption. I thought it was a high complement that this film reminded my father of the highly acclaimed, award-winning 1953 Western, *Shane*.

“You must watch it to compare,” he said. I thought I’d give it a try, after all - *Star Wars* is like a Western in space. So I did - and I can now say, I am a converted fan of the Western.

Curious about this Canadian Western starring Kiefer and Donald Sutherland and Demi Moore?
Click to view [Forsaken](#).