

Review : True Grit



by John Kennedy

For those of a certain age any film re-make has potent misgivings, no more so when it involves the character of Rooster Cogburn, immortalised by 'The Duke', John Wayne, in the legendary role. (for which he [won an Oscar](#)) Regarded as his cinematic swan-song, many would argue, in fact, that his dying gunfighter, J.B. Bookes, in Don Siegel's 'The Shootist' takes that accolade. Directors, screenwriters, the Coen brothers, renowned for their idiosyncratic signatures and empathy for character and elegiac landscapes, the latter realised with sympathetic grandeur by cinematographer, Roger Deakin, are back on fine form. From 'The Dude' to stepping into The Duke's boots is Jeff Bridges as Ruben (Rooster) Cogburn in a career defining performance as the cussing, eye-patched gruff, US Martial in pursuit of Outlaw bounty, whisky and legal loop-holes to wriggle out his questionable methods of arrests.

Harangued by the precocious insistency of one retribution-seeking Mattie Ross (screen-stealing portrayed by an impossibly young and talented Haille Steinfeld) Rooster reluctantly accepts her commission to hunt down her father's killer, Tom Chaney (Josh Brolin). Inevitably a bond of ambiguous, mutual admiration develops as we follow them on their journey into the wilderness, a beauty and the beast allegory if you like. Texan Ranger, LaBoeuf (Matt Damon) who is after the same man, does then doesn't, then does ride along, enabling numerous credible, sometimes upsetting, narrative resolutions that finally allow Rooster's True Grit to shine through. The dialogue has a poetic formality with characters both good, bad and ugly equally well drawn. There are moments of wry, sometimes grim humor. And just the

occasional Coen enigmatic cameo as with the encounter with 'The Bearman. If you've never liked a Western – this isn't one of them. Recommended.

True Grit showing at several cinemas around Edinburgh including the [Cameo](#) at 12.00 15.30 18.00 and 20.30