

# Film Review: 'Free Fire' \*\*\*

*Free Fire*

*Direction: Ben Wheatley*

*Screenplay: Amy Jump, Ben Wheatley*

*Cast: Brie Larson, Charlto Copley, Armie Hammer, Cillian Murphy, Michael Smiley*

*Length: 90 minutes*

*Rating: 15*



Unfolding over real time, this film is an action-packed rollercoaster that collects together a multitude of colourful characters with conflicting interests, and lets them loose with both violent and entertaining results.

Set in the 1970s, Justine (Larson) has arranged for an arms trade to take place in an abandoned harbour warehouse between two criminal parties. Vernon (Copley) and Ord (Hammer) are heading the gang selling the weapons while Chris (Murphy) and Frank (Smiley) are leading the group buying. Unfortunately, strong characters result in strong language and the overpowering presence of large egos in the uncomfortable claustrophobia of the small building.

An undeniably charged atmosphere between all sides of the table cause tensions to rapidly escalate as verbal conflict leads to physical contact which starts an irrevocable breakdown in the exchange process. But it is only with an impulsive break out of gunfire begun by one side that the pressure erupts into an uncontrollable battle forcing each of them into a fight for survival.

With an ensemble cast, it is rare that each actor and their character is given enough attention to matter to the story, as

happens here. We are allowed this opportunity because we don't know the backstory of each character and we don't need to know.

Providing context would explain character reasoning but wouldn't be any fun. When unexpected events transpire without warning, requiring quick thinking and decision making, some don't know how to react, so nor do we, making the whole premise much more exciting with a film that could go in any direction. 'Free Fire' also benefits from good comedy and many brilliant quotable lines delivered adeptly by the established cast:

"I don't like his jumper".

"It's too late. I've been insulted".

"I've forgotten whose side I'm on".

"Save it for your \*\*\*\*\* autobiography".

'Free Fire' appears extremely well planned from its use of camera angles to character travel around the confines of the warehouse. With a swift soundtrack leaving most of the other space to dialogue and the noise of weaponry, respectable research in sound design for this film presents us with a vast collection of gunfire effects avoiding repetition which may have proved distracting.

Similar to 'Lord of the Flies', 'Free Fire' examines the collapse of society, the destruction of the social order and consequently the downfall of humanity – albeit with a more upbeat approach.

Once again, a group of individuals act as a microcosm of man, with each person jostling for power over the other until one victor remains. Civilisation descends into barbarism with respect for life replaced with mindless killing. All that has taken modern man, as we know it today, millennia to achieve through the process of evolution, can be reversed back to its natural state within hours, killing to live once more. In this

sense, 'Free Fire' is a force of nature.

'Free Fire' is released in cinemas in the United Kingdom on 31 March 2017.