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"Prisoners"

By Derek Zemrak



From left, Hugh Jackman as Keller Dover and Paul Dano as Alex Jones in Alcon Entertainment's dramatic thriller "Prisoners," a Warner Bros. Pictures release. Photo provided

Jackman delivers the performance of his life. You feel all the emotions a parent would go through if their child was suddenly snatched away. You empathize with Dover and then turn against him, but he reels you back in.

"Prisoners" is not like "Taken," for Dover is not a trained CIA specialist but a common working class man who will do anything for his family. This is not a Hollywood knock-off of "Taken." Villeneuve delivers a very different film that will keep you on the edge of your seat right from the beginning, setting the tone by filming the entire movie with no sunshine, just typical East Coast winter gloom.

The supporting cast includes two-time Oscar nominee Viola Davis ("The Help," "Doubt"), two-time Golden Globe nominee Maria Bello ("A History of Violence," "The Cooler"), Oscar nominee Terrence Howard ("Hustle & Flow") and Oscar winner Melissa Leo ("The Fighter").

Get ready for "Prisoners." It is a movie that takes you into a heartbreaking situation that addresses the emotions of each individual from the parents to the supporters and outward through the entire small town. The twists and turns will keep you mesmerized for the entire 2 hours 19 minutes. Do not give away the ending when talking about this film.

"Prisoners" is rated R for extreme violence, torture scenes and strong language throughout the movie. This is not a film for the young ones.

Derek Zemrak is a film critic, film producer and founder of the California Independent Film Festival. You can follow Derek on Twitter @zemrak for the latest Hollywood news. Derek can be heard every Friday on KAHN 950AM on the Poppoff Show.

Compelling, terrifying, riveting and a parent's worst nightmare best describes this chilling new thriller from French Canadian director Denis Villeneuve. "Prisoners" was the "talk about film" at both the recent Telluride Film Festival and Toronto International Film Festival. Villeneuve may not be a household name yet but his previous film, "Incendies," was nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film in 2011. In 2009 the California Independent Film Festival showed his short film, "Next Floor," which won the Best Short Film.

"Next Floor" will be shown at the CAIFF preview night at 7 p.m. Oct. 15 at the Rheem Theatre to showcase the quality of films that will be featured at the festival in November. Kudos to CAIFF Alumni!

After "Prisoners," Villeneuve will be a worldwide household name as a director. He brings out the best in the stellar cast that includes Oscar nominee Hugh Jackman ("Les Miserables") as Keller Dover, a working class dad in rural Pennsylvania whose daughter and her best friend have gone missing. Dover takes matters into his own hands when the only suspect, Alex Jones, played the talented young actor Paul Dano ("Little Miss Sunshine") is released after 48 hours by local Detective Loki, portrayed by Oscar nominee Jake Gyllenhaal ("Brokeback Mountain").

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