



## BABY GOOSE-SHINE?

Ryan Gosling was first considered for the role of Forrest Bondurant before Tom Hardy was cast.

Once in a while, theater-goers get lucky. Usually, bodies shuffle into the loudest theater in the Cineplex as it's the best shot they have at enjoying themselves. Some CGI-filled movie about saving the world, no doubt. It goes down smoothly when applied respectfully, but becomes all that one knows when consumed in massive amounts. This week, these overdosed cinephiles get the cure to heal those overexposed retinas.

1930's Virginia isn't a place of innocence by any stretch of the imagination. Any innocence that existed had fled long before The Bondurant Boys began profiting off the illegal production of alcohol, Moonshine. Jack Bondurant (Shia LeBeouf) has grown tired of his minimal involvement in producing and distributing their moonshine and has become eager to rise up to the level of his brothers, Howard (Jason Clarke) and Forrest (a top notch Tom Hardy). No thanks to Jack's underestimation of the complications of the family business, The Bondurant Brothers have created an illusion of immortality by refusing to abandon Franklin County when a Chicago lawman, Charlie Rakes (Guy Pearce), comes to town to clean the streets of moonshine at all costs. As if hightened security and vile consumers weren't enough, notorious gangster Floyd Banner (Gary Oldman) has been in and out of Virginia, killing anyone who stands between him and whatever his heart pleases. Franklin County earns the title of the wettest county in the world, but it's also earned the notoriety of being the most dangerous. Franklin County, more than anything, is lawless.

Lawless, directed by John Hillcoat, is one of the more memorable films of this year. Hillcoat has crafted something he's been working towards for almost his entire career. While his other films are nothing short of greatness, Lawless presents a thrilling story with explosive characters and dynamite performances from everyone involved. The prohibition is something that has been criminally underlooked recently before Boardwalk Empire came around. Having a grittier, more personal story of moonshine and those involved with it on the big screen is a delight in itself. The story of Lawless is a classic set up and relies heavily on the characters to shine through and give it heart.

Forrest Bondurant and Charlie Rakes might as well be the new standard for Good Vs. Evil in cinemas. Forrest doesn't care too much on the success of a business more than a family legacy. With Rakes, nothing is beyond his firm and deadly grasp, proving an unfortunate end to any folks crafting their own moonshine. The greatest aspect of this rivalry is that Forrest and Rakes get very little screentime together, as it is more a game of chess to see who can break first. Many other characters help make Franklin County seem entirely real, but it's Forrest and Rakes that give Lawless the signature fire that makes it burn so brightly.

If one thing is to be learned from Lawless, it's that Tom Hardy is being robbed of some serious recognition by the Academy. Charles Bronson, Eames of Inception, Tommy Conlon of Warrior, Ricki Tarr of Tinker Tailor Solider Spy and Bane of The Dark Knight Rises make for an incredibly versatile and impressive list of roles and the work he does with Forrest Bondurant round it out to make Hardy one of the finest actors on the scene. Hardy's portrayal of Forrest is a man of silent virtue with a deep mountain translation of principle. He's the vision of what can happen to a man when his troubles are so high, yet also the idea of prosperity and wealth. A true shakespearean character caught in a different time and Hardy absolutely owns it.

While the screen stays alive thanks to some brilliant performances all around, we mustn't forget what brought the story and characters to life in the first place: John Hillcoat and writer/musician Nick Cave. Responsible for The Proposition and The Road, these two men have paved their way to excellence and ultimately led us to Lawless, undeniably their best work. It's one thing to capture the look of 1930's Virginia, but to also capture the feel, sound and taste of the era and location is another skill altogether. Franklin County was never a place striving for glamour, yet Hillcoat and Cave capture it so accurately that it seems to have it's own sense of filthy glamourization to it. I don't believe Hillcoat and Cave can top themselves here, but I am more than willing to eventually eat



those words.

Lawless' one of very few flaws and biggest has to be the role of Floyd Banner, portrayed by the legendary Gary Oldman. Oldman oozes slime and charm as Banner without the smallest hiccup, yet is so underused that it feels almost wasted. Sure, he gets to shoot a tommy gun and spout out obscenities with that classic gangster style, but in terms of the story, he is merely a crossroad. Again, I've learned never to complain when Gary Oldman shoots up a gas station, but he feels massively overlooked in terms of the overall story.

Acting, direction and the use of Nick Cave's soundtrack make Lawless a massive knock out on every level. Everyone involved is in top gear here, creating one of the better films in years. Lawless is a film that talks a lot about immortality and virtue. I'm not sure about virtue, but if Lawless is anything, it's immortal.

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