

21 Grams

Directed By: Alejandro Gonzales Inarritu

Starring: Sean Penn, Naomi Watts, Benicio Del Toro

Running Time: 125 minutes

Release Date: 11/21/03

GRADE: A

There are certain films that have extremely complicated and relatively shocking plots which should not, under any circumstance, be discussed with those who have yet to see that particular movie for if its plot is revealed it could potentially ruin the overall experience and thus prevent that person from enjoying their time at the theater. There have been a number of examples of these types of films that have been released over the past few years, films such as "In the Bedroom," "Mulholland Drive," among others. "21 Grams" is one of those movies. The film's plot isn't necessarily complicated, however I'm finding it almost impossible to explain it without revealing something that happens later on in the movie. Basically, "21 Grams" is about three major things: revenge, loss, and guilt, all of which are lived out by its main characters, and ultimately connect them to each other as well. The film is edited in such that it's not told in chronological order, which I personally felt made the film stronger than it would have been had it been told from start to finish. Directed by Alejandro Gonzales Inarritu ("Amores Perros"), "21 Grams" is a brilliant movie which easily lives up to the pre-release hype that has circulated over the past few months.

Essentially, the main reason why this film is so good is because of its performances, particularly that of Naomi Watts, who gives not only the best performance in the movie, but the best performance of the year as well. I'd assume this woman is going to have a difficult time choosing her Oscar clip for there are literally so many different scenes for her to choose from. Although I'm not confident she'll actually win the Best Actress Oscar (I still think Charlize Theron will be the eventual winner), Watts is definitely going to be at the ceremony as a nominee, and if I were her I'd prepare a speech just in case. I think I was one of maybe six people who did not care for Naomi's performance in David Lynch's "Mulholland Drive," and because of this, I somewhat doubted her ability to perform as an actress, but after seeing "21 Grams," I now understand why so many people have been creaming over her for so many years. Simply put, Ms Watts is a revelation.

Playing a man overwhelmed by feelings of guilt and remorse, Oscar-winner Benicio Del Toro ("Traffic") shines in a rather difficult role. In a complete transformation, Del Toro is able to dig deep into the soul of his character, making it feel as if he's not even acting at all. Giving a surprisingly subtle performance, Sean Penn radiates on screen and would have probably been nominated for this movie had "Mystic River" not been released earlier this year. **Also turning in a fine performance is actress Melissa Leo, who plays Del Toro's wife.**

While "21 Grams" may not be the most original film ever made, it's nevertheless a powerful movie, featuring what may very well be the best acted ensemble of the year thus far. Much credit is due to Inarritu for his ability to capture performances like those featured in the film, and if critics embrace "Grams," an Oscar nomination could be in the making for his work here. Inarritu's direction, along with the superb

performances by Watts, Penn and Del Toro make for one outstanding motion picture in a year of relatively disappointing films.

"21 Grams" hits theaters in limited release on Friday, November 21st.