

# Critics Slam '12 Strong' – Jingoistic Film Treats Taliban Badly



Film critics didn't exactly throw their arms around the new action film "12 Strong."

The movie currently sits at 54 percent "rotten" at RottenTomatoes.com. The film beat studio projections over the weekend all the same, earning \$15.8 million along with an "A" CinemaScore. RottenTomatoes.com users offered a much more friendly 75 percent "fresh" rating.

The critical consensus? A well-meaning war film filled with too many genre cliches. Other critics took the film to task in ways that remind us one irrefutable fact.

The majority of modern film critics lean to the left.

Some do more than let their ideology shine through. They're aggressively partisan in their critical approach. Take the BirthDeathMovies.com review, which features a conventional review until this baffling series of barbs.

Perhaps strangest of all are 12 Strong's politics; handling

this first battle in the War On Terror as if the audience has forgotten the numerous lies and years of bloodshed that followed this inevitable victory ...

How could a movie set during the later stages of 2001 possible include those details? Only the critic isn't done.

The Taliban are portrayed as black-clad savages, executing women who teach others above eight years old how to read and write. Dostum is a mourning warrior, on a quest to avenge the deaths of his family at the hands of the terrorists' merciless leader (Fahim Fazli). In short, 12 Strong plays like it's trying to sell us on the nobility of a morally dubious conflict we've already experienced, knowing that these men were all essentially deployed in the name of nonsense.

The Taliban is every bit as monstrous as the movie suggests. More so, actually. Why not show it?

America is no longer grieving and vengeful, but clear-eyed and distrustful following a lack of WMDs, and scores dead after invading Afghanistan and Iraq. The movie's righteous posturing is frankly baffling.

The Indiewire.com reviewer also takes issue with the film's chronology.

The disillusionment that set in a few years after the events of "12 Strong" hadn't yet come about here, and while it doesn't exactly roll out the Mission Accomplished banner, the movie also seems uninterested in the fact that we still have soldiers on the ground a decade-and-a-half later.

Should the narrative awkwardly lurch to 2018? That makes no sense, save for a film critic eager to score cheap points on his own country.

The LA Times finds a creative way to slam the film.

That attempt would be more convincing if "12 Strong" had any interest in comprehending the plight of this war-torn nation from any perspective but that of a grieving, vengeful America. The tragedies that have stricken Afghanistan's embattled citizens for generations have been conveniently distilled into the role of a young village boy who tags along with the Green Berets and who will be physically endangered, you immediately suspect, at the most dramatically opportune moment.

Why is it wrong to tell the heroes' story from ... the heroes' perspective? Plus, the film does include information about the Northern Alliance and why it seethes with hate at the Taliban's atrocities.

Now Toronto starts its review by playing the Race Card. The outlet describes the movie as "a monochromatic experience of beige men running through grey terrain."

The disdain drips further from there:

...the script, by Silence Of The Lambs Oscar-winner Ted Tally and Hunger Games screenwriter Peter Craig, is by-the-numbers jingoism. Hoo-rah, or whatever.

Slant Magazine goes all in to attack both America and the U.S. Military. Here's the review's third sentence (and more).

Meanwhile, America is still fighting the same damn war. But you'd hardly know that from watching this rah-rah recruitment film for the U.S. Army, which endeavors to look away from all the horrors associated from the American occupation of Afghanistan in order to return us to those halcyon days just after 9/11, when everything seemed so simple: The U.S. was good, al-Qaeda was bad, and the invasion of an impoverished country most Americans couldn't even locate on a map was a purely just and righteous act.

The reviewer even clutches some pearls over the film showing

the Taliban killing a young woman for trying to educate young girls. That's how the Taliban roll. It still sticks in the reviewer's craw.

This gruesome atrocity is cynically used to goose the audience's moral outrage as well as to provide an additional rationale for the U.S.'s mission: Now it's not just about revenge, but also liberation.

Later, he complains that the Taliban are "faceless," as if we need to get to know each and every foe personally before we see them meet their maker.

The critic doubles down on this silliness.

That the men who die in these battles might not be purely "evil," that they too might have families, friends, and lovers, is a nuance that 12 Strong doesn't care to discern. The enemy here is just that, existing merely as foils for our American heroes.

Let's deposit this critic in a Taliban stronghold and see how he feels a few days later. If any group can be described as evil, it's a fair bet the Taliban earn that dishonor.

The Washington Post, where bias thrives in darkness, is upset that the Green Berets tell the wrong kind of jokes. Some of the dialogue is "inflected with an unsettling gallows humor that renders the real-world gravity of the situation unserious."

Does the critic have any idea of how a soldier's mind operates? How humor, particularly the jet black variety, is a coping mechanism in times of stress?

Thankfully, most film reviews stuck to the subject at hand and judged "12 Strong" on its merits. The aforementioned reviews are best reserved for comic relief.

The post Critics Slam '12 Strong' – Jingoistic Film Treats Taliban Badly appeared first on Hollywood in Toto.