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**Michael Giltz**

Freelance writer and raconteur  
Posted: May 12, 2010 08:48 PM

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# Cannes 2010 Day One: *Robin Hood* Ho-Hum

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Critics shrugged over the potential summer blockbuster *Robin Hood*, which reteams director Ridley Scott and actor Russell Crowe. With a star-heavy cast that includes Cate Blanchett, William Hurt, Max Von Sydow, the great Eileen Atkins and many more, it's a prototypical opening night film for Cannes. *Robin Hood* delivers the star power they want to get the flash bulbs popping. Art can wait until tomorrow.

Most of the discussion shifted to how well the film would do worldwide; presumably with that cast and a large canvas, it will be fine. When an indifferent *Alice In Wonderland* from Tim Burton (who is the head of

the jury at Cannes) saunters its way to \$960 million worldwide (the 8th biggest grosser of all time), surely the equally bankable name of *Robin Hood* will be a safe bet. Crowe has never made a sequel and this franchise should change that. I just wish he'd start with another *Master & Commander* instead.

The festival insists the same number of journalists are here, but it feels like a smaller contingent, at least from the US. Online journalists like me have exploded from about 40 some eight years ago to 350 this year out of 1500 or so overall. It seems...quieter. But the list of intriguing films from major directors to new talent is -- as always -- impressive and a little overwhelming. The first day offers only two films. Starting tomorrow, there will always be hundreds of films showing in the festival, a sidebar or in the market and no one can come close to seeing them all.

**ROBIN HOOD** \*\* out of \*\*\*\*

Director Ridley Scott mocked the original title of this Robin Hood origin story: *Nottingham*. If you're going to make a movie about Robin Hood, he says, you better call it *Robin Hood* or you'll spend half your time explaining the title. Ironically, he's made a serious, sober, medieval adventure tale that is brave and

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fearless in depicting battle but runs in fear from any plot device even remotely similar to the Robin Hood myth we know so well in classic films like *The Adventures Of Robin Hood* (one of my favorite movies of all time). So the first person to shoot an arrow is Lady Marian, played by the game Cate Blanchett. Robin doesn't pave the way for King Richard; the Lion-Heart falls in battle towards the beginning. The Sheriff of Nottingham is toothless, for the most part. And Crowe isn't Sir Robin Of Loxley but a humble archer who takes that name in order to save his hide after the Crusades fall apart. Robin's men aren't so merry and the outlaws in Sherwood Forest are feral orphans scavenging for food. Almost every trope from the Robin Hood tales is ignored or turned on its head, though thankfully at least Friar Tuck (Mark Addy) is still a worldly man who loves a good drink. While a siege is rather hectically paced (surely battles in those days weren't as frenetic as video games), the film has a certain confidence. And Crowe is solid as the wry man of few words; he milks every nuance out of his lines. And he and Blanchett strike genuine sparks. It's fine, I kept saying to myself; it's fine. Ignore the film you expected them to make and just enjoy what they've delivered. I can't really dislike a film set in the 1100s that has the wit to nod to *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* in one early scene of theft. But while I can swallow the wholesale upending of Robin Hood and historical accuracy is for re-enactment buffs, not me, I found myself drowning in revisionism and just plain goofiness by the end. The French invaded England with boats akin to those invented for the D-Day landing. Robin offhandedly declares for a universal declaration of human rights while pre-dating the Magna Carta by years if not decades. He believes his father abandoned him at the age of six, until simply closing his eyes brings back a flood of memories about his father being slaughtered right in front of him. Lady Marian's can-do spirit extends to ludicrous lengths. The big battle includes a laughable rehashing of a scene from *Rambo* and the coda in Sherwood Forest that sets up the adventures to come is absurdly noble, down to Marian giving doses of medicine to some little tykes. Something is wrong when the watercolor end credit sequence is more intriguing than the film that preceded it. Far from a turkey, it's sure to be their biggest hit since *Gladiator*. Maybe with the sequel they won't be scared to have a little fun.

**TOURNEE** \* out of \*\*\*\*

The only other film to screen today is *Tournee/On Tour*, from acclaimed French actor Mathieu Amalric, star of *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* plus about a thousand other French films. This is his fourth film as director and tells about a down on his luck producer (who used to be big in TV) now touring the hinterlands of France with a gaggle of New Burlesque stars he found in America. They're women -- plus one man -- who devise witty, sometimes silly acts around the strip tease. In one memorable scene, Amalric is filling up his car and suddenly finds himself flirting with the woman at the cash register. Their dialogue pulses with real life and genuine discovery. Is this moment the hinge the movie turns on? No, it's just one of many random scenes but the fact that it feels focused and real just puts the rest of the film to shame. Mostly, we watch the gals goofing around before and after their shows, complaining about being hustled from town to town, putting on their costumes, rehearsing and performing before they pack up, head to a new city and do it all over again. Much is discovered: Amalric's producer character has two sons, an ex-wife, an ex-girlfriend with breast cancer and mountains of debt and bad will in Paris. The leader of the burlesque artists flirts mildly with him. And the show goes on. Even this description is probably too forceful and direct to get across the meandering pointlessness of the film. Mostly I thought about the power of the moustache. Amalric simply had to grow a seedy, porn-producer sort of stache and I immediately knew who this guy was. It's in Competition simply because of Amalric's great track record as an actor. (The very light smattering of applause it received surely came from the French contingent.) But then, the festival never programs movies it is high about on the first or second day. At least we got to see some burlesque acts. And there's always tomorrow.

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The Cannes Film Festival kicked off Wednesday night with a gala premiere for 'Robin Hood.' Below are some of the photos, featuring Russell Crowe and...

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER

**Nate Carter** 04:10 PM on 5/14/2010  
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New Rule: Crowe must do a project against type or risk losing all relevance. We know you can do epics, gotcha. Try a comedy on for size. An action-thriller maybe? Russell Crowe in this film is as unexpected as a fat person 'supersizing it'. And that's why Iron Man will be #1 again this weekend. No one really cares about this \$237 million waste of a film. When it bombs, some studio suit should lose their job.

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**rboylern** 06:53 PM on 5/13/2010

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I've seen the trailers for this film on TV. The romance seems a bit overdone and there's an awful lot of general screaming and yelling. These things tell me to put this on my "must miss" list. Give me the Robin Hood of Errol Flynn - hardly historically accurate, but an all-around engaging film.

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**Michael Giltz** 07:14 PM on 5/13/2010  
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Nothing can match Errol Flynn. But I would say that the romance is handled pretty subtly, doesn't dominate the action and the two do have good chemistry. It's certainly not a

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romance with some action; quite the opposite. Thanks for commenting.

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**SILVANUS** 02:17 PM on 5/13/2010

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Crowe said it: "My theory would be, if Robin Hood was alive today, he would be looking at the monopolization of media as the greatest enemy."

Yep

All the same. All dull. All dumb. All slick. All FORGETTABLE.

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**esolesek** 02:00 PM on 5/13/2010

22 Fans

Sounds like Ridley Scott doesnt want to challenge his media paymasters of threaten his movie's support. Too bad. The entire point of Robin Hood is rabble-rausing and the Nottingham Sheriff is supposed to be an oppressor. Thought about seeing this, not anymore. Dont need Maid Marion as Aeon Flux either. Same old stupid formula dreck.

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**bswell** 03:44 PM on 5/13/2010

75 Fans

What do you expect from this type of blockbuster "dreck"? Although Scott made "Bladerunner," he also makes a few bucks from bad tv, presumably to finance the films he's making now. The reviewer needs to focus more on the films as films, and less what he would like them to be. Robin Hood is not even a historical character, so whatever is done, said or filmed bears no relation to history; it's what the director wants it to be. Check out such minor items as the cinematography and the mise-en-scene, if you can, prior to rendering critical judgments. Stay away from all the plot summarizing.

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**bswell** 03:53 PM on 5/13/2010

75 Fans

Sorry. That should be "presumably," and "less on what he would like them to be."

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**NewsCorpse** 01:13 PM on 5/13/2010

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The best part of the press conference for Robin Hood was what Crowe said about the media:

See Robin Hood vs. The Tea Baggers: <http://www.newscorpse.com/ncWP/?p=1643>

"My theory would be, if Robin Hood was alive today, he would be looking at the monopolization of media as the greatest enemy."

A brilliant analysis. Robin Hood would be a great symbol to counter the Tea Party. He is a heroic progressive and one of the early practitioners of "redistributing the wealth."

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**MajorKong** 11:35 AM on 5/13/2010

1047 Fans



So is this Robin Hood or "Gladiator - Sherwood Forest"?

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**SILVANUS** 02:17 PM on 5/13/2010

138 Fans



"BladeMoney"

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**dora rice** 11:19 AM on 5/13/2010

28 Fans

Russel Crowe don't matter what movie role he plays, he is special. His earthy qualities , like the land in Australia, distinguishes him from any superficial hero in Hollywood.

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**HUFFPOST SUPER USER**

**Bush-Rolled** 03:43 PM on 5/13/2010

110 Fans



Gotta agree!

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**HUFFPOST BLOGGER**

**Michael Giltz** 07:19 PM on 5/13/2010

59 Fans



Yep, he's a very good actor and gives this film what heft it has by his performance.

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**OutsideLookingIn** 11:58 PM on 5/12/2010

7 Fans

The reason "The Lord of the Rings" was such a success was that Jackson did not fiddle with Tolkein's archetypes - the lost king, the humble commoner given world-saving quest, etc.

Robin Hood is an archetype - and one very apposite to our age with its ordinary folk oppressed by robber bankers rather than robber barons - but in running "in fear from any plot device even remotely similar to the Robin Hood myth we know so well" Ridley Scott clearly totally misses the mark in a way the original Robin Hood never would have.

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