

'Geronimo' is more history, less fanaticism

Story of Apache based on facts



A rarity in mainstream movies, "Geronimo" is a historical film based more on history and less on fantastic embellishments.

The story is narrated by 2nd Lt. Britton Davis (Matt Damon), a young and inexperienced officer whose idealistic beliefs are challenged by the injustices of the army and government.

Davis serves under 1st Lt. Charles Gatewood, played by Jason Patric ("Rush"). Gatewood befriends Geronimo and negotiates his final surrender after the army is unable to capture him.

Gatewood and Davis are aided by Al Sieber, one of the few "White-Eyes" able to track the Apache. Robert Duvall ("The Godfather") delivers a strong showing as Sieber, a man who sees the world as black and white.

Gene Hackman ("Unforgiven") gives a solid performance as Brig. Gen. George Crook, whom the Indians call Nantan Lupan, "Gray Wolf Chief." Crook sees himself as a friend of the Indians and earns their respect.

Wes Studi as Geronimo really pulls the movie together, though he only received fourth billing. He plays the rebellious warrior to perfection.

The story begins in 1885 when Geronimo surrenders and is placed on Turkey Creek reservation. He finds himself unable to sit and farm the land or take government handouts.

Geronimo exemplifies the American Indian free spirit. He refuses to be caged in on a tiny reservation, forced to adapt to the ways of the "White-Eyes."



Courtesy of Columbia

Wes Studi, left, as Geronimo and Jason Patric as Lt. Charles Gatewood star in "Geronimo: An American Legend."

He rises up and returns to the mountains, attacking white settlers to supply his men and to discourage whites from moving onto Apache land.

The film is more historically authentic than most popular films. The filmmakers used an American Indian consultant, Sonny Skyhawk, to ensure a more accurate depiction of the American Indian people and their

lifestyles.

Geronimo deals with actual American Indian-white issues and not just cowboy and Indian fights, although the fight scenes are well-choreographed. Geronimo and the other Apache are struggling to understand the ideals of the "White-Eyes." But it is almost impossible for them to comprehend the greed of Manifest Desti-

ny.

Unfortunately, even though the film is named after an American Indian leader, "Geronimo" leans strongly to a white perspective. It also portrays Geronimo as the hero of all his people, when there were many who disagreed with him and thought he was leading them in a suicidal rebellion.

This film does portray Geronimo

and the Apache who followed him as what they were — the last group of American Indians to show their discontent with white domination in the form of warfare. Even though Geronimo may not have been the hero to all his people, he was an inspiration to many and a legend to all.

— Joel Strauch

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