

# Tarantino Has Done It Again!

A review of Once Upon a Time in Hollywood by Ahmed Zayani

When it comes to hardcore film aficionados, Quentin Tarantino has to be one of the most revered mainstream directors working today. The smallest announcement or rumor is enough to get his fans excited with euphoric glee and the excitement in the air upon walking into any screening of his is palpable, to say the least. I would be remiss if I didn't go as far as considering him one of the modern-day movie masters, to the likes of Steven Spielberg, Martin Scorsese, and Christopher Nolan. However, there does exist a disparity in how the general audience views his movies with his more critically acclaimed works, being marred with criticism from your average joe, especially when compared to his more recent output.

Directed by Quentin Tarantino, Once Upon a Time in Hollywood is the ninth film in the master's filmography and tells the story of aging actor Rick Dalton (played by Leonardo DiCaprio), who along with his trusted stuntman and compatriot Cliff Booth (played by Brad Pitt) must navigate the changing landscape that is 1960s Hollywood that seems to be intent on leaving them by the wayside. With his penultimate feature, Tarantino has assembled an ensemble cast of virtually a who's who of giants in the film industry including the likes of Al Pacino (in his best role since Danny Collins) Kurt Russell, Bruce Dem, Tarantino mainstay Michael Madsen, Emile Hirsh, and Margot Robbie amongst others, and while they all shined in their respective parts, this film was through and through DiCaprio's and Pitt's showcase, and what a riveting experience it was! Over the last decade, Leonardo DiCaprio has proved to us time and time again that he is one of the best thespians working in the industry today, and this film does nothing but helps solidify that notion. In

Once Upon a Time, DiCaprio gives us a layered thought-provoking performance of a man that sees his star fading in the only world that he knows. Yes, quite a few of his scenes are played for laughs but there are many nuances beyond that. While I wouldn't go as far as to call this the next performance of the year (James MacAvoy's turn in Glass is yet to beat), this is the next best thing thus far. I was actually quite surprised by Brad Pitt's solid performance, and how he was able to stand side by side with DiCaprio. While he was never the most talented actor around, Pitt has the ability to shine in the hands of the right director and was the case with Inglorious Basterds, Once Upon a Time shows that his collaborations with Tarantino are some of his strongest performances. Beyond that, the film benefitted from wonderful cinematography and utilizing their sets and locations to their maximum. For this, Tarantino has collaborated with Richard Richardson on every movie since Kill Bill Vol. 1, and they are both all the better for it.

I believe that the thing that would divide audiences on Once Upon a Time is the story. When this movie was announced, many sources correctly asserted that it would revolve almost completely around the Manson Murders. While the movie did touch on that aspect, it was never as prominent as some audiences would like, and in most cases, it was relegated to background fodder. This film also harkens back to Tarantino's earlier films where the narrative isn't as concrete as his more recent productions which would further frustrate audiences unfamiliar with that style. I have heard and seen audiences walk out of theatres for this very reason. During my screening, two of my friends struggled to keep their eyes open. However, in my opinion, I absolutely loved every single frame of this film, so much that I was making plans for a re-watch the moment the lights came back on. I believe that hardcore movie aficionados and those more familiar with Tarantino's earlier movies will get more out of this production than the common cinema-goer, but that shouldn't take away from how good a film Once Upon a Time in Hollywood is. In a time where the cinema landscape is polluted with sequels, remakes, and CGI-laden blockbusters, it is still amazing to see something this original be given such a wide release. This is easily one of my favorite films of this year thus far, and I recommend that you give it a watch.

Verdict – 10/10

For more cinematic intel, follow @theahmedzayani on Instagram.



**THE FIVE**  
Favorite Tarantino Films

1. Inglorious Basterds
2. Pulp Fiction
3. Kill Bill Vol. 1
4. Django Unchained
5. The Hateful Eight

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► \_\_\_\_\_ is one of the movies releasing this week. (See Page 10)

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