

3d- Dances with Wolves' - Natives portrayed honestly and sympathetically

Movies have rarely, if ever, depicted the grace and inner spirit of North America's first people in the way Kevin Costner's *Dances with Wolves* succeeds. Directed, co-produced and starring Kevin
5 Costner, *Dances With Wolves* is an epic set in the 1860s as the white settlers began their westward journey into the lands of Native Americans. *Dances With Wolves* is the extraordinary story of an ordinary hero's search for humanity in the ultimate frontier – himself. Lured by the desire to witness the last frontier before it vanishes, Union soldier John Dunbar (Costner) becomes trapped between two
10 worlds as he's slowly drawn into the loving and honorable fold of a Sioux tribe living in the Dakota territory.

The movie's honest, sympathetic portrayal of Native Americans is unlike any seen before on film, according to many critics, and shows the often devastating impact of history on an entire people through both sides of the conflict. The film opens in the midst of the Civil War as Lieut. Dunbar who, as a reward for an act of heroism, chooses reassignment to the frontier. Upon arriving he discovers the
15 fort in the Dakotas is abandoned and he soon becomes involved with the Sioux. Dunbar meets with the Holy Man, Kicking Bird (Graham Greene), the Warrior, Wind In His Hair (Rodney Grant); tribal chief Ten Bears (Floyd Red Crow Westerman); Black Shawl (Tantoo Cardinal) and Stands With A Fist, a white woman adopted into the tribe as a child and Costner's eventual love interest in the film. Gradually, through acts of bravery and honesty, he and the Sioux develop a mutual respect and
20 admiration.

It was the support and co-operation of local Native Americans that made the project a success. The community, according to Orion, embraced the project for its fair and genuine treatment of its heritage and was eager to participate. *Dances With Wolves* was, according to many people of the community, one of the few honest cinematic portrayals of Native Americans losing their culture and
25 identity to the white man.

"North Americans are kind of rootless in a way," said the film's creator Kevin Costner. "The people who truly know how to use this land, how to control it, are not here anymore. At the cost of the people who already lived here, we, the white man, had to have this. This movie is certainly not a history lesson or an attempt to set the record straight. But I do hope our efforts to authenticate the people and places
30 we're dealing with will finally show a side of their legacy that had long been forgotten.....their honor."

However, according to critics and audiences alike, perhaps the film's boldest stroke a authenticity is the use of the actual Lakota language by its American characters, which is translated on the screen with English subtitles. Doris Leader Charge, a Lakota instructor at Sinte Gleska College on the Rosebud reservation, was hired to help translate the screenplay into Lakota and it was an awesome
35 task. "Lakota is a very difficult language with so many strange sounds," she explained. "We had to first translate the script the way we would speak it, then go back and simplify the dialogue using fewer, easier words with similar meanings." Jimmy Herman, who portrays the elder warrior Stone Calf, says Costner's insistence on using Lakota in the film "made the Indian people feel proud. Even if the subtitles weren't there, the audience would know what was going on because Kevin is very careful that
40 the audience will experience the feelings."

Dances With Wolves, while similar in theme to other movies made involving the white man meets Native theme, is so much more than its predecessors. It involves all of us in a culture and landscape rarely experienced or even seen and it deserves all the accolades now being poured upon it.

It's a must see and feel for the 1990s.

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