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ANN BREYNE FILM 1 PERIOD 3

As a cowardly farmer begins to fall for the mysterious new woman in town, he must put his new-found courage to the test when her husband, a notorious gun-slinger, announces his arrival.

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SETH MCFARLANE, DIRECTOR

PITCH

While Seth MacFarlane started behind the scenes, directing and voicing “Family Guy” in 1999, he didn’t gain infamy in pop culture until the release of “Ted” in 2012. His graphic use of language and over-the-top innuendos set him apart from comedians like Seth Rogen, Judd Apatow and Tina Fey. Americans respond surprisingly well to his tasteless jokes, making potty-humor more accessible for audiences to use in everyday life.

Thanks to his layered characters, riveting plot and classic humor, “A Million Ways to Die in the West,” is MacFarlane’s greatest advancements in the Hollywood film industry.

SYNOPSIS

Set in 1882 in the American West, Albert is a lowly farmer with a nice girlfriend. But when she leaves him for the more successful and handsome owner of a moustachery store, Albert returns to his lonely daily life of trying to avoid death at all turns. Then the mysterious Anna rides into town and captures Albert's interest and heart, but with her deadly husband in town, Albert is going to have to become the western gun-slinging hero he never was. It won't be easy because there are a million ways to die in the west.



MOVIE AWARDS

Razzies:

Worst Director: Seth MacFarlane

Worst Actress: Charlize Theron

Worst Actor: Seth MacFarlane

Worst Screen Combo: Charlize Theron, Seth MacFarlane

WHY THIS FILM MATTERS

“A Million Ways to Die in the West” is a great case study for parody and innovative, unique humor.

NEW YORK POST REVIEW

"I laughed more at Seth MacFarlane's sendup of '60s Westerns than I did at all the other comedies I've seen this year, combined."

"(MacFarlane) ...as a director and co-writer with two others, he has a wider comic imagination than "Blazing Saddles." For every so-so gag, there are three genius ones."

"At his best, MacFarlane delivers funny new takes on the strangest aspects of frontier life — the weirdly stiff photos, the constant accidents, the shoddy medicine, the dances — and the movies about same."

"The score (by Joel McNeely) is a ringer for '60s cowpoke pics, and MacFarlane has a brilliant tip on how to survive a saloon brawl. Through the eyes of a comic master, even boredom can be funny: In olden days, "there's only, like, three songs, and they're all by Stephen Foster."

THE INFLUENTIAL FILM

OPENING & TITLE

"A Million Ways to Die in the West," opens with the sweeping, empty landscapes of the open west and the soaring music by Joel McNeely harking to the days of the Westerns of old. The title refers to the difficulty of the antagonist, Albert, in his effort to become a hero.



EXPOSITION

- Set in 1882 in the American West.
- Albert is a lowly farmer with a nice girlfriend.
- His girlfriend leaves him and he returns to his lonely daily life of trying to avoid death at all turns.



THEME

- Making it through the perils of life is easier with someone by your side.
- It's important to be spontaneous and fight for what you love since life is unpredictable.

TRIVIA & ANTECEDOTES

Charlize Theron had to wear a wig during filming because her head was shaved for Mad Max, Fury Road.

Liam Neeson agreed to play the role of Clinch if he could use a broad Irish accent.

Avery Breyne-Cartwright was Sarah Silverman's double and was personally chosen by Seth McFarlane to be featured in the film.

Avery's scene partner in the saloon is the head writer for "Family Guy".

Neil Patrick Harris says his famous catchphrase from How I Met Your Mother (2005) when he is challenged to a duel by Albert. "Challenge Accepted!" However, according to movie commentary neither of the writers knew this when they were writing the movie and later during test screenings didn't know why audiences were laughing.

THE INFLUENTIAL FILM CONTINUED

DRAMATIC STRUCTURE

"A Million Ways to Die in the West" is a typical linear structure told from the beginning to the end in the way that it happened.

CHARACTERIZATION

Protagonist/Dynamic Character: Albert is the classic anti-hero who wants good things but doesn't want to work hard for them. He has a good heart since he makes right decisions at the crossroads. Women and relationships motivate his actions, but so does his desire to survive.

Antagonist: Clinch is clearly driven by power and control. He disregards human life for his own gain.

Anna: Assumes the damsel in distress role but still stands up for herself and defends what she cares about.

Louise: A very hopeful, naïve and ambitious character that feels like she always deserves better.



CONFLICT

Man vs Man: Clinch vs Albert

Man vs Nature: Albert vs the harsh elements of the unsettled West

Man vs Himself: Albert, the coward vs Albert, the hero

PARODY & HOMAGE

MacFarlane clearly cites old westerns from the 1950s and '60s in his parody. He takes stereotypical elements like tumbleweeds, boozy saloons, and deadly shootouts to further his corny ideas. Most notably, MacFarlane uses the opening/closing scene from "The Searchers" (1956) in his film. The infamous scene features a door opening to the windy, desolate desert as characters look out at the canyons.








ALLUSIONS

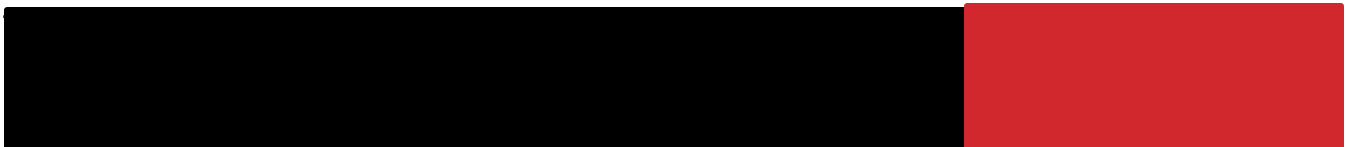
The final line of the movie by the gunman at the fair, after the credits is a reference to "Blazing Saddles" (1974), "Bring me one of those white women."

The long-legged sheep in the drug trip are a visual reference to Dali's painting, "The Temptation of St. Anthony."

The scene where Anna steals the bottle of whiskey at the barn dance, the band is playing the theme song from "The Magnificent Seven"

CAST

	Seth MacFarlane Albert <i>Known for "Ted" and the "Family Guy". Is a producer, director and actor.</i>
	Charlize Theron Anna <i>Won Best Actress in a Leading Role "Monster" (2003). Has been nominated for over 50 acting awards.</i>
	Liam Neeson Clinch <i>Nominated for Best Actor in a Leading Role "Schindler's List" (1993).</i>
	Amanda Seyfried Louise <i>Known for "Mamma Mia!" and "Les Miserables".</i>
	Neil Patrick Harris Foy <i>Known for "How I Met Your Mother" and "Doogie Howser, M.D.".</i>
	Sarah Silverman Ruth <i>Won a Primetime Emmy Outstanding Writing for a Variety Special "Sarah Silverman: We Are Miracles" (2013)</i>
	Giovanni Ribisi Edward <i>Known for "TED" and "Saving Private Ryan".</i>



ABOUT SETH MCFARLANE

Born in Connecticut in 1973.

He is a skilled pianist, and took voice lessons from a couple who trained Frank Sinatra.

One of his jobs was working for what is now known as Cartoon Network.

Seth MacFarlane began working in animation in the mid-1990s.

Debuted his first animated show *Family Guy* in 1999.

On Sept. 11, he was supposed to be on, but missed the first plane that crashed into the Twin Towers.

THE INFLUENTIAL FILM^{CONTINUED}

CINEMATOGRAPHY & VISUAL DESIGN

The film is aesthetically pleasing thanks to the **saturated colors**, **desaturated colors** and classic Western cinematography. The setting is breathtaking encompassing the untamed frontier, the mountain



ranges, the rugged lands and the vast plains. The main street includes the saloon, the businesses such as livery stable and the jail.

SHOT TYPES

A large range of shots, lenses, composition and lighting are used in this film. The shots include establishing wide landscape shots, closeups and normal length lenses to make it appear as what the human eye would see.

LIGHTING

- **High Key** lighting in the landscape scenes.
- **Low Key** lighting in Albert's cabin.



High Contrast, Low Key lighting

MAIN TYPES OF COMPOSITION USED

- Rule of Thirds
- Symmetry →
- Asymmetry
- Closeup
- Simplicity



THE INFLUENTIAL FILM^{CONTINUED}

ACTING

Seth MacFarlane: For spending most of his career behind the scenes, MacFarlane has a believable, and sometimes effective, presence on screen. Like other Hollywood actors of his kind, MacFarlane assumes the role of classic, sometimes pitiful, funny guy that the audience laughs at the expense of. While he will never be the king of comedy, his experience in filmmaking shows through in his seasoned acting.

Charlize Theron: This leading lady takes on the goofy role with much of the grace she carries in her other films. While Anna Faris or even Jennifer Lawrence feel better equipped for the part, Theron's tough girl attitude translates well with the core of the film.

Liam Neeson: The action man was definitely in MacFarlane's mind when he wrote the part of Clinch. His raspy voice and overwhelming stature make him a perfect choice to play a Western villain.



SCRIPT & DIALOGUE

Some of MacFarlane's original ideas are his references and direct jabs to people in popular culture used directly in the film. Even Ryan Reynolds makes a cameo as himself before he is shot and killed.

While the dialogue is often eye-roll inducing and cringe-worthy, MacFarlane's jokes reach a new level of absurdity that plenty of audiences respond to.

SAMPLE

DIALOGUE

Edward: Man, I see kids everywhere with those stock hoops lately.

Albert: I know. Me too. It's got to be bad for their brains, right?

Edward: Yeah. It stunts their attention span. I read an article in the paper.

Albert: Yeah, I saw that. It's like they lose the power to innovate because they're staring at the stick hoop all day.

Edward: Yep.

WHY I LIKE THE FILM

I never would have gone to see this film if my daughter had not been in it. Seth MacFarlane's humor is a little crass for me. Although there were parts, such as the bathroom humor aimed at small children (hopefully not in the audience), that made me cringe, I was surprised that I enjoyed it overall more than I thought I would.

My favorite scene is when Edward and Albert are talking about the stock hoop and how it will rot the brains of the children. It was obviously a reference to current concerns about children spending too much time in front of screens.

The best part is that my daughter, Avery Breyne-Cartwright, was in the film. It was fun looking for her main scene and looking for when she appeared in the background in different scenes.

THE INFLUENTIAL FILM^{CONTINUED}

MUSICAL SCORE & SOUND

MacFarlane's Western theme doesn't stop with visual design. The soundtrack, which features work from Joel McNeely, sets the prairie scene with such ease, that even with the modern references, audiences still feel like they are living in the 1880s. It's obviously based on the classic silver screen era Westerns. As a plus, there's the especially silly song, "If You've Only Got a Mustache".

While there are no especially remarkable or outstanding sound effects, there are the typical horse whinnys, sheep baaing and gunfight sounds which add to the overall feel of a typical Western.



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