

“News of the World” a Ride Worth Taking

by [Michael G. Maness](#)

Tyler County Booster (3-18-21), 4A.

Tom Hanks fills another superb role in “News of the World” (2020).

Five years after the Civil War, Hanks is Capt. Jefferson Kyle Kidd, or Capt. Kidd, who travels from town-to-town reading newspapers for small change. Somewhere near Wichita Falls, Texas, he encounters a massacre, a lynching, and a 10-year-old girl, Johanna, who had been raised by the Kiowa. Yet she only knows her Indian name, Cicada.

Writing for the AV Club, A. A. Dowd noticed, “There’s no missing the parallels ‘News of the World’ hopes to draw between the divided country it depicts and the one it’s being released into.” Perhaps, that too, and more predictably, Hanks grows in affection for Johanna, who is now twice orphaned. Her parents were killed when she was four, and then her second set of parents are recently killed. She is adrift. Her “papers” give a clue to a family of German immigrants 400 miles to the south to Castroville, twenty miles west of San Antonio.



Capt. Kidd’s troubled soul bonds to help a likewise troubled soul. He’s not sure what to do with a little girl. The heart of the movie revolves around these two strangers who really do not want to be together, who are both damaged personalities trying to figure out life, and they find themselves fighting for their lives. Refreshingly, the adult role and child role are not compromised. (I do not care for movies where the child saves the universe from stupid adults.) And little Johanna, played by Helena Zengel, is such a good fitting of a mixture of fear and courage and lostness. Many times, you wonder if she is angry or sad or confused, and she is truly all of those at the same time and more. She is not very cute, which adds credit to her angst.

The ending is a truly pleasant surprise. I suspect most hearts will be warmed with how the movie goes and then closes with this surprise crafting of something so simple, yet it lights up the world. If you see the movie, do not spoil it for your friends by giving up this wonderfully pleasant and bright spot that, for me, turned this good movie into a great one—a happy ending!

Capt. Kidd’s honor will not allow him to abandon the child. At first, the girl cannot remember her English, and Kidd struggles to communicate. His rambling reading becomes a mission to ferry Johanna across Texas to her religious German relatives, reading along the way.

It hit the theaters on Dec. 25, 2020—Christmas Day. Who goes to see a movie on that day? Doesn’t everyone spend time with their families on that day? Yet, how appropriate it may be that a movie about transients in life arrives on the day when—forgive me—transients in the twentieth century would not be at home.

Be ready for a movie where even the tedious parts are done well. The long wagon rides were created without stunning vistas, perhaps on purpose, perhaps to make the tedium felt. Several portions of “2001 Space Odyssey” were boringly tedious. Yet, I cannot recall another movie where the journey seemed so long but was not truly “tedious” for me. Well done!

The gun laws in one town were another surprise, and then the reality of firearm accuracy is another well-portrayed tension. There are no fantasy shootouts with a quickdraw lighting a match at fifty yards, and thankfully. Two disparate souls seemed to discover that they must use the gun to save their lives; that rings true for most of us. The long journey turns Capt. Kidd from a man hiding from grief into a father—into a larger man—and a lost girl into a daughter.

“News of the World” is based upon a 2016 novel by Paulette Jiles (PauletteJiles.com). The last sentence on her website about the book and movie sums well: “A story of courage and honor and the truth that these two things are often the possession of even the unlikeliest people.”

www.PreciousHeart.net



A business card for Michael G. Maness. The card features a black header with a small portrait of Michael G. Maness on the left and the logo for PreciousHeart.net on the right. The logo includes the text "Unlocking Treasures of the Heart". Below the header, the name "Michael G. Maness" is printed in bold, followed by the phone number "409.383.4671", the email addresses "Maness3@att.net" and "MGManess3@gmail.com", and a QR code for PreciousHeart.net. To the right of the contact information is a quote: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" with "Matthew 6:21" underneath. Below the quote is a double-headed arrow with a star in the center. At the bottom of the card, there are social media icons for Facebook and LinkedIn, each with a QR code and the handle "/Michael.G.Maness". A red outline of the state of Texas is positioned between the QR code for PreciousHeart.net and the social media icons.

Michael G. Maness
409.383.4671
Maness3@att.net
MGManess3@gmail.com

Where your treasure is,
there your heart will be also
Matthew 6:21

PreciousHeart.net
facebook /Michael.G.Maness
LinkedIn /MGManess