

Meek's Cutoff

USA 2010

Directed by
Kelly Reichardt**Screenplay**
Jon Raymond**Cinematography**
Christopher Blauvelt**Original Music**
Jeff Grace**Cast**
Emily Tetherow
Michelle Williams
Stephen Meek
Bruce Greenwood
Thomas Gately
Paul Dano
Glory White
Shirley Henderson

104 min

*Our next screening...***Heima (Iceland)**

Tue 6 March 2012

Dir: Dean DeBlois

A love letter to the people
of Iceland via the hypnotic
music of Sigur Ros.

Just as you think all aspects of a western have been covered, along comes a whole fresh approach.

Kelly Reichardt's gaunt, mysterious and superbly calibrated movie about pioneers and the old American west appears to have come from another age – from the early days of Malick or Antonioni. When I saw it again in London last week, the print itself was worn, speckling the images with lines and scratches, and reinforcing the weird sense that we were watching a rediscovered classic. Reichardt's film-making palette is determined by the parched, scorched landscape and the grim faces of those travelling across it. It is a world of tough browns and ochres, pale greys; the blue of the sky is bleached out with glare and haze. And with its long, silent takes (music is used sparingly on the soundtrack), it is a film which compels you to examine the details. There is a comparable sense of an embattled, frightened expeditionary force, out of food and water, and ideas: without the experience, resources or language to understand someone who may be their destroyer or their only hope of survival. This superbly made, austere film is Reichardt's best yet, certainly a huge advance on her previous work, and a powerful new addition to the genre.

Peter Bradshaw, The Guardian

Working with her frequent collaborator, screenwriter Jon Raymond, as she did in the critically acclaimed *Wendy and Lucy* in 2008 and *Old Joy* in 2006, Reichardt has stripped "Meek's" down to bare essentials and careful emotions. The cast captures that quality beautifully — like the water that is running out, everything is conserved. It makes the frustration and tears more powerful when they come. In Emily, the movie's quiet force, Williams adds another to a string of distinctive characters and fine performances. This is her second collaboration with Reichardt, who seems to know how much the actress can do with a little. Emily says everything about Meek when she takes his measure with just the slightest narrowing of her eyes.

Betsy Sharkey, Los Angeles Times

The actors inhabit their roles with total conviction, and the picture creates its own sense of time and space. *Meek's Cutoff* is both realistic and allegorical, a tale of the real pain endured by the pioneers but also a fable about American history. There are echoes of John Ford here, but the westerns it most brings to my mind are *The Shooting* and *Ride in the Whirlwind*, Monte Hellman's minimalist diptych starring Jack Nicholson, made back to back in 1966 on similarly desolate terrain.

Philip French, The ObserverVoting for *Mary and Max*: A-26 B-20 C-4 D-1 E-0 Attendance: 54 Rating: 84.8%