

# 'No Country' takes hold and doesn't let go

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Imagine wandering through the countryside and coming across a few abandoned pickup trucks, several dead bodies, all shot to death, and a large briefcase overflowing with about \$2 million in cash.

Would you call the police, or would you be tempted to take the money and run?

In "No Country for Old Men," the most recent film directed by brothers Joel and Ethan Coen, the central character is faced with just this predicament when he encounters what remains of a drug deal gone bad while on a hunting trip in the desert of southwest Texas.

He chooses to try his luck by fleeing with the money.

What follows is a nerve-racking journey as the hunter, played by Josh Brolin, attempts to avoid being found by the man seeking to reclaim the money, a cold-blooded, calculating hit man who displays chillingly few human qualities.

This stalking villain, memorably and convincingly portrayed by Javier Bardem, is such a cold and inhuman character that one may be reminded of Christian Bale's notorious performance in "American

Psycho."

The story comes to include an aging sheriff, portrayed by Tommy Lee Jones, who discovers the lurid crime scene and begins to piece together what took place and determine what is yet to come.

While the above elements are brewing together, and as the tension rises, another hit man is hired to get to the lost money first, a Vietnam Special Forces veteran played by Woody Harrelson.

The film is based on the Cormac McCarthy novel of the same title, and does not follow the cause-and-effect sequence of events typical of most action movies. Rather, it progresses in a more non-linear fashion which makes the plot more engrossing and far less predictable.

While not a Western, the film does convey some of the feel one would associ-



ate with the genre, such as the perceived lawlessness of western border towns and the gun-toting outlaws that frequent them, but in an exceptionally gritty and realistic style.

In "No Country for Old Men" the arid South Texas atmosphere and the raw storytelling style combine to form an experience that will keep the viewer guessing and constantly vigilant, in hopes to see how a few characters' fates will unwind in an untamed and brutal expanse of country.