

some [measured praise from the mainstream press](#). And [The Wall Street Journal](#) even published an editorial by David M. Howard Jr., the nephew of one of the murdered missionaries, which offered his perspective on the events that inspired the film.

But some, like Mark Holcomb of [The Village Voice](#), are clearly overreacting based on their own extreme prejudice. Is there any word better than "bigotry" for his sneering and condescending reaction? "Coy crypto-Christian claptrap masquerading as feel-good ethnography, *End of the Spear* is part missionaries-in-peril potboiler (sans pot) and part Bush-era evangelical screed. It's the kind of oversweet cinematic Kool-Aid they used to force-feed us in Sunday school." He concludes that the movie's "Davey and Goliath dogmatism comes through as loud and clear as the sinister subtext behind its message of nonviolence—that the world's nonwhite, 'undeveloped' cultures continue to require prophylactic doses of Yank benevolence in order to survive and thrive." Ahhh, religious intolerance dressed up as film criticism.

Stephen Holden ([The New York Times](#)) takes a more disciplined, critical approach. He doesn't criticize the film's religious characters so much as he dislikes the tone of the storytelling, and the heavy-handed use of music. He calls it "inspiring enough to make you wish that the filmmakers had reined in their sentimental excesses. The humane message of the film ... is undercut by the religio-mythic trappings attached to it, and by an inescapable air of Kiplingesque smugness in its portrayal of civilized whites enlightening rampaging dark-skinned savages. The overawed musical score by Ronald Owen is so obtrusive that it never lets you have a feeling of your own."

Christian critics are, of course, responding differently.

Marcus Yoars ([Plugged In](#)) says the director and his co-writers, Mart Green and Bill Ewing, bring "experience, talent, heart, resources and a commitment to telling the story accurately—from the Waodani point of view." He writes, "While not shying away from depicting the near-nakedness of the tribe or the violent acts they routinely engaged in, Green, Hanon and Ewing effectively relay the myriad of godly, life-changing messages contained in this gut-wrenching story. Forgiveness. Healing. Selflessness. Family. Love. Honor. Bravery. Kindness. The list goes on, yet maybe no message stands out as much as *redemption*."

Lisa Rice ([Crosswalk](#)) says, "The movie lends itself to many compelling questions for the family, such as, 'What would our family be willing to suffer for the sake of the gospel?' ... Filmmakers like Bill Ewing understand that audiences love watching true stories packed with drama, danger, intrigue, and spiritual inspiration, and *End of the Spear* will likely attract scores of families who want to so inspire their children to make a sacrificial impact in this life."

from [Film Forum](#), 02/02/06

Denny Wayman and Hal Conklin ([Cinema in Focus](#)) write, "Without being either preachy or obvious, the film takes us through the sacrifice given by the missionary families and the effect it had upon the Waodani. The supernatural power of God is present in the moments of sacrifice as well as in the powerful transformation of this vengeful culture."

Matt Wiggins ([Relevant](#)) says, "Artistically speaking, *End of the Spear* is often breathtaking." He says it's "a very good movie that will probably have much more success in the Sunday school classroom than the cineplex, but that's not necessarily a bad thing either. In the final estimation, *Spear* is a movie that will be enjoyed by Christians and viewed skeptically by everyone else. For us it will be a great reminder of the power of forgiveness and a reminder of why we are called to make disciples of all the world. The story of Steve Saint and Mincayani needs to be told and this is a valid rendition of that tale."

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