

Potential headings:

A Tale of Two “Bridges”

Jeff Bridges impresses in two quality December films, *Tron: Legacy* and *True Grit*

Burning “Bridges”

Jeff Bridges proves he’s still on fire in new releases *Tron: Legacy* and *True Grit*

*Tron: Legacy* Vs. *True Grit*

Jeff Bridges stars in two quality holiday releases

Over winter break, tons of movies are released in hopes of attracting Academy Award voters, baiting them in with controversial subject matters and transformative performances. Jeff Bridges has never been an actor to clamor for awards, however. After decades of great performances and nominations, he only recently was given his due with a Best Actor trophy for his role in *Crazy Heart*. This December he starred in two more very different but equally notable films, one a sequel and one a remake. Which one is worth your time and money?

First up is *True Grit*. Westerns have sadly become something of a rarity in Hollywood in recent years. Compared to the glory days of John Wayne and the Monument Valley, the genre is seemingly nonexistent. That is why it is always a refreshing surprise when a movie like *True Grit* gets released. Spearheaded by the Coen Brothers, *True Grit* is a remake of a classic Wayne western and his only Oscar winning performance. Based off a 1968 novel by Charles Portis, the story follows a 14 year old girl named Mattie Ross (Hailee Steinfeld) who is out to capture and turn in the criminal who robbed and killed her father, Tom Chaney (Josh Brolin). While looking for help from someone who has "true grit," she comes across a Deputy U.S. Marshall named Rooster Cogburn (Jeff Bridges), a man known for his drunken boorishness as well as his merciless nature. After much protest from Texas Ranger LaBoeuf (Matt Damon), who is also on the hunt for Chaney for a different crime, the three ride off towards danger in pursuit of a murderous crew. Though the entire cast delivers, the real draw here is Bridges' Cogburn. Stepping into the legendary Waynes' boots would be a daunting challenge for any actor, but Bridges makes it all his own with a spectacular, award worthy performance. The original book matches the Coen Brothers' black humor sensibilities extremely well, making this version the more faithful of the two to the source material. Their effort is an un-ironic and unabashed love letter to the Westerns of yesteryear. It is not perfect. The ending kind of fizzles out right when it should explode. And it probably can't compete with the brothers' very best work, such as *Fargo* and the former Bridges' masterpiece, *The Big Lebowski*. Still, this is a lovingly crafted and entertaining film anchored by fantastic performances and a still captivating story. Verdict: A-

Racing to theaters is Disney's newest sequel/reimagining, *Tron: Legacy*. Never

seen the original Tron that this film's plot follows? No worries. Neither has ninety percent of this movie's audience. The first movie was a mild success at its release, but quietly disappeared into obscurity. Copies of it are still extremely difficult to obtain. Tron was at its heart a trippy light show and is now seen as the beginning of Hollywood's infatuation with special effects. The film's exciting vision of a world inside of our computers managed to attract a small but rabid cult fan base, however, enough to encourage Disney to make this sequel. The film has received the 21st century makeover, with stunning special effects, impressive directing by Joseph Kosinski, and solid acting including Jeff Bridges reprising his old role as videogame designer Kevin Flynn as well as a younger, computer generated version of himself who serves as the story's villain. The plot is still a little muddy and sometimes difficult to buy into, but former *Lost* scribes Adam Horowitz and Edward Kitsis keep the story entertaining and fun enough not to sweat the details. Besides, you know the real reason you're there: The awesome effects. They really do elevate the film to new heights. Check this one out in 3D if you can. Verdict: B

So the answer is somewhat murky. Both films are highly entertaining examples of unpretentious winter blockbusters done right. And it is not too late to catch them in theatres, so the question really becomes what you are in the mood for, a classical Western or a futuristic sci-fi flick. Either way you go, one thing is for sure: Bridges brings it, proving once again that he is one of the best actors in Hollywood.