

VICE – David Stratton’s Introduction

VICE, USA, 2018, 132 min, Bio/Comedy/Drama, M. (Rights held by Entertainment One). Dir: Adam McKay. IMDb vote 7.2

Welcome to VICE. Vice is Adam McKay’s masterful biography of Vice President Dick Cheney, who is played with uncanny conviction by Christian Bale, often under a ton of makeup.

This is no linear chronological biography but a dazzlingly constructed and completely gripping story of a man and by extension, a country.

The film uses a narrator, an everyman, called Kurt, played by Jesse Plemons, who is sometimes heard but not seen, and at other times seen in a variety of manifestations, for example he is a fireman on 9/11 and a soldier in Afghanistan.

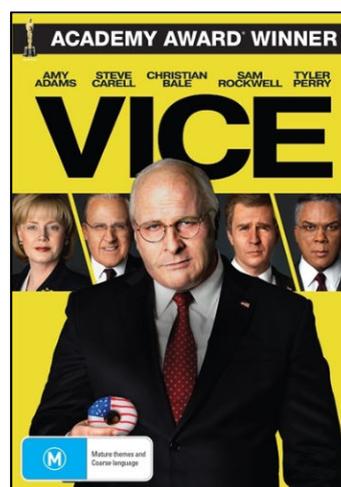
Kurt’s voice-over notes that as the news of the attack on America on that fateful day in 2001 came through to the centre of government there was confusion, fear and uncertainty, but Dick Cheney saw only opportunity.

This is a true story, the opening title asserts, but then goes on to note that Cheney is a notoriously secretive politician and so there may be limitations to the truth.

Steve Carell plays Donald Rumsfeld, and Sam Rockwell as George W Bush – and they are both amazingly good.

VICE, from the very title helps tell you where the case stands on Dick Cheney, is unquestionably a small “l” liberal film, a fact acknowledged in a late scene in which a group representing a cross-section of Americans begins a violent argument over the movie that has just ended. Maybe you will argue about it too, because the film raises a lot of controversial questions about the use and abuse of power. Some of you may dismiss it – some of you may even hate it – but I reckon that as the details of Cheney’s career accumulate and the film concludes with an ironic rendition of America – that celebratory song from WEST SIDE STORY, we are celebrating the conclusion of the best American film of 2018. That’s my opinion anyway.

I hope you enjoy, and are provoked by VICE.



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