

Review: Action does all the talking in dialogue-free 'Silent Night'



CHENNAI: Violence and bloodshed are the speciality of Hong Kong John director John Woo and he is considered a pioneer in this sphere. After working in his native country, he went to the US to make movies but somehow slipped into a 20-year hiatus. His last American film was “Paycheck,” a science-fiction thriller that did not go down well with critics, who said that it was a rather hotchpotch affair. In the intervening years, directors like David Leitch and Chad Stahelski took over the reins from Woo and made a killing. Now, Woo has made a comeback to what can only be described as his domain with the release of “Silent Night,” which screened at this month’s Red Sea International Film Festival in Saudi Arabia.



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The title serves as a double entendre, with the film set during the Christmas period (hence the play on the beloved Christmas carol), and the unmissable fact that it is a dialogue-free film with absolutely no talking.

Godlock's (Joel Kinnaman) son is killed by a stray bullet. Rival gangs speed past his home in a crazy shooting spree and one bullet misses its target and kills the son. Godlock turns from a man of peace to a man of grief and anger. He vows to take down his son's killers in year and goes about executing his plan in the most methodical manner.

There is not much of a story beyond this and for most of movie's 104-minute run time we see characters trying to bump each other off. Motorcycle riders use guns, knives and their bare fists to get their job done and in "Silent Night," sadistic action does all the talking.

Woo's trademark bloody destruction is choreographed with eye-catching style. There is no subtlety, and the narrative reeks of raw passion and rancour. There is not much to talk about when it comes to the acting, but that is only to be expected in a genre of this kind. After all, cold-blooded killers do not act, they brandish their guns and pump bullets into their enemies. Can we cheer for Woo's return? Maybe — to a point. For a cinematic work to make a real impact, violence alone is not enough. You need a strong story and raw acting which can sometimes speak volumes — here, the cast merely grunts.
