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Coverage from the Toronto International Film Festival

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Foster fired up at Festival

John Powell - Cineplex Entertainment

As far as Jodie Foster sees it, Erica Bain has nothing in common with Travis Bickle other than their penchant for firearms, of course.

"He is just primal and he just reacts," said Foster of the iconic vigilante she shared screen time with some 31 years ago. "You know at the end of 'Taxi Driver' he is going to do it again. It is not a good thing but it is the truth."

Whereas Bickle sought redemption when he moved on from one mess in Vietnam to another in New York City, Foster claims Bain is motivated by fear, and violence is the answer to her own sense of powerlessness.

Foster says Bain, the radio talk show host who takes the law into her own hands when a group of punks slay her fiancée in her new film "The Brave One", becomes another person entirely when she decides to seek revenge on the murderers and bring her own brand of justice to the streets of New York.

Jodie Foster as Erica in 'The Brave One'.

Traditionally, women tend to turn inside hurting themselves when faced with trauma or abuse but instead Bain lashes out. She goes from acting in self-defence to living out the delusional belief that if she can recreate the tragedy, she can somehow bring her fiancée back from the dead.

As her story unspools, the film becomes more of an existential movie than a genre movie with Bain transforming into a voice in the night or a ghost wandering the streets of New York searching out wrongs to be righted.

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Since its debut at the Festival yesterday, comparisons between 'The Brave One' and other genre revenge films such as 'Death Wish' have been made. Foster believes 'The Brave One' is much more than that. It is a thinking man's vengeance tale, especially in the hands of 'Crying Game' director Neil Jordan, whose characters are always driven by outside forces they cannot understand and are physically changed on the outside by their inner yearnings or desires.

On hand at the press conference as well, Jordan said he was fascinated by not only the revenge aspect of the plot but the underlying theme of living in a fearful and sometimes paranoid post-9/11 America.

Foster aids a victim. "The New York in 'Taxi Driver' is very different than post-911 America where in Times Square there is a cop on every corner and yet I ask why is it that I don't feel safe? Why every inch of me is caught up in an orange or red alert even though this should be the safest time of my life," said Foster.

As for her recent string of action-oriented roles such as those she played in 'Flightplan' and 'Panic Room', Foster says they could just be coincidence. In the last 10 years she has just realized that she is most happiest working with directors she truly admires and directors who give their own spin on a certain genre.

"I am not Arnold Swartzenegger. I am not an action hero," she laughed in describing how her petite frame fit everyone's vision of Bain as an unassuming woman who is incredibly dangerous.

Although 'The Brave One' is gritty and raw, it does not showcase the energetic, stylized violence associated with John Woo or Robert Rodriguez. The violence and more importantly, the aftermath in 'The Brave One' is dark and unnerving.

"In the movie, violence corrupts absolutely. Even the last good man becomes a bad man in the end," said Foster.

'The Brave One' opens across Canada on September 14th.



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- ▣ [The History of TIFF](#)
- ▣ [Hollywood stars set for TIFF](#)
- ▣ [TIFF by the numbers](#)
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