

Selma – Review

Says Martin Luther King in *Selma*, Ava DuVernay's **bracing**, powerful biopic of the great man: "Our lives are not fully lived if we're not willing to die for those we love, for what we believe."

Sacrifice is one of the many themes considered here. The director - and David Oyelowo, who delivers a soulful, **stirring** performance in the lead **role** - certainly **revere** King, but they also **paint** him very much as **canny** and media-savvy as he is inspirational. In explaining the methods of his African-American Civil Rights Movement to the leaders of an **unconvinced**, younger group, he is **plain**: "We negotiate, we



demonstrate, we resist," he tells them. The opposition that he and his followers faced in the Alabama city of Selma was **fierce**; the resistance that they met it with intended to highlight the horror and injustice of institutionalised racism by making it a national **news** story.

DuVernay deserves credit for painting a more complicated picture of King than one might imagine. His **infidelities** are acknowledged during one particularly **excruciating** scene with his **wife**, Coretta Scott King (Carmen Ejogo), while his doubts are numerous. The **battle of wills** he finds himself in with President Lyndon B. Johnson (Tom Wilkinson) is expertly depicted; the cast, in general, is fantastic, featuring rapper Common, veteran of *The Wire* Wendell Pierce, Tim Roth and Oprah Winfrey - **among** others - in small but vital roles.

Selma is, in many ways, a shocking film. The brutality and the **hatred** on display can be difficult to **watch**, especially when the situation in the United States regarding violence against black communities is so horrendous at the moment - something Common and John Legend **highlighted** when picking up their Best Song Oscar for the film's 'Glory'. But it is admirable, and important, too: an intelligent, compassionate exploration of **freedom**, power and a quest for equality that resonates to this day.