



War Ravages the Soul

By: Megha Pakhiddey

Posted: 11/29/07

Badland is inspired by the tragic incidents that took place in the lives of American soldiers after they returned from the Iraq war. The movie doesn't focus on their overall experience. Instead, it focuses on a veteran named Jerry. After returning from the war, Jerry finds himself in a miserable position as he takes care of his wife and three kids. He struggles through each day, working in a gas station where his boss steals his pay and his wife treats him like dirt.

In addition, the effects of the war leave Jerry in a mentally disturbed state. When Jerry finds out that his wife has been hiding money from him, he gets frustrated. He shoots her and his two boys, but somehow manages not to kill his daughter. This marks the beginning of their new life that starts as they move to a new town. Jerry starts to work at a restaurant and makes a living. At the same time, a search begins to mount for him in his hometown.

With hope in her heart, his daughter still believes that God will bring back her mother and brothers. In the new town, Jerry finds another Iraq War veteran who is going through the same dilemmas as he did. They start talking and sharing each other's experiences. The movie mostly emphasizes Jerry fighting his inner demons and the ways he tries to get out of his situation. Overall, Badland has a good concept, but when executed, it's just not that appealing. This is mainly because of the speed of the film. It seems to slow down various times throughout - taking away the audience's interest.

The performances are remarkable, especially the performances by Jamie Draven (Jerry), Grace Fulton (Celina) and Joe Morton (Max). They went deep into their characters and captured the audience's sympathy. The film's writer and director, Francesco Lucente, had good direction, but his storytelling abilities lack the charisma needed to hold the attention of the viewers. This is, in part, because he unnecessarily extends some scenes.

The mood of the film is slow and sad, so it's definitely not for people who expect this movie to be an action thriller - as could be assumed by the film's title. However, if you are a sucker for these types of movies, go for it.