

'Badland' gives a glimpse into the life after the war

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"Badland" is a truthful glimpse into the horrific aftermath of war seen through one family's story. It is a gut-wrenching and touching story of anger, disaster, fear, warmth and also deep love that will have you biting your fingernails to the bitter end.

The movie is the inspiration of writer/director Francesco Lucente. It's based on America's impetuous thrust into the Iraq war and stories of increased domestic violence, murder and murder-suicides resulting from soldiers suffering from post traumatic stress disorder after their return from the war.

Jerry Rice is a Marine reservist and a veteran of the Gulf War, who later in life is called to duty to serve in Afghanistan and Iraq. After being dishonorably discharged and traumatized by the horrors of war, he returns home to civilian life disillusioned and broken. Jerry suffers from nosebleeds, night terrors and uncontrollable crying from his tour of duty. He lives a life of poverty, working at a local convenience store under a demeaning and unethical boss in a dismal town that could be considered an 'any town' USA.

Nora, his pregnant wife, is extremely unsympathetic, cold and shockingly abusive to her husband and his problems. Their three children, Stevie, Ray and Celina are the innocent victims of the turmoil around them. Living in complete discontent, Nora decides she must keep money for bills and from her two son's paper routes and hide it in case she and her children need to leave. Their trailer becomes a prison, marked with repeated fights and ugliness. When Jerry discovers that Nora has betrayed him, he becomes angry.

The rest of the film follows Jerry and his daughter Celina and their flight from the law.

All of the actors fit their parts perfectly and played their parts well, but the main characters of the story really stood out for their ability to play such emotionally charged roles.

Although her part was brief, Nora, played by Vinessa Shaw, did an excellent job. She was very convincing as the angry and verbally abusive wife, who left the viewer feeling contempt and disgust towards her.

Jamie Draven, a British actor, played the part of Jerry Rice, the war ravaged veteran. Draven also gave a stunning performance that was fervent, intense and evoked sympathy despite his heinous act.

Jerry's daughter, Celina, was played by nine-year-old actress Grace Fulton. Fulton demonstrated an acting ability comparable to a well-established and focused adult that had been acting their entire life. Her role was very emotional and intense and she played the part persuasively without missing a beat. Furthermore, her on-screen rapport with Draven made their father-daughter relationship believable.

Chandra West was brilliant in her part as Oli, the sweet, caring, new love in Jerry's life that really never had a chance to flourish.

Lastly was Joe Morton, who played Max, acting as another returning Iraqi soldier and small town sheriff trying to cope with the atrocities left in his mind from the war. He did a splendid job of acting as a man spiraling into bouts of alcoholism, suffering from severe feelings of fear and thoughts of suicide.

In addition, the script and plot allowed the story to unfold very nicely without gaps or confusing parts that might leave the viewer with questions or uncertainties. It also allowed the actors to portray their parts accurately and compellingly.

"Badland" is a story of great tragedy and the triumph of love between a daughter and her father. This story will have you sitting on the edge of your seat wondering what misfortune might occur next, all the while, crossing your fingers and hoping for the best.

Make sure you strap yourself in tightly for this profound and emotional roller coaster ride.