

Blu-Ray Review: Peter Weir Presents Human Fortitude of 'The Way Back'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on May 3, 2011 - 3:08pm

- [Blu-ray Review](#) [2]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [3]
- [Colin Farrell](#) [4]
- [Dead Poets Society](#) [5]
- [Ed Harris](#) [6]
- [Fearless](#) [7]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [8]
- [Jim Sturgess](#) [9]
- [Master and Commander](#) [10]
- [Peter Weir](#) [11]
- [Saoirse Ronan](#) [12]
- [The Truman Show](#) [13]
- [The Way Back](#) [14]
- [Witness](#) [15]
- [Theater, TV, DVD & Blu-Ray](#) [16]

CHICAGO – “*Nature is your jailer, and she is without mercy.*” So says the guard at the Siberian prison that houses the leads in Peter Weir’s harrowing true story of escape, pain, and survival, “The Way Back.” It’s so desolate, freezing, and dangerous in the wilds of Siberia, that prisons barely need walls or guards. Where would people go? A group of seven men were willing to find out and their story has been documented in “The Way Back,” recently released on Blu-ray and DVD.



Blu-Ray Rating: **3.5/5.0**

Peter Weir is one of the best directors that ever lived. There’s no debate about it. He first gained international prominence by leading the Australian New Wave with films like “Picnic at Hanging Rock,” “Gallipoli,” and “The Year of Living Dangerously.” He parlayed that success into a series of films, most of which were nominated for at least one Academy Award (a trend that continued with the Makeup nomination for “The Way Back”) — “Witness,” “Dead Poets Society,” “Green Card,” “Fearless,” “The Truman Show,” and “Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World.” It was seven years between “Master” and only the second film he’s made this millennium, “The Way Back.”



The Way Back was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on April 19, 2011

Photo credit: Warner Bros. Home Video

The world of cinema would be a better place if Peter Weir directed more often. There’s a craftsmanship on display in his work that’s simply remarkable. Like many of the greats, he’s clearly detail-oriented (as the period elements of “Master” and “The Way Back” prove) but he also never loses the human element of his stories. Mere moments into “The Way Back,” it’s clear yet again that he is one of our best.

Sadly, “The Way Back” is not one of HIS best. It’s a good film that falls short of great; a movie that looks very good in HD and features a few strong performances but still sags a bit and fails to make the full impact of his best work. Still, lesser Peter Weir is more worthwhile than the best films of some of his peers.



The Way Back was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on April 19, 2011

Photo credit: Warner Bros. Home Video

Jim Sturgess ("Across the Universe") stars as Janusz, a Polish POW sent to a Siberian Gulag in this true story. There he meets a group of men who will become his fellow escapees and partners on a journey that spanned thousands of miles, including the stoic Mr. Smith (Ed Harris, who also starred in Weir's "The Truman Show") and criminal Valka (Colin Farrell). After a few harrowing encounters, including the loss of one of their own to the elements, the group stumbles upon a Polish girl who has been following them played by the spectacular Saoirse Ronan. Once again, the young star of "Hanna" and "Atonement" proves that she may be the most interesting actress of her generation. She gives this old critic the same feeling as early performances by Jodie Foster and Kate Winslet — you can tell the well of talent is deep.

Harris and Ronan are two of my favorite actors working today and their efforts alone make "The Way Back" worth seeing. The dialogue scenes between the two of them are my favorites in the film. Sturgess and Farrell aren't bad here although I'm still not convinced by the former despite his interesting career decisions and the latter seems a bit miscast (although, speaking of career decisions, I'm not sure anyone has made better ones over the last half-decade as Farrell has chosen the more-rewarding projects over the more high-profile ones). As I mentioned, there's also a technical artistry here that's remarkable — effective without being flashy. Cinematographer Russell Boyd brought a similar look to "Master and Commander" and the design is impressive on multiple levels.

It's easy to admire "The Way Back" but it's not as emotionally compelling as one might have expected. I never felt fully engrossed in the storytelling, something that perhaps Weir has lost by taking so much time off from behind the camera. "The Way Back" is a movie that one is more likely to respect than to truly love or get lost in like they could have with such a compelling story. The film mustered only a miserable \$2.7 million at the domestic box office and it deserved a better fate. Hopefully, you'll help it find one on Blu-ray and DVD.

The Blu-ray from Image features a solid-if-unspectacular HD transfer and matching audio mix. Only one special feature is including about the making of the film but it is a sizable one at just over half an hour.

"The Way Back" stars Jim Sturgess, Ed Harris, Colin Farrell, and Saoirse Ronan. It was written by Keith R. Clarke & Peter Weir and directed by Weir. It was released on Blu-ray and DVD on April 19th, 2011 and is rated PG-13.



[17]

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [18]

Content Director

HollywoodChicago.com

brian@hollywoodchicago.com [17]

Source URL (retrieved on **Mar 29 2024 - 6:34am**):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/14195/blu-ray-review-peter-weir-presents-human-fortitude-of-the-way-back>

Links:

[1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/briantt>

[2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/blu-ray-review>

- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/brian-tallerico>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/colin-farrell>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/dead-poets-society-0>
- [6] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/ed_harris.html
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/fearless>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/jim-sturgess>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/master-and-commander>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/peter-weir>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/saoirse-ronan>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/the-truman-show>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/the-way-back>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/witness>
- [16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/dvd-theater-tv-news>
- [17] <mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [18] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#BRIAN>