

Blu-Ray Review: Mel Gibson, Jodie Foster Deserve Bigger Audience For ‘The Beaver’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on August 29, 2011 - 11:16am

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CHICAGO – If there was one film this year that I wished had found a wider audience more than any other it is definitely Jodie Foster’s “The Beaver,” a daring, challenging piece that would have had an uphill battle at the box office even if the personal life of its star, Mel Gibson, hadn’t made that climb even steeper. The film didn’t even break \$1 million domestically, meaning most of you haven’t seen it. You should.



Blu-Ray Rating: **4.5/5.0**

One of the many things that “The Beaver” does well is present a picture of depression as more than just a bad mood. Depression is a disease. It can be debilitating. It can kill. And it looks like it’s going to kill Walter Black (Gibson), a man so deep in his own personal hole that he can no longer see the sun. The film opens with Walter’s suicide attempt. There are comedic elements of Jodie Foster’s film but you should know that it’s a serious film about serious subjects and not as goofy as you might expect given its odd plotline.



The Beaver

Photo credit: Summit Pictures

It would be easy to falsely label “The Beaver” purely based on its title and its basic pitch — the movie where Mel Gibson talks to a puppet on his hand. A surprising number of people have refused to look deeper to see that this is a story not solely about its title character. This is a tale of two men at turning points — one older one questioning whether or not he has the strength to go on and one younger one who has long desired to break completely from his family. With incredibly strong performances throughout and complex tone management by its multi-talented director, “The Beaver” is one of the most interesting and most rewarding films of the year.

Walter does nothing but sleep and cry. After years of trying to break him of his dangerous patterns, his family has essentially given up, but one

could hardly blame them. They merely have realized that they must cut ties in order to save their own sanity. His wife Meredith (Foster) has kicked him out of the house, his youngest son Henry (Riley Thomas Stewart) has stopped talking, and his oldest son Porter (Anton Yelchin) has done everything he can to ensure he's as unlike his dad as possible before leaving home for good.



The Beaver was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on August 23rd, 2011

Photo credit: Summit Home Video

After his failed suicide attempt, Walter awakens to what feels almost like a dream state in which he speaks to a stuffed beaver that he found in a dumpster earlier that evening. The beaver has a voice with an accent not unlike Ray Winstone (one wonders if Gibson didn't refine it working with Ray on "Edge of Darkness") but the words come from Walter's mouth. Through the stuffed puppet, Walter expresses things he never could, almost serving as a split personality that pushes him back to the surface of normalcy. He becomes closer to his wife and his young son, but Porter remains distant.

But this is not just Walter's story, it is as much Porter's (something bizarrely-underpromoted in the marketing). The young man writes papers for classmates for money and when the stunning valedictorian Norah (Oscar nominee Jennifer Lawrence of "Winter's Bone") asks him to write her speech, Porter becomes closer to the prettiest girl in school. As romance blooms between the two people who would seem to be from different sides of the tracks, they realize they both have family issues yet to be reconciled.

The entire ensemble works, but this is Gibson's movie and he gives arguably the best performance of his career. It's daring, challenging, and, given recent tabloid development, one could even say personal work. There have been many portrayals of depression in film. This is one of the best. With expert direction from his close friend, he manages a very tonally complex part and never comes off as silly or juvenile, as a film like "The Beaver" easily could have become.

Summit Entertainment and Jodie Foster faced a difficult challenge with "The Beaver" long before those infamous voicemails were released. As time goes by and we get further and further away from the melodrama surrounding the real life of Mel Gibson, his work will be re-examined and "The Beaver" will find a larger audience. Films this good always do.

Special Features:

- o Audio Commentary with Director Jodie Foster
- o Deleted Scenes
- o "Everything Is Going to Be O.K."

"The Beaver" stars Mel Gibson, Jodie Foster, Riley Thomas Stewart, Cherry Jones, Anton Yelchin, and Jennifer Lawrence. It was written by Kyle Killen and directed by Foster. It was released on Blu-ray and DVD on August 23rd, 2011.



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