Blu-Ray Review: Excellent ‘Terri’ Defies Genre Expectations

Submitted by BrianTT [1] on October 14, 2011 - 3:33pm

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CHICAGO – Most movies about awkward teens feel like they’re mocking them as much as embracing them. I’m exhausted by the subgenre because of this fact — there’s a deep hypocrisy in so many of these movies that wants to make fun of their subjects and then tell you how bad it is to make fun of them. Imagine my surprise at the charming, wonderful, incredibly well-written “Terri,” recently released on Blu-ray and DVD. This is a hidden gem.



Blu-Ray Rating: **4.0/5.0**

Terri Thompson (Jacob Wysocki) is awkward but not in the way that it’s usually presented in independent film. He’s a huge kid who has taken to skipping school and showing up in pajamas when he does come to class. He is a gentle soul but he’s presented as such a fully-rounded, believable person. He’s not the creation of an independent film screenwriter. He’s smart, kind, but also flawed. He makes mistakes over the course of “Terri” but none of them feel like products of a screenwriting class. He’s an always-engaging lead who we watch go through a few of the most important weeks of his life.



Terri was released on Blu-ray and DVD on October 11th, 2011
Photo credit: Fox

It helps significantly that Terri is surrounded by equally-believable characters. “Terri” is essentially a five-character piece and all five of them are well-rounded, interesting people, not mere art movie creations. For the most part, their story isn’t forced or underlined (and the few times that it is a bit cliched stand out more than they would in most movies of this kind). This is the rare independent comedy that could honestly be called a character study. I was fascinated by all five of its characters and yet I never felt manipulated. That’s an amazing accomplishment courtesy of Patrick Dewitt’s stellar screenplay.



Terri was released on Blu-ray and DVD on October 11th, 2011
Photo credit: Fox

Dewitt’s script is expertly directed by Azazel Jacobs merely by how much he lets it breathe. So many other directors would have cluttered “Terri” with montages and catchy tunes but Jacobs seems more excited by long scenes of dialogue. There’s a spectacular exchange between Terri and his principal (John C. Reilly) after the young man has felt betrayed that stands among my favorites of the year.

Terri becomes friends with his Principal, a man who understands a thing or two about trying to make it in a world that sometimes feels like it’s working against you. Through a series of unpredictable events, Terri also gets close to a quirky kid named Chad (Bridger Zadina) and a beautiful girl named Heather (Olivia Crocicchia of “Rescue Me”). A scene between the three of these outcasts in the basement of Terri’s weird uncle/guardian (Creed Bratton of “The Office”) is a stellar examination of experimentation, teen sexuality, and the mixed emotions that change every other minute during adolescence.

“Terri” is a simple film that is MUCH harder to pull off than it might appear. It is essentially a story that defies standard teen drama in that its lead has lost his extremes. When asked how he’s feeling, he draws a face with a straight line for a mouth. He no longer feels happy or sad — just right down the middle. “Terri” is about him breaking out of that stasis and, if not finding happiness and sadness again, knowing that he can.

Synopsis:
Life is in session in the year’s biggest Sundance hit. Social outcast Terri (Jacob Wysocki) is stuck caring for his uncle (Creed Bratton, TV’s The Office) and trying to survive high school. He feels disconnected until his wildly unconventional Vice Principal (John C. Reilly, Walk Hard) inspires him to reach out.

Now with the help of beautiful misfit Heather (Olivia Crocicchia, TV’s Rescue Me), Terri discovers he doesn’t have to fit in to belong.

Special Features:
o A Look Inside Terri
o Deleted Scenes

“Terri” stars Jacob Wysocki, John C. Reilly, Bridger Zadina, Olivia Crocicchia, and Creed Bratton. It was written by Patrick Dewitt and directed by Azazel Jacobs. It was released on Blu-ray and DVD on October 11th, 2011.

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