

## Film Review: ‘The Kid with a Bike’ Marks Another Home Run by the Dardenne Brothers

Submitted by [mattmoviemann](#) [1] on March 23, 2012 - 6:49am

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CHICAGO – The sullen little boy is always on the run. His red shirt and jacket cause him to resemble a crimson blur against the green and gray landscape of his Belgian town. He believes that there must be an explanation for why his absent father has left him in a state-run youth farm, and is determined to track him down. Consumed with confusion and rage, the boy has no choice but to keep moving toward a destination that may not exist.



Rating: **4.5/5.0**

This may sound like a hopelessly depressing premise, but in the hands of celebrated auteurs Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, it emerges as a riveting, immensely powerful meditation on the need for human connection. It’s also incredibly tense for a quietly nuanced drama, and viewers may find themselves spending much of the film holding their collective breaths with the hope that no harm will come to the pint-sized yet stubbornly resourceful protagonist. This picture has more genuine suspense than most Hollywood thrillers.



[Read Matt Fagerholm’s full review of “The Kid with a Bike” in our reviews section.](#) [12]

In a way, “The Kid with a Bike” is a fitting follow-up to the Dardenne’s last feature, “Lorna’s Silence,” which centered on poor Albanian emigrants seeking a permanent residence status in Belgium. In an act of desperation, they ended up cooperating with an ill-advised scheme hatched by gang members. In my 2010 review of the film’s DVD release, I wrote that “watching a Dardenne film is like unravelling a mystery,” and the same statement could be applied to their latest effort. The filmmakers’ background as documentarians can clearly be noted in their refusal to use narration, music or any self-conscious storytelling constructs. The camera simply observes its subjects as it would in the classical style of cin  ma v  rit  , allowing the story to develop as if it was organically unfolding before the audience’s eyes. Even in the most turbulent of circumstances, the characters in “Kid With a Bike” never feel compelled to spill out their life stories to each other. It’s a tricky task for screenwriters to make any expository monologue sound naturalistic, and the Dardennes have confessed in interviews that they have no interest in bringing clarity to psychological motivations. Weak performances would sink this sort of approach in a heartbeat, but the Dardennes have already proven to be among the most gifted filmmakers in world cinema when it comes to the art of directing actors, particularly those with little to no experience. Young cinema masters such as Ramin Bahrani and C  line Sciamma are indebted to the Dardenne’s innovative technique.

*‘The Kid with a Bike’ stars Thomas Doret, C  cile De France, J  r  mie Renier, Laurent Caron, Fabrizio Rongione, Egon Di Mateo and Olivier Gourmet. It was written and directed by Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne. It was released March 23rd at the Music Box Theatre. It is not rated.*



[Continue reading for Matt Fagerholm’s full “The Kid with a Bike” review.](#) [12]



Thomas Doret and Cécile de France star in Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne's The Kid with a Bike.  
*Photo credit: Christine Plenus/A Sundance Selects release*

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