

Blu-ray Review: Brit Marling Mesmerizes in Nail-Biting ‘Sound of My Voice’

Submitted by [mattmovieman](#) [1] on October 22, 2012 - 5:48am

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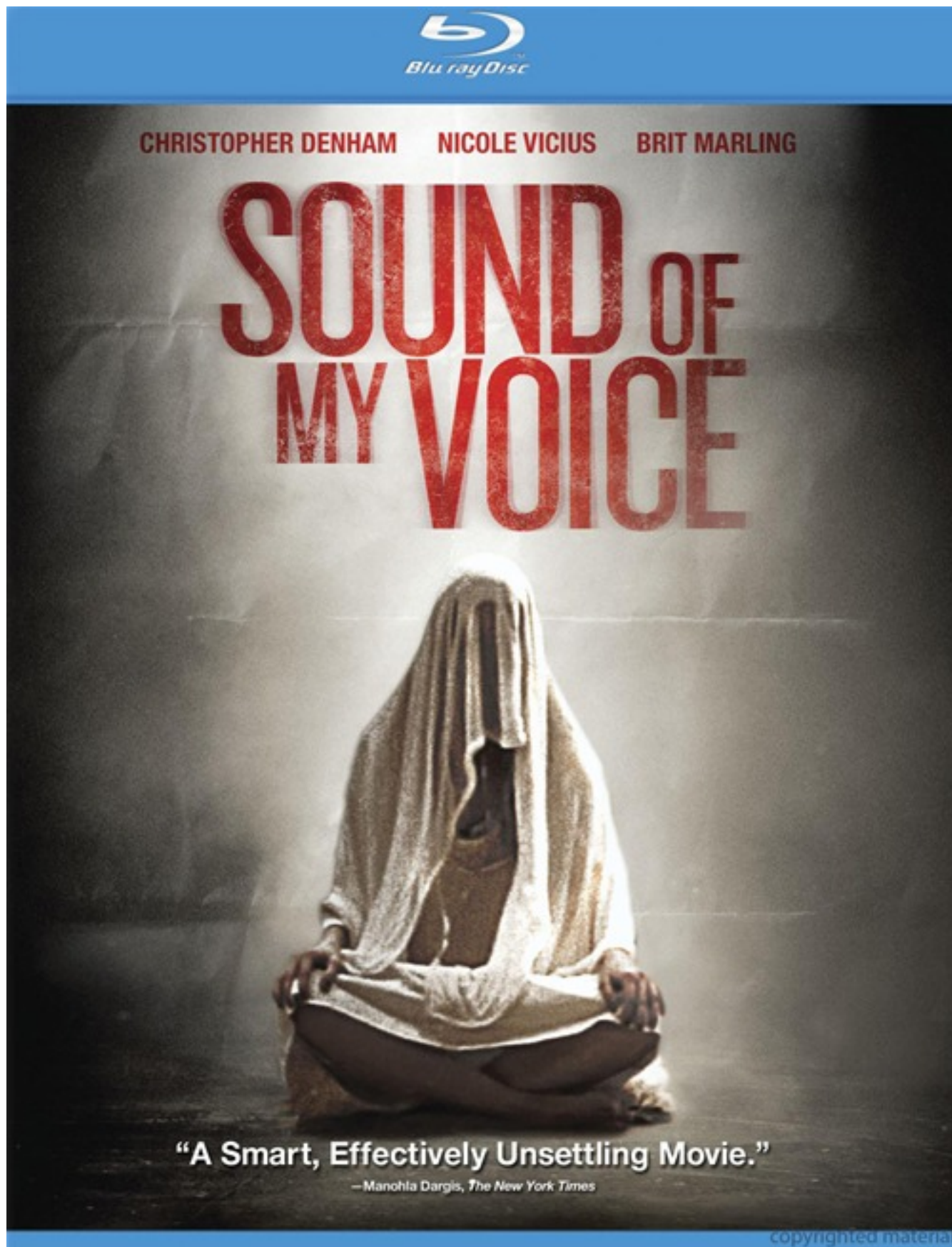
CHICAGO – In between the pulse-pounding jitters of “Martha Marcy May Marlene” and the mesmerizing opaqueness of “The Master,” Fox Searchlight released a decidedly less-showy exploration of cult dynamics. Zal Batmanglij’s “Sound of My Voice” doesn’t quite have the dizzying depth of the other two films, but what it lacks in complexity, it makes up for in tantalizing dialogue, expert pacing and deliciously involving suspense.

This is one of the most effective edge-of-your-seat thrillers in recent memory as well as an inventive portrait of shifting perspectives. The film is divided into numbered chapters, each one subverting the expectations built from the preceding segment. In the opening chapter (released for free online), lovers Peter (Christopher Denham) and Lorna (Nicole Vicius) attend a meeting hosted by Maggie (Brit Marling of “Another Earth”), a woman who claims to be from the future. It soon becomes apparent that this group huddled on the floor of a basement is comprised of devout cult members eager to follow the prophetic words of their ethereal leader.



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

Twelve minutes into the film, the script co-authored by Batmanglij and Marling pull the rug out from under the audience by revealing that Peter and Lorna are documentary filmmakers intent on exposing the potential danger of Maggie’s cult. This isn’t the first time the filmmakers resort to rug-pulling tactics, but never once do they merely function as manipulative gimmickry. Batmanglij’s film is fascinated by the aspects of life that appear true depending on how one perceives them. A shallower film would’ve simply portrayed Maggie as either a calculating fraud or a frightening phantom. The genius of Marling’s performance is how it allows both interpretations to seem valid. With her angelic features and formidable aggression conveyed with the most lilting of voices, Marling is flat-out astonishing. There’s a moment when Maggie interrogates Peter that evokes memories of the already famous “processing” scene between Joaquin Phoenix and Philip Seymour Hoffman in “The Master.” Though Peter later confesses that his reaction to her probing questions was entirely an act, his tearful expressions suggest that Maggie indeed hit a raw nerve. Whether her questions were based on luck or otherworldly insight is one of the film’s countless enticing quandaries.



Sound of My Voice was released on Blu-ray and DVD on October 2nd, 2012.

Photo credit: Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment

Like many recent indies, “Sound of My Voice” challenges viewers to question everything they’re seeing. These movies are built on a central question of whether their characters’ troubling visions are prophecies or mere delusions. Batmanglij’s film ultimately shares the same flaw as Jeff Nichols’ “Take Shelter,” which is the lack of a satisfactory final act. What happens in the last five minutes of “Voice” raises so many new questions that the fade-out feels more like a cop-out. Marling and Batmanglij don’t appear to have had a clear idea of how to wrap up their narrative, which flirts so seductively with both possible outcomes until the very end. Yet what continues to resonate after an initial viewing of the film are not the questions posed by its narrative but the sheer strength of the filmmaking itself. Marling and Batmanglij are two major talents on the rise, and this is a fine first feature-writing effort. I imagine that they will only get better from here.

“Sound of My Voice” is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 1.85:1 aspect ratio), accompanied by English, Spanish and French audio tracks and includes four disappointingly brief featurettes.

‘Sound of My Voice’ is released by Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment and stars Brit Marling, Christopher Denham and Nicole Vicius. It was written by Brit Marling and Zal Batmanglij and directed by Zal Batmanglij. It was released on October 2nd, 2012. It is rated R.



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