

Film Review: Stylish, Well Performed ‘You Were Never Really Here’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on April 15, 2018 - 8:44am

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CHICAGO – Actor Joaquin Phoenix almost solely specializes in portraying broken souls, but he also does it with such intensity that he adds necessary depth to those characters, to allow for their redemption. As a hit man for hire in the new film “You Were Never Really Here,” he again reaches beyond the darkness.



Rating: **4.0/5.0**

The film is an adaptation of a Jonathan Ames novel, and is directed by Lynne Ramsay (“We Need to Talk About Kevin”). Like “Kevin,” it is a moody interpretation of a highly salacious subject, the use of preteen girls for prostitution. Phoenix is a hardened Marine combat veteran-turned-hit-man whose only soft spot is for his aging mother. The process of the story is to get him to feel again, but it is done through many tortuous emotional encounters and his own brand of violent justice. Ramsay’s cinema landscape is a dreamy one, and protects the Phoenix character – seemingly against his will – within a cocoon of sorrow, while the rest of his life crumbles around him... it becomes an all-encompassing life lesson.

Joaquin Phoenix is Joe, an Iraq veteran whose PTSD – both in childhood and in war – makes him both suicidal and qualified for his work as a hired gun. He is super paranoid along the way, and his only emotional relief comes in caring for his dementia-addled mother (Judith Roberts) in a middle-class neighborhood in New York City.

His next job is a doozy. A state senator (Alex Manette) named Votto is working through some family issues, which includes his runaway preteen daughter Nina (Ekaterina Samsonov). He suspects she has been forced into prostitution, and gives Joe an address to a high end brothel that caters to the specific kink of their wealthy customers. Joe is able to rescue the girl, but sets off a series of events that puts him and everyone involved around him in danger, leading all the way to powerful state leaders.

“You Were Never Really Here” continued its nationwide release in Chicago on April 13th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Joaquin Phoenix, Ekaterina Samsonov, Alex Mannette, Judith Roberts and Alessandro Nivola. Screenplay adapted and directed by Lynne Ramsey. Rated “R”



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Joe (Joaquin Phoenix) and Nina (Ekaterina Samsonov) in ‘You Were Never Really Here’

Photo credit: Amazon Studios



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