

Film Review: ‘Leave No Trace’ is Emblematic of Our Times

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on July 6, 2018 - 3:55pm

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CHICAGO – The temptation to “drop out” must weigh heavily on the minds of many Americans on a daily basis. “Leave No Trace” views this phenomenon through a prism of many factors, including materialism and mental illness. Ben Foster and Thomasin McKenzie are a father/daughter duo who drop out, then tune in.



Rating: **4.0/5.0**

The film was created by the writer/director team of Debra Granik and Anne Rosellini (and adapted from the Peter Cook novel “My Abandonment”), who worked on the Oscar-nominated film “Winter’s Bone.” There are similar themes to that film in “Leave No Trace,” but the main commonality is the depiction of the socio-economic class, which is poor to lower middle. They honor these noble survivors in their outward kindness, but never shy away from their problems as well, which is often associated with drug abuse and mental difficulties. Many of the characters just have a hard time “playing in the sandbox” of society, through their outer and inner conflicts, and dropping out has as much to do with not being able to fit in, and in the case of this story some ex-military issues.

We meet Dad Bill (Ben Foster) and 13-year-old daughter Tom (Thomasin McKenzie) in a state park in Oregon, where they have set up a home situation with tents, tarps and camping gear. The park rangers don’t know they are there, even as they occasionally go into town to stock up on goods. Bill deals pills for cash, mostly his own prescriptions for treatment of the aftereffects of post traumatic stress syndrome.

The pair are busted by a chance encounter with a runner, and the rangers bring in a phalanx of social services to rescue them. They are assigned work on a Christmas tree ranch, and Tom begins to assimilate to the structure of organization. Bill cannot abide, and convinces the girl to leave the ranch, and they begin to wander aimlessly. Another rescue is coming, and this one will change everything.

“Leave No Trace” continues its nationwide limited release in Chicago on July 6th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Ben Foster, Thomasin McKenzie, Dana Millican and Dale Dickey. Screenplay adapted by Debra Granik and Anne Rosellini, based on the novel “My Abandonment” by Peter Cook. Directed by Debra Granik. Rated “PG”



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Tom (Thomasin McKenzie) and Bill (Ben Foster) Fight to Survive in ‘Leave No Trace’
Photo credit: Bleecker Street Media

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