

Luminous Story of Disconnection in Organic ‘Tracks’

Submitted by [NickHC](#) [1] on September 26, 2014 - 12:18pm

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Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – “Do you ever wonder if the things that are meant to connect us ... actually disconnect us?” This cheesy hypothesis as found in many millennial dramas has only caused the film world go to in circles about the quandary of handheld screens and social media. With its cool air, John Curran’s low-key adventure “Tracks” takes a line straight through that argument, providing a story of disconnection from distraction as set in a world when Apple products were only gadgets on re-runs of “Star Trek.”

The story of “Tracks” is a true one, and follows free-spirit Robyn Davidson (Mia Wasikowska), a young woman in 1970s Australia who dreams of crossing 1,7000 miles through the western desert with four camels and her dog, while carrying only the necessities, like a compass. To get funding for the venture, she appeals to National Geographic Magazine, who agrees to fund her ambitious venture so long as they can document it with one of their photographers, Rick Smolan (a dorky Adam Driver, who is edited with the beats of the Road Runner). As Robyn fulfills a dream by enduring hard conditions and long passages of loneliness, Rick abruptly pops up at her checkpoints with cartoonish energy, and attempts to orchestrate fictional representations of a blood-sweat-tears experience.

With these embodiments of truth and fiction clashing together, “Tracks” is a film about the forces that impede on our natural course in life, and our ambitions. What is necessary when trying to connect with the world around us, and how much are we overcomplicating our time on Earth by becoming so distracted? “Tracks” expresses that there are the natural things in our world, and then there are the unnatural. What matters most though, is to exercise the ability to remove ourselves from the unnatural.



Mia Wasikowska in ‘Tracks’

Photo credit: The Weinstein Company

Wasikowska presents a very organic existence in her work as Davidson, which is as grimy and sunburnt and free as about a human being can be. She fashions quite an ambitious dreamer out of Robyn, one who vocalizes a vivid tiredness with constrictions from gender, class, or

generation. This role has Wasikowska in her element, using her previously confirmed charisma to show a rawness that goes beyond classic dramatic acting, and simply exists within this special moment.

As “Tracks” sends a young woman through the Australian desert with only her beloved camels and dog in tow, the film becomes similarly striking in its resistance against the usual winds of a survival movie. The challenge that Davidson puts herself into is more an adventure that only has passages of bad luck, indicating the narrative’s lack of interest in choosing tension of danger to steer the experience. Instead, Davidson’s journey often has an airy sense to it, accompanied by music that favors steady paces than big lunges.



Adam Driver in ‘Tracks’

Photo credit: The Weinstein Company

The dazzling naturalness of “Tracks” is brought full circle by the canvas it adeptly uses, the Australian terrain that provides all the color and depth a visual palette could ever desire. As inspired by Smolan’s photography, “Tracks” features more than just a few of the best visual passages you’ll see in 2014, taking advantage of vivid natural lighting. In a fitting example of the film’s touch, director John Curran barely adds anything to the environment he is capturing. His contribution to an aesthetic of camels, an actress fully into the environment, and a sunlight only found from nature, is the tune “Starlight.” It is pure bliss.

“Tracks” continues its limited release in Chicago on September 26th. Featuring Mia Wasikowska and Adam Driver. Directed by John Curran. Rated “R”

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