

Reel Honest Reviews

I spend MY money and MY time so that you don't need to waste yours!

“Half A Man” Full of Emotion by Pamela Powell



“Half A Man,” part of the Toronto International Film Festival ‘Short Cuts’ program, packs in full-length emotion in under 20 minutes. In this beautifully shot film directed by Kritina Kumric and written by Maja Hrgovic depicting her personal story about the effects of war in a very different way. It’s the impact upon the family seen from a child’s perspective which is not typically acknowledged let alone portrayed in film. We see how war changes everyone in a family, how you look at life and how you live it. “The short film is the winning project of the competition ‘One picture from the Homeland War,’” a part of the Croatian Adiovisual Centre and the Ministry of Veterans’ Affairs. It is also a part of the book ‘Zivjet cemo bolje’ (‘We Live Better’) authored by Hrgovic as well. “The film is a result of a nationwide competition seeking to address the traumas sustained by war veterans and their loved ones.”

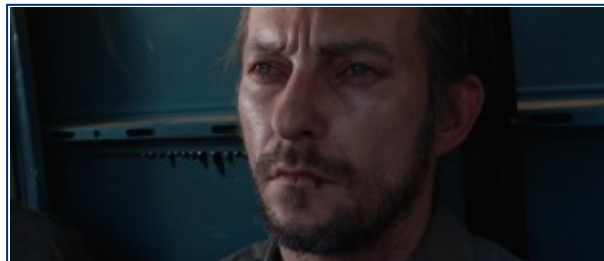
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We are introduced to two young girls: 10 year old Mia, an unbelievably feisty and tenacious girl and the more diplomatic, introverted 12 year old Lorena. Both girls deal with the day’s big event of their father returning from a 3-month captivity at a prisoner of war camp. As they rehearse for a recital

approaching, we immediately see, even in this activity, how the girls have dealt with the absence of their father as well as the unknown truth that lies just moments in front of them.



Upon Father's return, it is evident that he is not the same person that left not that long ago. From Lorena and Mia's mother's reaction to the girls and friends who gather, everyone approaches the father from a different angle, but none of them are quite sure how to navigate this unfamiliar territory. It's a harsh look at life and the unexpected, yet most likely very common, consequences of war in our lives.



From the opening scene, the style of filmmaking pulls us into the situation, allowing us to be a part of what's happening so that we can feel the emotion that pours from each character. Mia's anger and yearning to fight anyone who disagrees with her, somehow endears you to her. Her expressions of "don't mess with me" cover deep within a scared little girl who needs to be sheltered from what's to come. As the song "I Need A Hero" by Bonnie Tyler appropriate plays in the background, we hear each

of their reactions to this rather catatonic war veteran and perhaps get a glimpse into the crystal ball predicting all of their futures.

The story is a powerfully poignant one, with rich characters who are real yet complex. These two children, particularly "Mia," give such heartfelt performances, it is as if they are drawing upon real life experiences. The intensity and keen understanding of the "Mia" character is as mesmerizing as it is commanding. With this type of performance from all of the actors, the story is irresistibly compelling. The insightful dialogue will take your breath away as the words shatter your heart. This short film is worthy of any full-length feature as it allows the viewer to not only understand the story, but to somehow have empathy for the characters.



"Half A Man" will strike a chord that resonates within all of us whether or not we have directly been effected by the horrors of war. Skillful acting, directing, and writing bring you an unforgettable story of family, love, and survival.

If you're lucky enough to be at the 2016 TIFF, be sure to put this film on your list:

Saturday, September 10, 10 pm at Scotiabank 14 (World Premiere)

Friday, September 16, 9:15 pm at Scotiabank 14

(Press & Industry screening on Sunday, September 11, 11:15 am at Scotiabank 6)

For more information about the film, go to tiff.net/films/half-a-man

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