

Rating: ««««

out of «««««

Running Time:
98 minutes

This feature from Bleeker Street Media opens at theaters in Albuquerque, New Mexico on March 25.

There have been a great many movies based on adventurers getting themselves stranded in the wilderness, leaving them isolated and warding off impossible conditions to reach safety. “Infinite Storm” is yet another of these survival tales.

Based on a true story, it follows a pair of individuals atop a mountain caught in a blizzard. Although the plot itself is a familiar one, the feature does provide solid performances and unique depictions of the central characters, making it distinctive enough to garner a recommendation.

Pam Bales (Naomi Watts) is a Search and Rescue Team member who lives near Mount

Washington, New Hampshire (home to the highest peak in the Northeastern US).

Despite reports of a possible snowstorm, the seasoned, well-prepped figure decides to take a hike up the mountain. After several hours, conditions worsen and Bales considers leaving.

But after noting sneaker tracks in the snow, she feels compelled to find the individual and warn them of the danger. After encountering her own troubles in the poor conditions, she eventually crosses paths with a barely conscious, uncommunicative and frostbitten individual whom she calls John (Billy Howe). Despite his protests and resistance over her efforts, she battles to get him down the mountain.

For the first 20 minutes, everything is played in a simple and minimalist manner. We witness an average, routine day in the life of Bales, walking trails and taking in the sights.

The feature is beautifully photographed, with some truly spectacular images of the mountain and park. In fact, the movie almost serves as a pretty travelogue for the region (while set in the US, it was actually shot in Slovenia).

There is a comment made late in the film about there being beauty in even the worst aspects of life, but the movie is almost too attractive at times. The gorgeousness on display and occasionally glossy lighting doesn’t always communicate how harsh and gritty the situation is.

Still, tension does arise as the weather turns. Bales herself runs into trouble and then must deal with the surprisingly difficult John. The movie is unique in that John is something of a mysterious and frustrating character, getting the two into more trouble instead of being thankful for the assistance.

It’s an interesting dynamic, as Bales tries to maintain some semblance of positivity while going through the ringer with unappreciative company. This adds tension as the two leads go through some harrowing events. And, despite the film being set on an open and snowy mountain, there is even an unusually claustrophobic moment or two during one nasty fall.

Another plus is that in many movies with a similar theme, there are awkward expositional exchanges between characters in which they share their history and backstory. This movie doesn’t try to squeeze in any inauthentic dialogue between the leads. John is consistently unfriendly, while Bales is too busy trying to lead them out of danger to share personal details about herself.

Instead, the feature waits to explain more about John’s motivation and why Bales is so determined to save his life. Had the two opened up to each other while on the mountain, it all would have come across as corny. Thankfully, the film takes a quieter approach, which is more effective and ends up delivering a bigger emotional punch.

While based on a real event, anyone who has seen these types of films won’t be surprised by many of the physical challenges the protagonist has to endure. Still, “Infinite Storm” delivers some striking imagery, a few tense moments and at least offers a different approach to the personal interactions between the characters stuck in a blizzard. For those seeking out a nature survival film, it is enough to make it a trek worth taking.

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By Glenn Kay
For the Sun