



I think it was "Australia week" for me as I had the privilege of reviewing "Beautiful Kate." Here is another Australian movie directed by another wonderful Australian director, Rachel Ward. Many of us may remember her from "The Thorn Birds" and " Against All Odds" in the 1980s; both wonderful pieces.

"Beautiful Kate" is the film adaptation of the novel (of the same name) written by American author, Newton Thornburg. Although the novel is set in rural Idaho, Rachel Ward does a brilliant job of setting it in rural Australia. Isolation is isolation no matter where you live.

"Kate" deals with some very pedestrian, yet some very taboo subjects; there is an over-bearing patriarch, a dysfunctional family, and energetic teens with no means of channeling their energy so far out in the country. I have to be very careful not to give away the details of this film since their discovery is what makes the film work. We have Ned, successful writer, who comes home to visit his dying father, Bruce (Bryan Brown). Ned brings his very young fiance with him to pass the time, but it is she who ends up finding the skeletons in Ned's past forcing him to deal with them. Ned is one of four children: Cliff, Ned and Kate (twins), and Sally. There are only two of them left and it's the events of one summer long ago that claimed the lives of Cliff and Kate. Ned has to come to terms with what happened and make peace with what is left of the family.

"Kate" is a little hard to watch at times because, you, the viewer, know where the story is headed, but the characters go there anyway. I think the personal transformation of Ned is dramatic and heartbreaking as he comes to the realization that his version of what happened that summer isn't what he thought at all. So sad.

Bryan Brown is stunning as always and turns in a performance that makes you pity, hate, and then love by the end. Thanks Bryan. His wife, Rachel Ward, treats the subject matter with respect and is careful not to make you judge or point fingers at any one person. "Beautiful Kate" is just a series of unfortunate events.

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