

A Quiet Place delivers strong performances, a few gasps

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: ««« out of ««««

Running Time: 90 minutes

An excellent cast can sometimes be the difference between a project that doesn't suspend disbelief or come together, and one that sends chills down the spine. *A Quiet Place* offers a minor twist or two on the creature feature formula. However, the cast sells the material so well that one can overlook its shortcomings fairly easily. Despite a few questionable tropes simply designed to put the leads in danger, the movie delivers the goods and is an effective little scare flick.

The story is set in a deserted small town and farm, following a family as they anxiously wander through the area in their bare feet. Lee (John Krasinski) and Evelyn (Emily Blunt) lead their children Marcus (Noah Jupe), Regan (Millicent Simmonds) and Beau (Cade Woodward), using little more than sign language to communicate and insisting that no one in their party make so much as a peep. It soon becomes clear why when a sound echoes through the empty street.

Initially striking are the scenic colors and photography around the primary locations. It's a beautiful environment that contrasts well with the empty streets and disheveled stores with overturned carts. The foreboding is further emphasized by the sound design. This is an incredibly quiet movie with long stretches of complete silence, again adding tension and drama to the proceedings. Shots of the ground and floors offer a threat in the form of noise from any creaky floorboard or shuffling. The film also gets great use from a rogue nail sticking out a barn staircase that could cause the characters to shriek and result in instant death. All of these moments are played out for maximum effectiveness.

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While watching, it does become apparent that despite the unique silent treatment, there are some tropes on display. As the story progresses, it is revealed that the protagonists has decided to add a new arrival to the family. There isn't any discussion of whether another clan member is a great idea considering the horrific circumstances. Still, if one can simply accept this story element and allow it as a genre tactic to create unwanted noise and dramatic tension, it shouldn't be a big distraction. Additionally, as the movie climaxes, the invaders are shown too much. It also takes longer than it should for the leads to come to a conclusion about the foe's weakness.

Still, what ultimately elevates the film above these issues are its characters. A great deal of personal time is allotted between them and the performances are excellent all around. Since the actors don't have much in the way of actual dialogue, they all have to communicate their terror, fears and other emotions with facial expressions as well as through their eyes. That's an incredibly difficult task, but all of the characters including the children are up to the job. They're completely convincing in an exaggerated situation.

So, while the movie doesn't completely stray from genre film trappings, the characters are unique and events are handled in an interesting enough manner to keep one's attention and create a consistent air of nervousness and terror. That's already more than most horror films can accomplish. It may not be a noisy or jarring scare flick, but if one can find a suitably muted theater to view it in (the cinema where I saw the film had loud patrons who were amplified by the silence and caused some distraction), *A Quiet Place* should easily illicit a few gasps.

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