



# IDOL

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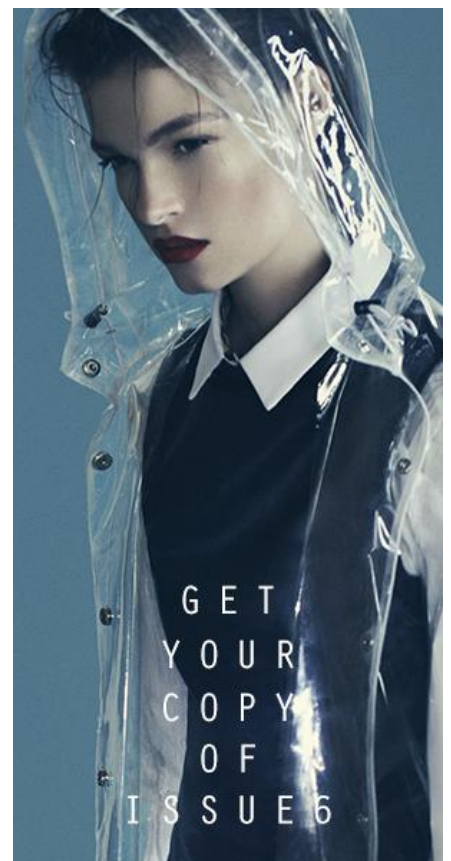
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**REVIEW: HOW I LIVE NOW » FILM**



Director: Kevin MacDonald. Cast: Saoirse Ronan, Tom Holland, Harley Bird, Anna Chancellor.

Following the success of the cinematic transformation of teen novel series, *The Hunger Games*, it's easy to understand why Meg Rosoff's novel was picked up in the first place. Pseudo-apocalyptic themes have certainly been trending over the last couple of years but Kevin MacDonald brings something genuinely fresh to the table through his interpretation. Considering his past directorial work (*Last King of Scotland*, *Marley*, *Touching the Void*), it was intriguing to discover how he took on such far removed subject matter.





How I Live Now confronts a variety of issues both personal and societal and initially you get the disquieting feeling that maybe they've bitten off a bit more than they can proverbially chew. This lingering doubt is quickly swept away, however, as you come to understand just how shrewdly these matters are made cyclical and integral to the film's emphasis.

The film is essentially a character study and, to some extent, a coming of age story set against the background of a crumbling, war-stricken, rural England. The protagonist, Daisy, played by Saoirse Ronan is introduced as an angst-ridden, self-loathing American teenager battling some derivation of an obsessive-compulsive disorder. At the very beginning, when Daisy has first arrived in England, there are a series of serenely scenic shots of the roads and countryside which give you that unparalleled joyous feeling of returning to the UK on a summer's day. After the tragedy of World War III strikes, the same environment is shown desolated in damp destruction.



There is charming comedy in the first half, realised most promisingly in the performance of ten-year-old Harley Bird who is commanding throughout. This group of youths, left to their own devices in the country, is almost reminiscent of a twenty-first century Lord of the Flies (without the cannibalism). Then, quite suddenly, everything changes and the film takes on a violent, abrasive and saddening tone. The journey back, driven by love and loss, becomes the crux of the story and you can't help but think of John Hillcoat's The Road or even of the first installment of Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.

With the film both beginning and ending with references to mental health issues, it can perhaps be inferred that war is exemplified here as both a cure and a cause for mental strife and singular demise. Whilst Daisy' torturous experience settles her demons, the post-traumatic stress of her cousin-come-lover's war is poignant and reflective of nuclear trepidation.

**Watch the trailer here:**

How I Live Now is in UK cinemas October 4th.

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Images courtesy of Tumblr

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