Review: Joe (David Gordon Green, 2013)

It has been labeled Nicolas Cage's great comeback. After years of substandard performances in, frankly, quite awful movies, he has finally embodied a character that has elements of himself. Cage depicts Joe's eponymous character with every ounce of dry wit and internal anger that he requires.

A boy living an unfortunate life catches the attention of a woodsman in the forest on the outskirts of his town. The man, an ex-con, employs him, prompting a relationship between two tormented souls.

Commendations must be made to Gordon Green for picking himself up after a couple of rather awful films (we'll try and forget Your Highness). His versatility translates into a gorgeous if indelibly sullen film about suffering, that lets its viewer rake through thick dead foliage to find its true heart. That's partially in credit to screenwriter Gary Hawkins too, in crafting a script that almost twists the characters to have smiles to cover their dark pasts. These pasts are hinted to throughout, always thwarted by warm conversation between Joe and his young companion, Gary, yet are brought bleakly to the forefront as the film approaches its dramatic conclusion.

Whilst Nicolas Cage is receiving a lot of the praise related to Joe, the films real profound talent comes in the form of fair newcomer Tye Sheridan. Playing Gary, the abused young boy intent on making something of himself, he delivers a performance both winsome and tactfully bleak. He embodies both side of his character with the transitory affect of a sunset; beautifully well timed and performed.

Joe is a meritorious interpretation of companionship through

dark times. It has all the features of the great American classics and will, in good time, stand stead as a career highlight for those who were involved.

It may not be the most joyful of films, but Joe stands mysterious, bleak and yet rich, head and shoulders above the rest of Gordon Green's cinematic catalogue.

Joe opens at the Cameo, Home St this weekend.