



## **DISAPPEARANCES PRESS QUOTES (2007)**

*“Palpable, intimate and magical with the vivid textures of rural outback life, Craven’s delightfully simple narrative operates on powerful metaphorical levels.”*

**–Shaz Bennett, Senior Programmer, American Film Institute’s AFI Fest**

*“Stunning.”* **–Katrina Yeager, Yankee Magazine**

*“...lovingly handmade...beautiful and raw...imbued with a robust charm.”*

**–Stephen Holden, New York Times**

“Jay Craven’s *Disappearances* is an extraordinary accomplishment, a Depression-era piece made on a sub-shoestring budget. This Peckinpah-like Eastern Western stars grizzled Kris Kristofferson as a ex-moonshiner on a last quest, an optimist forever. “Just the opposite of me,” Kristofferson said at Austin.”

**–Gerald Peary, Boston Phoenix**

“As usual in Craven’s films, there are many strong performances (Kristofferson, Gary Farmer as a jovial uncle, and Genevieve Bujold as superstitious Cordelia) and the kind of richly evocative landscape photography one associates with the work of Carroll Ballard or Terrence Malick.”

**–Scott Foundas, LA Weekly**

**“A Magic-realist Outlaw Tale of Subtle Rewards”** “A frontier spirit and a strong connection to the landscape inform *Disappearances*, which aims not to wow but to immerse the viewer in a mystical, hardscrabble bygone world. Craven explores matters of character, family and fate with a wise restraint; even the film’s passages of magic-realism are subdued. With its dreamy languor and nature-attuned rhythms, and the presence of three near-iconic figures of art house cinema — Kris Kristofferson, Genevieve Bujold and Gary Farmer – *Disappearances* will lure buffs and adventurous filmgoers.”

“The Vermont-based director has a clear feel for the place and its history. *Disappearances* unfolds in the state’s Kingdom County in 1932, centering on Bonhomme patriarch Quebec Bill (Kristofferson), a man of remarkable equanimity and resilience.”

“Eerily beautiful and led by Kristofferson’s fascinating Quebec Bill, the cast delivers flavorful but un-showy performances that suit the material. Wolfgang Held’s graceful, evocative widescreen camerawork and the Arcadian/Celtic dirge of the score by composers Judy Hyman and Jeff Claus are strong components of the impressively realized low-budget production.”

**–Sheri Linden, Reuters**



“A frequently mesmerizing stirring acted frontier tale...pic is clearly concerned with themes of parentage and the blessings and curses fathers bequeath to their sons. Craven’s poetic sensibility is steeped in an appreciation of nature, as well as an awareness of man’s ability to exist both in harmony and at odds with it, sometimes simultaneously. At the same time, the tale’s supernatural contrivances clash with the harsh, unforgiving realism of the world in which the characters find themselves stranded.”

“Performances are uniformly strong. Kristofferson’s weathered features and irascible charm couldn’t be better tailored to the role of a stubborn yet bracingly optimistic paterfamilias, while McDermott matches his every nuance as the decidedly un-wild Wild Bill. Wolfgang Held’s widescreen photography emphasizes the chilly grays and blues of the wooded landscapes, while the flavorful score by Judy Hyman and Jeff Claus (also composers for *Rivers* and *Stranger*) adds a crucial element to the film’s exquisite sense of place.”

– Justin Chang, *Variety*

‘Disappearances’ short on budget, long on charm. “The sometimes magical people who populate the movie *Disappearances* — primarily a feisty Vermont clan on a raid to steal illegal Canadian whiskey from a notorious whiskey pirate during Prohibition — obviously don’t know their own limitations. Led by an aging ex-bootlegger named Quebec Bill (Kris Kristofferson, in a role that’s perfect for him), they’re a frowzy little wild bunch that includes Quebec Bill, Q.B.’s boy Wild Bill (Charlie McDermott), Q.B.’s philosophical Iroquois brother-in-law Henry (Gary Farmer), and his bad-tempered hired hand Rat (William Sanderson). All of them are chasing a dangerous dream of romantic outlawry that tends to explode, amusingly but also scarily, in their faces. The moviemakers don’t know their own limitations either. *Disappearances* was shot for only \$1.7 million, but it’s a thoroughly entertaining, first-class job in every way — something we can apparently expect from the excellent Vermont-based director-writer-producer Jay Craven. The cast, which also includes Genevieve Bujold as Bill’s sister Cordelia and Lothaire Bluteau as the whiskey pirate Carcajou, is absolutely wonderful. The widescreen color cinematography of the Vermont and Canadian wilds is uncommonly beautiful, spacious and poetic. And the script is a rollicking, literate delight with dark, sad undertones.”?

*Disappearances*, has all the virtues of independent filmmaking and few of the drawbacks. The movie looks like far more than a million dollars and it offers the kind of smart, picaresque good time you get from books like William Faulkner’s *The Reivers* and Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* and movies like *Bronco Billy* and *Bonnie and Clyde*. Mosher wrote *Disappearances* in 1976 in a public library that straddles the border between Vermont and Canada. And the movie, like the book, uses the metaphor of border crossings in a hip, high-spirited way, along with old-fashioned trains, river runs and rites of passage. Wild Bill is our focal point, growing up here as he watches his irresponsible dad run amok for what may be the last wild time. We see this world and its charming, crazy wonders through the boy’s fresh eyes: the rivers and forests; the mysterious appearances and disappearances of magical realist Cordelia, who materializes like talkative mist; the slightly plastered Benedictine monk Brother St. Hilaire (or “Hilarious,” as Quebec Bill calls him) played by Luis Guzman; the patriarchal crook Carcajou who bewilderingly appears in both Union and Confederate Civil War uniforms; and Henry’s fast, scrappily elegant car “White Lightning,” which gets less elegant as the games get rougher and deadlier. Watching all these people, seeing and hearing all these intoxicating sights and sounds, you may be tempted to call out “Bravo!” Or maybe “Whiskey forever! Prohibition never!”

–Michael Wilmington, *Chicago Tribune*



“Aside from the presence of a few cars and a biplane, the setting of *Disappearances* — Kingdom County in Vermont during the closing days of Prohibition in 1932 — might as well be 1870s Deadwood in the Black Hills of the Dakota Territory. In some ways life in rural New England was even more hardscrabble. The characters in this picaresque western, adapted by Jay Craven from Howard Frank Mosher’s 1977 novel, speak in biblical cadences. Compared to the conversation in the frontier town of HBO’s *Deadwood*, their dialogue is leaner, leached of profanity and, save for one character’s pronouncements, not overtly poetic. That exception is a wizened female oracle with magic powers given to spouting Shakespeare and Milton. The movie’s code, however, is the same kill-or-be-killed law of the jungle. This is a world so primitive that supernatural forces rule. Ghosts materialize and vanish, and the mythic past lives in the present. The land is beautiful and raw. Visually *Disappearances* is an ode to virgin forests, clean lakes, and rivers and icy brooks teeming with trout.”

–**Stephen Holden, *New York Times***

“Kris Kristofferson, playing a whiskey smuggler, gives his most animated performance in years in Jay Craven’s *Disappearances*, a charming coming-of-age film set in 1932 Canada. Joined by his teenage son (Charlie McDermott), Kristofferson’s Quebec Bill, a teetotaler who’s been living a placid life as a farmer, decides to make one last run to quench the thirsts of Prohibition-era Americans. He swipes a load of whiskey that’s already been stolen from Seagram’s by a rival bandit (Lothaire Bluteau). The beautifully photographed *Disappearances* is solidly old-fashioned entertainment.”

–**Lou Limenick, *New York Post***

“It’s only when you realize that writer/director Jay Craven is using the woods of Depression-era Vermont as the setting for a pirate movie that this magical-realist picaresque starts to make sense. Of course, if you’re one of those people (like this reviewer) who can watch Kris Kristofferson do just about anything, you won’t insist on the references being that solid - that Kristofferson’s character, Quebec Bill Bonhomme, plays Long John Silver to his own young son, Wild Bill (Charlie McDermott), for instance, or that their scheme to steal liquor from another bootlegger, the murderous Carcajou (a convincingly crazy Lothaire Bluteau), is their personal trip to Skeleton Island. Or that the always-cuddly Gary Farmer is Wild Bill’s Captain Smollett. Or that his aunt, the mad-as-a-hatter Cordelia (Geneviève Bujold) keeps materializing in the most unlikely places. The Bonhomme family - which includes sometimes-director Heather Rae as Wild Bill’s mother, Evangeline - is on the verge of economic collapse and Quebec Bill’s return to the outlaw life is a necessity. But equally crucial is the introduction of Wild Bill to smuggling, guns, and whiskey, at least if he wants to be an epic romantic hero.”

–**John Anderson, *New York Newsday***



“Though set in Vermont in the 1930s, this has the feel of a Western — one with mystical overtones — and provides a great role for Kris Kristofferson, who’s looking well weathered these days. It’s a heartfelt effort made on a very modest budget. Kristofferson plays Quebec Bill, an amiable farmer and former rumrunner whose financial troubles force him into one last illicit job, bringing a load of Canadian whiskey across the border. He enlists his teenage son, the ironically named Wild Bill (Charlie McDermott), a green kid who needs to learn the ways of the world. Also involved are Quebec Bill’s shrewd brother-in-law (Gary Farmer), who owns a Cadillac called White Lightning that’s just right for carrying booze, and Rat (William Sanderson), a farmhand with a dubious past. Wild Bill’s mom (Heather Rae) hovers in the background, and the boy seems to have a much closer relationship to Cordelia (Genevieve Bujold), his whip-smart aunt who advises him to read Shakespeare and Milton. She offers a counterpoint to Quebec Bill’s notions of how he should be raised, and her mentoring continues even after the male characters have left her behind. The gorgeous north-woods setting lends some resonance to the proceedings. The film is well-acted, particularly by Kristofferson, Bujold and Farmer. There’s a decent score, by Judy Hyman and Jeff Claus, with overtones of Acadian and Celtic music.

–**Walter Adiego, *San Francisco Chronicle***

“Credit writer-director Jay Craven for making a ravishingly photographed frontier epic without studio funding. A western for the north country, the film has Kris Kristofferson’s grizzly Vermonter passing the torch to his blank-faced son (Charlie McDermott) on a Canadian whiskey run during Prohibition’s height. It’s a long journey, replete with redemptive women, Indians, and ghosts... and Kristofferson’s wildcat grin is always worth the price of admission.”

–**Max Goldberg, *San Francisco Bay Guardian***

“*Genuinely suspenseful.*” –**Tom Keogh, *Seattle Times***

“*Unfolds like a dream—half reverie, half nightmare—gorgeously shot by cinematographer Wolfgang Held.*” –**Tom Beer, *Time Out, New York***

“*Genuinely magnificent. Impeccably rich in the detail of period and place, but hallucinatory and unsettling in the treatment of heredity and obligation.*”

– **Peter Storey, director, *Declaration Independents Film Festival, London***

“*Sensuous...amusing...dazzling and dreamlike...Craven finds the poetry in Mosher’s Canadian-Vermont vernacular and voices and makes a valid connection between William Faulkner’s Mississippi and Mosher’s Kingdom County. Authentic-sounding North Country-style music by Judy Hyman and Jeff Claus is another big plus.*”

–**Jim Verniere, *Boston Herald***



*“The misty fields and forests and the rolling hills and twisting creeks of Kingdom County in Vermont prove to be as much a character as Kris Kristofferson’s feisty, headstrong Quebec Bill. Craven blends the fantastical—peacocks, prognostication—with stark Depression-era reality—potatoes, hay—as he examines the challenges of living within and at odds with nature. The most vital subtext, though, involves what’s inherited—the curses and strengths—and what’s lost between father and son.”*

**–Nina MacLaughlin, Boston Phoenix**

*“Wild adventure...pure fun.”* – **Wesley Morris, Boston Globe**

***Disappearances* Opens a New Chapter on the Literary Film.** “*Disappearances* plays surprisingly well. The movie has a literary quality, and not just because everyone’s always quoting Shakespeare. It’s filled with metaphors, the dialogue is as elaborately slangy as Damon Runyan’s (“A dreadful man-handling is about to take place,” says Kris Kristofferson when he’s fixing to punch someone), the macabre humor has the bleak spareness of William Faulkner and there’s a ghostly character (played by Genevieve Bujold) who periodically pops up to dispense wisdom and who is named after Shakespeare’s Cordelia.”

“In another movie, every one of those things would be enough to make you nervous - especially since Terry Gilliam recently employed similar tactics in the disastrous *Tidelands* - but *Disappearances* knits them all together into a satisfying yarn.”

“It’s set during the Depression. Kristofferson plays a farmer whose land is endangered and who decides a whiskey run is the answer to settling his debts. Despite repeated ghostly warnings from Bujold, he hauls his son, William, along on the trip to Canada for Seagram’s, an adventure that shifts from rollicking to horrifying when shots are fired and gangster toes are stepped on.”

“Writer/director Jay Craven masterfully balances the tricky tone, giving *Disappearances* a surreal quality that allows him to dip into American Indian philosophy and Greek mythology without seeming ridiculous. Ironically, by divorcing the story from reality, Craven makes it possible for us to focus on the real moral issues that William faces as he deals with his nut-filled family tree.”

**–Chris Hewitt, Pioneer Press (St. Paul, Minnesota)**

***Disappearances* a Marvelous, Subtly Crafted Film.** “If Sam Peckinpah had set one of his closing-of-the-frontier sagas in woodsy 1930s Vermont, it would have been something like “*Disappearances*,” a marvelous, subtly crafted elegy to a bygone era that balances its scenes of violence and gunplay with laconic humor.”

“The gorgeously photographed *Disappearances* opens with hard-luck farmer Quebec Bill Bonhomme (Kris Kristofferson), a onetime rum-runner, being forced back into the bootlegging business. Bill is both a loquacious dreamer and a daredevil man of action, and the fact that he named his 15-year-old son (Charlie McDermott) “Wild Bill” has more to do with his hopes for the boy than his mild-mannered nature.”



“When he agrees to run 20 cases of liquor across the Canadian border with his wry Iroquois brother-in-law Henry (Gary Farmer) and oddball hired man Rat (William Sanderson), the boy is eager to come along for the adventure. He gets what he wants and a lot more. Once you’ve gotten drunk with your elders for the first time and shot your first man, things never look the same.”

“What follows is a high-spirited, exciting yarn with a significant number of bruising life lessons for the wide-eyed tag-along as the team is pursued by Carcajou (Lothaire Bluteau), a merciless and seemingly bulletproof rival whiskey bandit. Kristofferson is in fine, craggy form, fiddling up a storm to put a barroom full of suspicious strangers at ease, hijacking a railroad train and laconically calling their dangerous mission “the trip to end all trips” as they stay one step ahead of the lethal Carcajou. With his back pressed to the wall, he uses the liquor run as an opportunity to pass on his values to Wild Bill before time runs out.”

**–Colin Covert, *Minneapolis Star Tribune***

“An elegy to a vanishing way of life, to dearly departed loved ones, and to innocent youth. *Disappearances* has all the elements of a lighthearted adventure, and in Kristofferson, it has its ideal leading man, the grizzled actor-musician wielding his roguish cool to perfect effect as the devil-may-care Quebec Bill.”

**–Nick Schager, *Slant***

“From his kingdom amid the majestic mountains and forests of Kingdom County, Vermont, Jay Craven (THE YEAR THAT TREMBLED) has established himself as one of America’s foremost independent regional filmmakers. DISAPPEARANCES could be called a Northern Western, and Craven uses the Canadian border as distinctively as Peckinpah used the Mexican one. But this isn’t the only border crossed: there’s also the border between childhood and adulthood negotiated by Bill’s 15-year-old son (McDermott) in a rousing rite-of-passage adventure out of Hemingway and Cormac McCarthy, and, most provocatively, the border between the ordinary world and the magical one of legends, curses, apparitions. . . and inexplicable disappearances.”

**–Marty Rubin, Curator, *Gene Siskel Film Center, Art Institute of Chicago***

“Regional filmmaking is supposedly on the rise, but most movies shot outside Hollywood or New York still have a bland feel of setting up cameras in a location and just getting the surface. Not so the films of New England’s Jay Craven. “Disappearances” is the kind of peculiar movie that could only be made by someone working on a very low budget - which buys creative license. Part period drama and part fantastical folk tale, this movie defies characterization. But I enjoyed being around it. It’s 1932, near the end of Prohibition. Up in north Vermont, an old rascal and former bootlegger named Quebec Bill (Kris Kristofferson) plots to make a run across the Canadian border to pick up a load of whiskey and smuggle it back across. His confederates in this illegal enterprise are a skeptical brother-in-law (Gary Farmer) and a crotchety sidekick (William Sanderson). Most importantly, he also has his teenage son (Charlie McDermott) in tow.”



“Taking the kid is a highly irresponsible decision, but we get the idea that Quebec Bill isn’t exactly destined for a Norman Rockwell painting. What follows is an adventure, with its share of lethal danger. Some of this plays out a little like William Faulkner’s “The Reivers,” with a strong sense of a momentous journey being recalled. What’s different about this movie is that it goes from being realistic to mythological, especially when Quebec Bill and the boys steal whiskey from a crazed smuggler.”

“The film has flavorful dialogue, great locations and an iconic performance by Kristofferson. There’s something about it that feels original.”

–**Robert Horton, *Everett Herald, Seattle***

“*Soothing to the eyes...Craven has a strong eye for capturing the glory of nature. Kristofferson gives a relaxed, enjoyable, down-home good ol’ boy performance.*”

–**Ed Symkus, *Cambridge Chronicle***

“*A dreamy adventure film about uncovering a family mystery. The trip is worth taking.*”

–**Rick Warner, *Bloomberg.com***

“*Keeps viewers on the edge of their seats...entertaining and emotionally rewarding... a wild and rollicking adventure—with an added touch of mystery”... easily Craven’s best film to date.*”

–**Jim Lowe, *Times Argus/Rutland Herald***

“*Shifts into high gear, stomps on the gas, and steers straight for a magical backwoods. Kristofferson’s performance is understated and restrained yet brimming with humor and life...it’s some of the best work he’s ever done.*”

–**Rick Kisonak, *Seven Days and WPTZ-TV***

“A really good show. First of all, there’s the stunning cinematography, a benchmark of this independent Vermont filmmaker’s movies to date. But more so, we were taken by the striking, moving, and often disturbing characters which we came to know in the 90-minute tale. Front and center is Kristofferson as Quebec Bill. But we were also impressed by Gary Farmer as Henry Coville and Charlie McDermott as Wild Bill. The film has gripping characterizations, plenty of action—including one heck of a runaway train sequence—and enough mysticism and symbolism to rival Harry Potter. Catch “Disappearances” when it comes over to our side of the river. But don’t expect a traditional ending.”

–**Charles J. Jordan, *The Colebrook Chronicle and Lancaster Herald***

“*Should be seen...a well-acted, beautifully shot independent movie...a whiskey-soaked run for your life.*” –**Ann Wood, *Provincetown Banner***



“With its undercurrents of ghosts and legends, *Disappearances* is one of the must-see films at this year’s Nantucket Film Festival.”

–**Festival Programmer Kelly Clement quoted in the *Nantucket Inquirer and Mirror***

“*Majestic*” –**June Pichel Cook, *Hardwick Gazette***

“Personally, I think this is a wonderful movie. I think it really achieves something special artistically. It creates a mood, texture, music and look in its early frames and it sustains that feeling—the mood is carried through the entire film. There are moments where we don’t if we’re in a dream or our imagination or what realm we’re in—of what’s really happening and what isn’t happening. But that becomes part of the ongoing power of the whole movie. I think that this may be the best thing that Jay’s ever done.”

–**Ken Peck, *Reel Independents*, Vermont Public Television**

“*Captures Kristofferson at his most rugged, most dynamic, most vulnerable.*”

–**Brent Hallenbeck, *Burlington Free Press***

“*Plenty of action to keep you watching.*” –***Savannah Morning News***

Movie website: <http://www.disappearancesmovie.com/>

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