



THE SURVIVALIST

DIRECTED BY STEPHEN FINGLETON

Raw, gritty and realistic, Stephen Fingleton's *The Survivalist* serves as a reprieve from the cinematic splurge of teen dystopian films as of late. Stripping it back down to basics in every sense of the word, Fingleton presents the aftermath of a depopulated society, reminding us that, whilst on some occasions welcomed, visual effects are not the be-all and end-all of dystopian film.

The Survivalist fixates on a lone survivor in the woods, after starvation has caused the population to drastically plummet, taking with it those unable to survive, and leaving behind those who are willing to do so by any means necessary. In the solitary confinements of his cabin, he pursues a mundane daily routine of tending to crops and searching for supplies, whilst flinching at any sudden movement.

Disturbing the unnamed survivor's 'peace' - a word used loosely - is an elderly woman played by Olwen Fouéré, and her daughter, played by Mia Goth. Their pleas for him to spare them supplies given that he has more than enough are retorted with a begrudging "that's what they all thought". With the kill-or-be-killed nature of the film exposed from

the outset, the arrival of these strangers pose a threat to his survival. So much so, that few shots exist where his shotgun is not at the ready, should the event unfold where he has turned his back for just a second too long.

Reliant on performance rather than dialect, Fingleton's use of visual exposition seems fitting given the reclusive post-apocalyptic society he conveys. Honing in on the natural sounds of heavy breathing, twig-snapping or the crackling of fire, the impact of isolation is heightened ever more by such fixation upon sounds that would merely be dismissed in any situation other than one that threatens your entire existence.

Intense at times and introverted at others, *The Survivalist* explores how, typically of human nature, survival revolves around bargaining, adapting and ulterior motives. This is a film where a human being is not considered company. A human being is considered a threat; an extra mouth to feed at a time where there is scarcely enough to feed oneself; an extra tick on the tally chart of people you've had to put into the ground before they put you in there first.