

# NETFLIX AND CHILL

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## Netflix and Chill: Hunt for the Wilderpeople

Eric Anderson



Sam Neill and Julian Dennison star as Hec and Ricky Baker an unlikely tag-team of misfits, in Taika Waititi's "Hunt for the Wilderpeople"

### Film: Hunt for the Wilderpeople (2016)

Director: Taika Waititi

Rating: ★★★★★

Since 2014's vampire mockumentary "What We Do in the Shadows" had me laughing to the point of tears, there wasn't a chance I was going to miss co-star/writer/director Taika Waititi's newest film, "Hunt for the Wilderpeople." And oddly enough, I wasn't disappointed.

Based on the Barry Crump novel "Wild Pork and Watercress," a clever twist on Huckleberry Finn, "Wilderpeople" is the story of an obese young teen named Ricky Baker (played by Julian Dennison), and his reluctant foster father, Hec (Sam Neill), who are on the run in New Zealand's wilderness from a society that seems hell-bent on misunderstanding them.

It begins with Ricky, the bookish "bad egg" (ay-g), a wannabe gangster guilty of stealing, loitering, kicking stuff and being unwanted since birth, as he's introduced to his new foster home in rural New Zealand. His near happy-ending turns into a desperate flee from the powers when his foster mother and savior, Bella (Rima Te Wiata), suddenly dies and returns from playing with his new dog, Tupac, to find Hec inconsolably sobbing over her body.

Oh, and I almost forgot—hilarity ensues.

After a funeral, presided over by Waititi in cameo, it's revealed that Ricky will be taken away from his new home. Intent on never going back to juvie, he stages a suicide by fire, which ends up sending a shed up in flames. He then heads off to the woods with Bella's ashes in his pack, where adventure and a classic coming of age story await.

After quickly getting lost and running out of food, Ricky is found by Hec, the gruffled and experienced woodsman. The two then become the target in a nationwide manhunt after it's assumed that a depressed Hec has kidnapped Ricky and is holding him against his will.

There are two things that really make this film for me. The first is the hilarious sets of minor characters that comprise the various episodes of the film, imbuing this satiric New Zealand with just enough mad humorism to make Ricky and Hec stand as characters worth rooting for.

The second is the bond between Ricky and Hec. Both of them being misfits might be enough to make them thick as thieves in most films, but what makes "Hunt for the Wilderpeople" stand out is the honesty with which it treats its characters and their troubles. It makes the eventual pseudo-family they form seem all the more genuine and earned.

I'm going to be straight with you, my expectations going in—and shots of that gorgeous New Zealand countryside—might have carried me through the first 20 minutes of the film. That being said, I still wouldn't give a second of it back after seeing how everything plays out by the end. Just like its lovable protagonists, this isn't a film that will win you over with a first impression. Every piece you see is part of what makes it a great experience as a whole.

If you're not into that kind of thing, though, there's still plenty of fat jokes, haikus, and "Lord of the Rings" references to keep you entertained.

["Hunt for the Wilderpeople" is available to stream via Hulu, which offers free a seven-day trial.]



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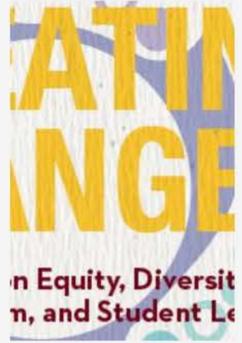
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