

# Jodie Foster: You'll See the Real Mel Gibson in His Next Film

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Jodie Foster and Mel Gibson

Jodie Foster, who has stood by Mel Gibson throughout the very public trials of his private life, hopes audiences reconnect with the actor in his next film – which she directed and also stars in.

"At this particular place, the most beautiful part of Mel, I think, is onscreen," Foster, 48, told PEOPLE at Wednesday's premiere of *The Beaver* at the South By Southwest Film Festival in Austin, Texas. "People will see the movie, and they'll see what an incredibly deep and committed performance he gives, and hopefully they'll have some insight into who Mel is as a human being."

Films may be fiction, Foster says, but they can reveal truths about the actors who work on them.

"Obviously we're playing characters," she says, "but it's our gestures and our psyches that are on the line, and this film is all about a lot of what Mel cares about."

It certainly has an offbeat premise. Half comedy and half tragedy, it stars Gibson, 55, as a clinically depressed man rescued from the brink of suicide by a beaver hand puppet, who becomes his best friend and worst enemy. Foster stars as Gibson's wife.

Gibson was sentenced last week to probation and counseling in a long and sordid battery case involving his ex-girlfriend, Oksana Grigorieva. But Foster says the real Mel Gibson is nothing like the caricature he's become in the media.

People would be surprised, she says, by "what a sensitive person he is, and what an incredibly thoughtful guy he is. He's just an incredibly good friend, and a very thoughtful man."

Foster, Gibson and his rascally rodent.



## The Beaver

Mel Gibson, Jodie Foster, Anton Yelchin

PG-13 | ★★★

### DRAMA

Forget his real life. In this movie, Gibson has a puppet that's funny, cocky and talks like Michael Caine—and that's plenty to chew on. Suicidally depressed, Walter (Gibson) uses his "therapy puppet" to interact with the world. But why does the world put up with it? Walter's wife (Foster, who also directed) never even calls his doctor. (How director Foster made actress Foster do a love scene with Gibson and the beaver, I'll never know.) That said, the film is boldly original. Gibson delivers in a tricky, tragicomic role, and Yelchin shines as Walter's miserable son.

### JODIE FOSTER ON HER FRIEND MEL

Foster, who has stood by her longtime pal through his troubles, says the edgy role was very personal for Gibson. "The most beautiful part of Mel, I think, is onscreen," she says. "People will see what an incredibly deep performance he gives, and hopefully they'll have some insight into who Mel is as a human being." —ANNE LANG