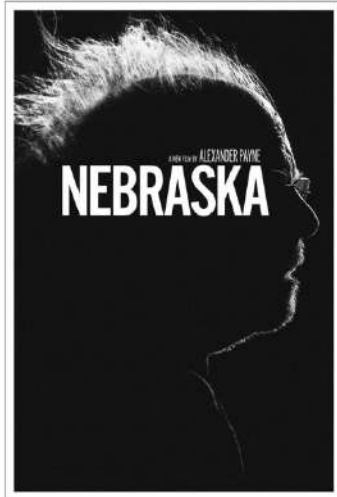


Mark Whelan's Movie Picks

Nebraska (2013) Director: Alexander Payne. 115m Rated: R



Bruce Dern lands the role of a lifetime in Alexander Payne's sobering Midwestern odyssey **Nebraska**; a humble yet highly effectual comedy/drama garnished with the director's patented smirk.

Dern plays Woody Grant, a senile and irritable old codger who believes to have won a million dollars in a sweepstakes and must travel from Billings, Montana, to Lincoln, Nebraska to collect his prize. Regrettably, his tough-as-nails wife (a memorably rancorous June Squibb) is unenthusiastic in carrying out this fantasy. Enter youngest son, Will Forte, to enable and humor the ornery geezer.

The expedition from Billings to Lincoln takes a detour when Dern stumbles, following a night of heavy drinking, and injures himself. This points the wayward duo to Dern's hometown of Hawthorne, Nebraska, where old wounds, closeted skeletons, and loose ends reside.

In correspondance with Bob Nelson's screenplay, Grant's gestures and intricacies are deceptively unassuming. A war veteran and a recovering alcoholic, Grant is embittered with the tedium of his life and invigorates new meaning when positioned with the prospect of inheriting a small fortune.



As are the circumstances with all of Payne's films, **Nebraska** is droll, satiric, and thoughtful. Scruffily photographed in black and white (Phedon Papamichael), demonstrating the somber parallel of Grant with the simplicity of his surroundings.

Nebraska is an honest examination of the American heartland through aged eyes and the best film of 2013.

--Mark Whelan, January 28, 2015