

= Digging for Fire =

Digging for Fire is a 2015 American comedy @-@ drama film directed by Joe Swanberg and co @-@ written by Swanberg and Jake Johnson . It stars an ensemble cast led by Johnson , Rosemarie DeWitt , Orlando Bloom , Brie Larson , Sam Rockwell , Anna Kendrick and Mike Birbiglia . Johnson and DeWitt play a married couple who find a gun and a bone in the backyard of a house they are staying in .

The film 's plot was inspired by a similar incident in which Johnson discovered a gun and a bone in his backyard . Instead of a traditional script , he and Swanberg wrote an outline that summarized the plot but included no dialogue . They cast the film mainly by contacting their friends and other actors who they knew had enjoyed their previous work . It was filmed over 15 days in Los Angeles County , California . Swanberg dedicated the film to filmmaker Paul Mazursky .

Digging for Fire premiered at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival on January 26 , 2015 . It was released in theaters on August 21 , 2015 by The Orchard and on video on demand on August 25 , 2015 . The film was generally well received by critics .

= = Plot = =

Lee ( Rosemarie DeWitt ) , a yoga instructor , brings her husband Tim ( Jake Johnson ) , a gym teacher , and their 3 @-@ year @-@ old son Jude ( Jude Swanberg ) to house @-@ sit in a client 's house for a few weeks while the client is away . While walking around the property , Tim finds a gun and a bone in the backyard . At first he wants to dig up the surrounding ground to see if a body is buried there , but Lee convinces him it is a bad idea .

When Lee and Jude leave for the weekend to stay with her parents so that Tim can work without distraction on the family 's taxes , he invites a group of friends ? including Ray ( Sam Rockwell ) , Phil ( Mike Birbiglia ) , Adam ( Kent Osborne ) , and Paul ( Steve Berg ) ? to the house for the night . After a few drinks , they decide to dig up the backyard together , quickly finding another bone and a license plate . Phil , who is skeptical about the digging , leaves with Adam and Paul as Alicia ( Anna Kendrick ) , Max ( Brie Larson ) and Billy ( Chris Messina ) arrive at the house . Billy pairs off with Alicia and Ray with Max while Tim continues to dig . He finds a shoe before deciding to go to sleep .

The next morning , Tim is visited by a neighbor who warns him that digging for buried items in the backyard is a bad idea and says that the site was once the " Chicano Hall of Fame " . Soon afterwards , Max returns to pick up her purse and finds Tim digging again . She joins him and discovers a plastic bag filled with bones . Meanwhile , Lee goes to visit her sister Squiggy ( Melanie Lynskey ) and brother @-@ in @-@ law Bob ( Ron Livingston ) for an afternoon after complaining to her mother that she no longer feels she has an identity outside of being a mother and wife .

Phil returns to the house and , seeing Tim with Max , assumes that Tim is cheating on Lee . Tim and Max go out to dinner and Tim confesses that he feels his marriage to Lee has deteriorated since they had a child . Lee goes to a bar alone , where she meets Ben ( Orlando Bloom ) . When Ben is punched by another man at the bar , she accompanies him to visit Alicia , who is a medical student and a friend of his , so that Alicia can suture his wound . As Tim and Max smoke marijuana together at the house , Ben cooks dinner for Lee .

Max leaves the house when Ray reappears and Tim accuses Ray of ruining his night . Lee and Ben make their way to the beach and share a kiss . Tim returns to the backyard and uncovers a ring and what appears to be a human hand before he decides to stop digging . He throws everything he has found back into the hole he has dug before starting to fill it in . He walks back up to the house and , finding Lee waiting for him , kisses her . The next morning , they pack up their belongings and go to pick up Jude .

= = Cast = =

= = Production = =

Digging for Fire was based on a real incident in which Jake Johnson and his wife dug up a bone and a gun in the garden of a house they had rented . Over a couple of weeks , he and a group of his friends dug up various objects before deciding to bury them again . Johnson described the experience to Joe Swanberg about three years later and they decided to make a film about it . They wrote a two @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half ? page outline that summarized the plot but included no dialogue or detailed character descriptions . Swanberg wanted the actors to improvise the details of each scene and allowed them to make choices about their characters : for instance , Orlando Bloom decided that his character would ride a motorcycle , Chris Messina suggested that his character go swimming naked , and Brie Larson persuaded Johnson and Swanberg that her character would not be sexually attracted to Tim .

Digging for Fire features an ensemble cast , the largest Swanberg had worked with at the time . He and Johnson cast the film by contacting friends and other actors who they knew had enjoyed their previous film together , Drinking Buddies . Rosemarie DeWitt and Swanberg decided to work together after her husband , Ron Livingston , starred in Drinking Buddies . Unlike the other actors , Orlando Bloom was cast through an agent . Swanberg cast his own son , Jude , as the three @-@ year @-@ old son of the lead characters .

The film was shot over 15 days in Los Angeles and Malibu , California . Swanberg and cinematographer Ben Richardson decided to shoot on 35 mm film rather than digitally , as most of Swanberg 's previous films had been made . They decided to shoot on film , Richardson said , because " there is a certain visual integrity to a film @-@ derived image that is still lacking for me in most of the digitally @-@ derived imagery that we see " . Although the film 's dialogue was improvised , the actors rehearsed each scene before filming so that the scene could be blocked out due to the constraints of working with film rather than digital .

Swanberg found the process of editing Digging for Fire more difficult than for his previous films , since there were many different possibilities of how to integrate the separate storylines involving Tim and Lee . He dedicated the film to Paul Mazursky , who died in 2014 , because of the thematic similarities between Mazursky 's work , especially the 1969 film Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice , and Digging for Fire and the influence Mazursky had on Swanberg 's work .

= = Release = =

The film had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival on January 26 , 2015 . Shortly after its premiere , The Orchard and Sony Pictures Worldwide acquired North American and international distribution rights respectively . The film went to be shown at the Chattanooga Film Festival , Sarasota Film Festival , Chicago Critics Film Festival , Maryland Film Festival , and Traverse City Film Festival . The film was given a limited release in American theaters on August 21 , 2015 , earning \$ 25 @,@ 000 from three locations on its opening weekend . It later expanded to 30 theaters and earned a total of \$ 119 @,@ 364 from its 38 day @-@ run . It was released on video on demand on August 25 , 2015 .

= = Reception = =

Digging for Fire has been met with generally positive reviews from critics . On the review aggregator site Rotten Tomatoes , the film holds a 65 % approval rating , based on 59 reviews with an average rating of 6 @.@ 2 / 10 . The site 's consensus states : " Digging for Fire finds director / co @-@ writer Joe Swanberg working from a familiar palette , but in ways that suggest he 's taking new and exciting strides as a filmmaker . " On Metacritic , the film has a score of 69 out of 100 based on reviews from 22 critics , indicating " generally favorable reviews " .

Film critic Richard Roeper described Digging for Fire as " a movie made by someone who clearly loves the art of movies " and praised the casting and editing . A. O. Scott of The New York Times wrote of the film 's " appealing honesty " and its " tight , satisfying narrative " . Variety 's Ben Kenigsberg characterized the film as " a lovely slice of everything and nothing " and gave particular

praise to the cinematography , editing and improvisation . Peter Travers , who awarded the film 3 out of 4 stars in a review for Rolling Stone , highlighted the performances , cinematography and score , and felt that Digging for Fire showed Swanberg to be " a true filmmaker " . Screen International critic Tim Grierson found the film to be honest and insightful , and drew particular attention to Johnson and DeWitt 's " nimble , low @-@ key performances " . An Banh of Indiewire opined that the film was the most " emotionally mature " of Swanberg 's works and that each of the actors gave " purposeful , plot @-@ driven performances " in spite of the large cast .

The Austin Chronicle 's Kimberley Jones , on the other hand , felt that the story suffered because of the large cast and wrote that " mostly it 's just a toe listlessly pushing dirt around " . Michael Phillips of the Chicago Tribune praised Ben Richardson 's cinematography and " natural tone " of the acting but felt that the dialogue was lacking , giving the film 2 out of 4 stars . The San Francisco Chronicle 's G. Allen Johnson also criticized the " forced and uninteresting " dialogue and thought that the story and characters felt " phony " . The Boston Globe critic Ty Burr found the film uninsightful , writing that " Swanberg is tilling soil here that has been churned since humanity began " , and felt that the plot focused too much on Tim rather than Lee . Chris Nashawaty gave the film a C + grade in Entertainment Weekly , dismissing it as " Joe Swanberg 's latest meditation on aging @-@ hipster malaise " .