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THE INTERVENTION EXPLORES RELATIONSHIPS BUT AVOIDS THE UGLY BITS

Posted by Christina Tucker | Sep 28, 2016 | Reviews |

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Overview: Four couples come together for a weekend getaway at a country house. Unbeknownst to one of the couples, the other three have conspired to turn this vacation into an intervention for their failing marriage. Samuel Goldwyn Films; 2016; Rated R; 88 minutes.

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Love Actually: Once the group latches onto the idea that the married couple Ruby (Cobie Smulders) and Peter (Vincent Piazza) absolutely needs to divorce, and nothing less, they will not let it go. Only one member of the six perpetrators of this scheme openly criticizes the idea of a “marriage intervention” as being absurd, but the other five, led by Annie (Melanie Lynskey) agree to carry on with the plan. Repeated attempts to instigate an intervention are foiled by hesitation and bad timing, and we learn about each couple’s faults despite their best attempts to maintain the image of being in a perfect relationship.

With the couples’ intentions relayed fairly early in the film, I was waiting for a revelation that would justify the group’s obsession with Ruby and Peter’s relationship, but such a revelation never materializes. The biggest problem with Ruby and Peter’s relationship seems to be a somewhat trite case of a husband who works too hard and is emotionally unavailable and a wife who doesn’t feel the same connection as she once did. A scene in which Ruby and Peter bicker over dinner seems to exist to show us that the couple has become incompatible, but what’s never explained is why these six people in particular feel they’re suited to serve as anyone’s therapist.

Love Languages: The theme that every couple is flawed is one that is suitably addressed. Writer-director Clea DuVall resists the urge to give her character, Jessie, the most screen time or most interesting lines, and tries to splits the time relatively equally between all four couples. We are shown the various issues of the other three couples: a May-December relationship between Jack (Ben Schwartz) and Lola,(Alia Shawkat), struggles with infidelity and

The Greatest Showman Will Leave You Demanding A Refund

SCORE: 

Te-Ata Isn’t a Good Film, But It Comes from a Good Place

SCORE: 

The Shape of Water Shows the Beauty in Our Differences

SCORE: 94% 

The Last Jedi is a Mostly-Successful Exploration of Morality and Legacy

SCORE: 88% 

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commitment between Sarah (Natasha Lyonne) and Jessie (Clea DuVall), and Matt (Jason Ritter) and Annie's hesitation to get married. These are among the issues that plague our otherwise picture-perfect middle-class protagonists, who we unfortunately never learn enough about to give their development any impact.

Some of the characters' problems feel as though they deserved more of the film's attention, particularly Jack's grief following the death of his wife and Annie's drinking problem. Both are given as much attention as Ruby and Peter's bickering or Sarah and Jessie's fears of infidelity, when they could have been more effectively used as emotional anchors for the film. Annie's drinking problem does get addressed sincerely in the eleventh hour, but in a way that was ultimately too little, too late. In refusing to delve into its characters' darker mental health issues, *The Intervention* does its characters a disservice.

Missed Connection: There are moments of humor that play well, and the comedic timing of all of the cast members, particularly Lynskey and Schwartz, are superb. Jack's opposition to the plan plays especially well at the start. All of the cast, in fact, is strong in their comedic timing and do the best they can to draw some emotional honesty out of the material, but there's just not enough in *The Intervention* to allow us to either love or hate its characters. Piazza's Peter, who is somewhat made out to be the villain for much of the early portion of the film, is woefully underdeveloped.

As the group plays charades and kickball and attempt to revel in their gorgeous yuppie enclave, attempting



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to both fix and judge the people around them, there is something unlikable about them. Had the movie leaned into that, perhaps, and been harder on its characters' ideals, poked fun at their resistance to tackle any real issues, *The Intervention* could have been an apt commentary on American conservatism and prudishness in relationships. The best moments, in fact, are when the couples' white, suburban-ness and an obsession with monogamy and the ideal relationship conflicts with the reality of their compulsion to meddle, bicker, lie, and cheat. But the film rarely decries these people as anything more than slightly misguided in the execution of their plan. In the end, when the eight leave their getaway apparently having learned something new about themselves and their relationships, the sense of closure feels unearned. The real problems persist, never fully addressed.

Conclusion: Ultimately the film makes the same mistakes its misguided protagonists do in ignoring bigger issues in exchange for focusing on those that are easier to look at. Films set in one location wherein an ensemble cast are allowed to inhabit their characters completely are perfectly suited to exploring characters and their neuroses, but *The Intervention* doesn't quite have the courage to show us anything too ugly about its characters or their approaches to relationships. Refusing to bring down the tone of a fairly benign dramedy, *The Intervention* maintains a comfortable, safe tone at the cost of emotional truth.

Grade: C

Featured Image: Samuel Goldwyn Films

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Christina is formerly an art history student, currently an aspiring film critic, screenwriter, and/or starving artist. Born and raised in Michigan, she is currently based in New York City.

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