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ZOOM HAS AN INTERESTING CONCEPT, BUT DOESN'T DIG DEEP ENOUGH

Posted by Christina Tucker | Sep 9, 2016 | Reviews | 0

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Overview: A comic book artist, writer, and director create and alter each other's realities in an inter-dimensional triangle of artistic creation (and eventual destruction.) Screen Media Films; 2016; Not Rated; 97 minutes.

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Being-for-Others: *Zoom* focuses first on quirky, insecure Emma Boyle (Allison Pill), whose day job is painting eerie-looking sex dolls. In her free time she is a comic book artist, and brings to life her dream man, Edward, in the form of a comic book character.

Edward Deacon (Gael García Bernal) is a handsome playboy director who seeks to challenge himself artistically, directing a contemplative indie film despite being known for more testosterone-fueled action films. Michelle (Mariana Ximenes) is the main character of Edward's newest film, and aims to publish a novel and be seen as more than just a model. Her novel tells Emma's story, and we discover fairly early that the three exist in a cycle of story-tellers and stories. It's a compelling and fun idea, and a bold choice on the part of director Pedro Morelli and writer Matt Hansen. Once *Zoom* establishes its premise, it wastes no time delving into the creative efforts of each of its main characters. Unfortunately the film has little to say about them.

The Look: *Zoom* finds enjoyment in its gimmick, especially through its visual direction. Each story has its own distinct visual character, from the colorful animated portions, the darkly lit, cluttered sets of Emma's story, to the glossy, clean color and almost comically overdone camerawork of Michelle's story. The acting is strong, as Pill creates a lovable character in Emma, and Ximenes is captivating as the often dissatisfied model Michelle. García Bernal has the hardest role as Edward, saddled with the task of making his performance breathe through rotoscoped animation, and he does it admirably.

There are no issues with the film as far as acting or visual direction are concerned. Rather, those arise

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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when an admittedly interesting idea overwhelms any development of *Zoom*'s plot or characters. The main characters are so distractingly *created* and are given so little time to *exist* that it is difficult to connect with them. In the end, it's a story about creating, not about the complexities of each of its creations, and works better as a kind of thought experiment than a fully realized story.

Being and Nothingness: There is no story to which we can attach ourselves. Ungrounded in any of its threads, *Zoom* becomes a sort of paradox in which nothing is real, and it's therefore impossible for the viewer to do what would be expected of them by most films: to suspend disbelief and invest in the films created reality.

The moments in which a character's faults and lack of control leads to another character's downfall, however, allow the movie to shine for a moment as something unique. Ridiculous plot points (particularly in Emma's story, as she is embroiled in a drug deal gone wrong) become more believable as we are forced to consider them as the work of amateur author Michelle. After Edward is told that his film is too strange, too niche, Michelle's scenes become more cliché until her story devolves into a typical action-thriller. It's clever and fun to watch, but doesn't amount to any real character development.

In the end, when the barriers between each character's realities break down, things fall apart in a grand spectacle that's visually engaging but has no consideration for any of its characters. For all the subtlety that's shown in the last fifteen minutes, I found myself half-expecting the final scene to show



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Hansen himself writing *Zoom*. (Instead, there's an implication that the entire film has been someone's dream, which feels out of place and absurd.) With a quieter, more relevant ending, this movie could have at least left viewers with something to think about.

Overall: *Zoom* tries, on occasion, to say something about the way human beings struggle to control their own identities and the way they are perceived, and ideas about agency, existence, and identity are there, but never get the attention they should. From Emma seeking out plastic surgery so she can “look like one of [her] drawings” to Edward's struggle to prove that he's “not two-dimensional,” this movie is about three insecure people who create one another and struggle to recreate themselves, but these themes are unfortunately lost in the film's need to push its concept to ridiculous extremes. *Zoom*, despite its great visual direction and solid acting, is primarily a fun execution of an interesting concept than a film that has anything of substance to say about human nature.

Grade: C+

Featured Image: Screen Media 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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