

Take This Waltz | Blu-ray Review



Despite a reasonably active acting career, Sarah Polley has put together quite an elegant little list of writing/directing credits for her already lengthy resume. Last year, her film *Take This Waltz* debuted at TIFF and continued on the festival circuit garnering rave reviews all along its travels. A vibrant romantic drama, Polley's picture employs Seth Rogan, Luke Kirby and Michelle Williams to explore what it means to be in a long term relationship and our inherent human attraction to newness and the things we can not have. And though chock-full of red hot chemistry and openhearted connection, the film is one of warning. Sometimes relation-

ships need time to evolve, as giving in to temptation won't always make you a happier person.

At the onset of Polley's plot, Margot (Williams) has yet to learn this lesson. She's become bored in her 5 year marriage to Lou (Rogan), a stay-at-home cook book writer. The old jokes and baby talk just don't do it anymore, and when she meets an effortlessly attractive mystery man who turns out to be her next door neighbor Daniel (Kirby), Margot becomes torn wanting to fill the void. Around her she sees her peers traveling down differing paths of life, some with kids, some with addictions, and some with both (Sarah Silverman). With the stagnancy of her marriage staring her in the face and a more than willing object of desire just across the street, the choice is obvious, but it never is that simple. Daniel, a part time artist and full time rickshaw runner, makes it abundantly clear that he is madly in love and Margot reciprocates in every way but actual acknowledgement – until she is forced to make that ever so difficult decision to stay in a loving long-term relationship that has merely reached a monotonous state of normal or escape for the touch of new skin and unplanned adventure.

It is this conundrum that makes Polley's narrative so effective, as she refuses to settle on a single side. She steadily walks the line, balancing lust and longing with moral reason-

ing and spousal responsibility. Williams' part in the procession is also of superb quality. Her heightened internal conflict plays to both sides with melancholic affection through familiarized comfort and anxiety ridden attraction. Anyone who has been in a long, loving relationship will surely identify with the unspoken familiarity and occasional aching for something new that floats to the surface every now and again. The only instance of heavy handedness is in the unnecessary subplot of Margot's drunken friend, Geraldine, played by Silverman. She occasionally reappears to remind that we have a tendency to hurt ourselves, even when we know better. Her presence almost always feels out of place, sucking all attention to her outrageous egotistic outbursts, rocking the steady tone of the film as a whole.

While the film shines in its trio of lead performances, the light and environments they move within is absolutely stunning. Cinematographer Luc Montpellier and the team of production/art/set designers Matthew Davies, Aleksandra Marinkovich and Steve Shewchuk have crafted a look that almost seems a long lost Canadian-born Almodóvar production. Bright, vivid color is oozing from every inch of the screen throughout nearly every frame. Aquas and oranges are constantly popping out of the screen, and the summer sun is warm enough to get you perspiring, as if you weren't

already from the romantic tension. And to top it all off, Polley has taken advantage of a long overlooked sad sap musician by the name of Micah P. Hinson for a couple subtly soul crushing musical swells of perfection, as well as a wonderfully awkward sequence that slaps The Buggles' "Video Killed The Radio Star" front and center. Overlooking a single annoying character, *Take This Waltz* is downtrodden indie romance done right.

The Disc:

Magnolia has picked another winner here, and treating it right, they have given it a wonderful home video transfer. As mentioned, the film is painted with a vivid color palette and the on screen image here looks outstanding. Lively reds and blues propel from the frame, highly defined with warmed up tones that run throughout the feature. The opening scene highlighting Williams' aqua toenails is just the beginning of a beautifully photographed, highly visually stylized film, and it looks great in HD. The 5.1 DTS-HD master track, though not as alive as the visuals, are nice and full, with crisp dialog and rounded out musical flourishes. The disc itself comes packed in a standard Blu-ray case.

Making of Take This Waltz

Running almost 40 minutes, this is a standard interview

based making of bit, but it explores very thoroughly the the-
matics behind the feature. Polley, the leads and key produc-
tion heads speak openly and at length on how they've devel-
oped their characters, how they became involved in the film
and how they're reflecting on the production in a non-pro-
motional manner. It's a really great compliment to the film
that digs deeper than your average making of piece.

AXS TV: A Look at Take This Waltz

Much more a standard EPK promo bit, this 5 minute fea-
turette highlights film bits and compliments them with red
carpet interviews.

Theatrical Trailer

Slightly misleading in its tone, this trailer features much of
the natural beauty of the film, but not enough of the awk-
ward, empty contemplation that lines it. It's still very entic-
ing though.

Final Thoughts:

Take This Waltz is an odd film. It's romantic enough to
watch with a significant other yet still sad enough to be a bit-
ter tear jerker for those lonely nights. It has all the makings
of a mainstream dramedy with a trio a fairly big names and
some funny awkwardness, but its light on fluff comedy and

a little too good at harshing your mellow. Despite the categorical confusion, within this tangle of indie attraction is an authentically realized composition of the challenges of monogamy and the equivocal forces of attraction, and thankfully, Magnolia's new Blu-ray is an admirable release that's certainly worth a watch (or several).

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