

Film Review: Michael Shannon Mesmerizes in Moody 'Take Shelter'

Submitted by [mattmoviemann](#) [1] on October 7, 2011 - 7:40am

- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [2]
- [Jeff Nichols](#) [3]
- [Jessica Chastain](#) [4]
- [Kathy Baker](#) [5]
- [Matt Fagerholm](#) [6]
- [Michael Shannon](#) [7]
- [Movie Review](#) [8]
- [Shotgun Stories](#) [9]
- [Sony Pictures Classics](#) [10]
- [Take Shelter](#) [11]

CHICAGO – It starts with a clap of thunder. Fierce winds cause the once serene landscape to shiver with unease. When the rain comes, it's the color of motor oil. All it takes is a single glance at the looming gray clouds overhead to realize that the impending storm could be capable of anything. It's enough to rock a level-headed man to his very foundation.



Rating: **4.0/5.0**

These are the visions that have begun to plague Curtis, the weary-eyed protagonist of Jeff Nichols' second feature effort, "Take Shelter." Festival buzz has been swarming around this picture like a flock of agitated birds, and expectations of art house buffs are generally through the roof, thanks to a trailer from Sony Pictures Classics that is easily one of the most enticing (and least spoiler-leaden) of the year.



[Read Matt Fagerholm's full review of "Take Shelter" in our reviews section.](#) [12]

Does the film live up to all the hype? The simple answer would be yes...and no. There are large sections of the picture that are as riveting as anything in American theaters this year. The tension level is excruciatingly intense at times, but for all his masterly direction of individual set-pieces, Nichols seems to have a nagging uncertainty about his promising concept. What starts out as a provocative psychological portrait starts to feel like a gimmicky thriller during its final moments, yet what ultimately holds the film together is the mesmerizing, Oscar-caliber work of leading man Michael Shannon, who has routinely proven to be one of the most transfixing actors in modern cinema. He looks like a Norman Rockwell painting as re-envisioned by Charles Addams. There's a darkness in his eyes that hint at unspeakable demons lurking beneath his boyish features. His galvanizing portrayal of an embittered brother in Nichols' 2007 revenge drama, "Shotgun Stories," jettisoned the undervalued character actor into cult star status. Though he's delivered fine work on both the small screen ("Boardwalk Empire") and the big screen since then, his performance in "Take Shelter" is his best to date.

'Take Shelter' stars Michael Shannon, Jessica Chastain, Shea Whigham, Tova Stewart, Katy Mixon, Lisa Gay Hamilton and Kathy Baker. It was written and directed by Jeff Nichols. It opened Oct. 7 at the Landmark Century Centre Cinema. It is rated R.



[Continue reading for Matt Fagerholm's full "Take Shelter" review.](#) [12]



Michael Shannon stars in Jeff Nichols' Take Shelter.
Photo credit: Scott Gardner, Courtesy of Sony Pictures Classics

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- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/sony-pictures-classics>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/take-shelter>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/15942/michael-shannon-mesmerizes-in-moody-take-shelter>