

Film Review: ‘Blue Jasmine’ Puts Woody Allen Back on Top

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on August 2, 2013 - 6:02am

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CHICAGO – The auteur Woody Allen is one of the most prolific post-studio-system directors, averaging one film a year for close to 40 years. His meditations on life have become part of the culture, and he brilliantly expresses himself once again – with help from Cate Blachett – in the emotional “Blue Jasmine.”



There are many themes in “Blue Jasmine” – mental illness, the failure to connect, family dispositions – but none more acute than Woody’s take on the class system in the United States and what defines the “American Dream.” Cate Blanchett portrays the title character of Jasmine, a multi-faceted performance tinged with an edge of a nervous breakdown. The cacophony of character types, including terrific turns by Bobby Cannavale, Peter Sarsgaard, Sally Hawkins and – wait for it – Andrew Dice Clay, offer a pastiche of the working man versus the leisure class, all driven by their sense of that position. This is a great statement, at the point in Woody Allen’s life when the assumption is that he doesn’t have much left to say. In nailing an essential slice-of-life with “Blue Jasmine,” Allen proves that he is a moralist, and a keen observer of the world around him.

Jasmine (Cate Blanchett) is on her way to San Francisco. She is escaping a desperate situation in New York City, in which her husband Hal (Alec Baldwin) has been indicted for financial malfeasance and tax evasion. She is going to move in with her sister Ginger (Sally Hawkins) and try to begin her life again. This is complicated by Ginger’s boyfriend Chili (Bobby Cannavale) and Ginger’s ex-husband Augie (Andrew Dice Clay). Hal lost a significant amount of Augie’s money in a financial scheme.

The two sisters – both adopted – have a severe clash of social morality, as the story of Hal unfolds in flashback. In the present, Jasmine is trying to adjust to being in the working world, and Ginger is trying to balance sheltering her sister with the pressures of Chili, who wants a commitment. When Jasmine meets Dwight (Peter Sarsgaard), her luck may change, but the baggage of her circumstance could conspire against that luck.

“Blue Jasmine” continues its U.S. release in Chicago on August 2nd. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Cate Blanchett, Alec Baldwin, Sally Hawkins, Andrew Dice Clay, Bobby Cannavale, Michael Stuhlbarg, Louis C.K. and Peter Sarsgaard. Written and directed by Woody Allen. Rated “PG-13”

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The Good Life?: Cate Blanchett and Alec Baldwin in 'Blue Jasmine'
Photo credit: Sony Pictures Classics

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