

Film Review: Frustrating Thriller ‘Wish You Were Here’ with Joel Edgerton

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 4, 2013 - 12:48pm

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Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – There’s an honesty in the increasingly-great Joel Edgerton’s (“Animal Kingdom,” “Warrior,” “The Great Gatsby”) harrowing performance in Kieran Darcy-Smith’s “Wish You Were Here,” opening in New York and Los Angeles this Friday, that makes it a difficult film to dismiss. Sadly, the truth of what Edgerton brings to the role of a man who carries a dark secret is shrouded by a filmmaker who refuses to let us in on the cause of his pain. “Wish You Were Here” is a thriller/mystery that should have been a drama and feels more like it’s playing games with its audience than offering truthful characters or engaging storytelling.

“Wish You Were Here” opens with a lengthy montage of carefree behavior on a vacation in Southeast Asia. Alice (Felicity Price), her husband Dave (Joel Edgerton), Alice’s sister Steph (Teresa Palmer), and Steph’s new boyfriend Jeremy (Antony Starr) are gallivanting through Cambodia. Beautiful sights, friendly locals, a massive party around a bonfire, and a devastating betrayal that precludes a much-darker secret. The betrayal is revealed very early, so don’t consider this a spoiler -- on one of their last nights on vacation, very high and very drunk, Dave slept with Steph. More importantly, Jeremy didn’t come back with his three friends when they returned to Australia. Did he see his girlfriend’s betrayal? Did something awful happen to him at the party?



[Read Brian Tallerico’s full review of “Wish You Were Here” in our reviews section.](#) [10]

As you might imagine, “Wish We Were Here” becomes an interchanging flashback/present-day story, as bits and pieces are revealed about that fateful night in Cambodia and Alice deals with the revelation that not only has her husband been unfaithful but with her sibling. Most interestingly, Dave clearly knows more about Jeremy’s disappearance than he’s letting on. He seems haunted by something, paranoid that he’s being followed or possibly even that Jeremy is back. Did he do something to him? What does he know? And is Jeremy dead or is the repetition of two scenes in which the young man talks about wanting to live in Southeast Asia forever meant to imply that he just ran away? And what exactly was Jeremy doing there in the first place? Was it more than a vacation?

Clearly, “Wish You Were Here” is a movie based on questions. Every scene gives a little bit more of the complete picture, like one of those puzzles that comes into focus gradually. The problem is that while Jeremy’s fate is an interesting story once revealed, it makes the rest of the film somewhat thin by not knowing it. There’s an incredibly strong drama buried in “Wish You Were Here” about a man keeping a harrowing secret but that drama only works if we know the secret in advance. I wanted so badly for “Wish” to lay its cards on the table and let us see their impact before the final scenes but realized, as it dragged its feet in the mid-section, that this wasn’t going to happen.



[Continue reading for Brian Tallerico’s full “Wish You Were Here” review.](#) [10]

“Wish You Were Here” stars Joel Edgerton, Teresa Palmer, Felicity Price, and Antony Starr. It was written by Price and Kieran Darcy-Smith and directed by Darcy-Smith. It opens in New York and Los Angeles on June 7, 2013 and is rated R.

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Wish You Were Here

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