

## Film Review: Opportunity For Insight Wasted in ‘The East’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 6, 2013 - 1:40pm

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Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Brit Marling is an undeniably smart, forward-thinking writer/actress in that she refuses to succumb to gender stereotypes and tries to chart her own way through the independent film movement. If this is true, and I still believe it is, why did “The East,” in which she stars and which she co-wrote, end up so frustratingly melodramatic? Why was the opportunity for true commentary or even character development within this fascinating world discarded in favor of an awkwardly-staged and poorly-written love story laden with genre tropes? I so wanted to like “The East,” but it never pointed me in the direction where I could do so.

It’s a world rich for dramatic potential – the domestic terrorists who challenge big business through action and the people who try to think one step ahead of them to keep their companies thriving. It’s quite easy to believe that a mega-company like Monsanto, for example, not only has people willing to attack it in very physical protestation but that it hires a company to make sure those people don’t get past the planning stage.



[Read Brian Tallerico’s full review of “The East” in our reviews section.](#) [15]

One person who works for such a company is Sarah (Marling), who is the underling for the somewhat-cartoonishly-evil Sharon (Patricia Clarkson), a woman who seems to enjoy her role as the keeper of the machine of Capitalism. She goes undercover in The East, a notorious group of protestors so deep underground that they’re spoken about in hushed tones and that one needs to essentially be kidnapped to speak to them. They’ve staged not just standard protests but crimes against major corporations in an attempt to shine lights on the way they’re damaging the economy, society, etc. Run by the charismatic Benji (Alexander Skarsgard) and headstrong Izzy (Ellen Page), they are a communal mini-society with a purpose.

As with most groups, even the most well-intentioned, there are cracks in the fabric of The East. Izzy sometimes wants to take things too far, willing to do anything for her cause. And when Benji and Sarah start getting flirtatious, it feels like it has the potential to tear the entire group down. Will Sarah become sympathetic to the cause of The East? Will she turn them in before they do real damage, including possibly getting someone killed? Will she fall in love with Benji?



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*“The East” stars Brit Marling, Alexander Skarsgard, Ellen Page, Toby Kebbell, Shiloh Fernandez, Aldis Hodge, Patricia Clarkson, Jason Ritter, and Julia Ormond. It was written by Marling & Zal Batmanglij and directed by Batmanglij. It opens in Chicago on June 7, 2013.*



The East

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