

Film Review: Pieces Fit Together in Sublime ‘Chinese Puzzle’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on May 31, 2014 - 8:08am

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CHICAGO – Life is chaos. We in the human race can all agree on that. The new film “Chinese Puzzle” allows that chaos to happen, and the results are funny, affecting and warm. Writer/director Cédric Klapisch completes his “Spanish apartment trilogy,” bringing back the characters from “L’Auberge Espagnole” and “Russian Dolls,” to place them squarely in middle age.



Rating: **4.0/5.0**

The beauty of the film is that it works as a separate element, there is no need to have prior knowledge of the other films – although it probably enhances the enjoyment. Cédric Klapisch creates lives that are challenged by turning age 40 (gasp!), an odd transition point when dealing with kids, divorce and multiple locations. The story is fresh, highly comic and propels itself due to the result of the organic decisions by the characters. There are also some parallel circumstances regarding fatherhood that are neatly applied, and a twist on the mid life affair crisis, using a woman rather than a man. “Chinese Puzzle” illustrates the old saying, “shit happens.”

Xavier (Romain Duris) has established himself as an up and coming novelist, even as his personal life begins to melt down. His wife Wendy (Kelly Reilly) has remained loyal to his quest in Paris for ten years, while they have begun to raise two children. Their marriage falls apart, and Wendy moves the children to New York City after meeting a man there.

Xavier’s old friends come to the rescue, as Isabelle (Cécile de France) encourages him to move to New York to be around his kids, and his camps out at her loft in Brooklyn, while she is pregnant with his child – Xavier was an anonymous sperm donor for the same sex pairing of Isabelle and Ju (Sandrine Holt). Meanwhile Martine (Audrey Tautou) is back in Paris with her single parented two kids, and begins to miss Xavier. The cultures and lives start clashing in their interaction, as pieces of the “puzzle’ are arranged by Xavier.

“Chinese Puzzle” continues its limited release in Chicago on May 30th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Romain Duris, Kelly Reilly, Audrey Tautou, Cécile de France, Sandrine Holt and Pablo Mugnier-Jacob. Written and directed by Cédric Klapisch. Rated “R”



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Martine (Audrey Tautou) and Xavier (Romain Duris) Work it Out in ‘Chinese Puzzle’
Photo credit: StudioCanal

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