

Film Review: Joy of Life Expands When Meeting ‘Toni Erdmann’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on January 30, 2017 - 10:43am

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CHICAGO – If you need a little cinema therapy, it doesn’t get any better than “Toni Erdmann.” This subtle story builds to generate a joyful feeling, which defines the small-but-important survival guides for this thing called life. Writer/director Maren Ade has delivered the goods, and the film is nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the upcoming Academy Awards.



Rating: **5.0/5.0**

The film features Sandra Hüller and Peter Simonischek as a daughter and father who are estranged, and come together again through the father’s “mission” to help his progeny enjoy life more. It is a reminder of the characters that populate our lives, and how they are designed with the perfect timing to remind us that there is more to life than just living. The film builds perfectly under Maren Ade’s sure hand, and the 162 minute length is no match for the culmination of the main moral to the story. There is a lightness, audacity and finally truth in this essentially cast and executed film, and will have you celebrating the joie de vivre, especially if that happens to be missing in action in your own life right now.

Ines (Sandra Hüller) is a hard charging upper level European executive for a company that comes in to downsize other companies. She has little contact with her father Winfried (Peter Simonischek), but does visit him on his birthday, because she is working in nearby Bucharest in Romania. Winfried is a music teacher, and a free spirit who is not above putting on false teeth and a bad wig, to become his alter ego Toni Erdmann.

Life changes for Winfried when his loyal dog passes away. He decides at that point to make his daughter his new project, to give her a dose of life affirmation. Showing up at her apartment in Bucharest, he infiltrates all elements of her life – work and private – and often does it in the guise of Toni Erdmann. It’s obvious Ines needs his help, but will she accept it?

“Toni Erdmann” has a limited release, locally at Chicago’s Music Box Theatre, 3733 N. Southport, through February 2nd, 2017. See local listings for other theaters and show times. Featuring Sandra Hüller, Peter Simonischek, Michael Wittenborn, Thomas Loibi and Ingrid Bisu. Written and directed by Maren Ade. Rated “R”



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Ines (Sandra Hüller) Encounters Toni (Peter Simonischek) in 'Toni Erdman'

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Classics

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