

Film Review: 'The Shack' is About Spirituality, Not Filmmaking

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on March 3, 2017 - 10:08am

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CHICAGO – To create spirituality from tragedy is like shooting the proverbial fish – a prominent symbol for Christianity – in a barrel. “The Shack” is based on a popular novel, and doesn’t try to do anything different or cinematic with a man encountering the Holy Trinity after a horrific incident.



Rating: **2.5/5.0**

This film is impossible to review from a basis of the spirit, because believers and lovers of the novel won’t care what a snotty critic has to say regarding the weird-but-soft encounter of a desperate man with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. But I can judge it as a film, and it really needed more character development. The wife of the emotionally hurt man is nearly invisible, the religiosity of the family is never really explored and the next door neighbor, a presumably good Christian man, seems oddly clingy to his sad buddy. The two hour and fifteen minute film also could have used another pass in the editing machine, as the second act seems to last for an eternity. Director Stuart Hazeldine also was particularly enamored of a certain type of camera move, and to make an old SCTV reference, “is that a crane shot, LaRue?”

Mack Phillips (Sam Worthington) has a great Christian family, years after his own childhood was fraught with sorrow. He is married to Nan (Radha Mitchell) who has a unexplained predilection for calling God “Papa,” and three bright-as-a-sitcom children. After the introduction, Mack is seen during a snowy day, lost in a funk that even his neighbor Willie (Tim McGraw) can’t get him to shake.

It turns out in flashback that Mack’s youngest daughter was abducted and murdered by a serial killer. The snowy atmosphere matches his icy emotions, until he receives a mysterious note to “meet Papa at The Shack.” The location is where his daughter was killed, and his obsession to arrive at the meeting results in meeting God (Octavia Spencer), Jesus (Avraham Aviv Alush) and the Holy Spirit (Sumire Matsubara). It takes a trio to heal the grieving father.

“The Shack” opens every where on March 3rd. Featuring Octavia Spencer, Sam Worthington, Tim McGraw, Radha Mitchell, Avraham Aviv Alush, Sumire Matsubara and Graham Greene. Screenplay by John Fusco, Andrew Lanham and Destin Daniel Cretton. Directed by Stuart Hazeldine. Rated “PG-13”



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The Line-Up: Avraham Aviv Alush, Sam Worthington, Octavia Spencer and Sumire Matsubara in ‘The Shack’
Photo credit: Lionsgate

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