

Film Review: Ethereal ‘The Shape of Water’ Forms Cinema Magic

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on December 13, 2017 - 2:48pm

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CHICAGO – This breathtaking morality and love story, set in a backward age, takes all of its major themes – passion, tolerance, symbolism and thrills – to the highest level. Writer/director Guillermo del Toro has created a masterwork that is part fairy tale, part adult desperation and all cinema magic.



Rating: **5.0/5.0**

The fairy tale involves a mute janitor, portrayed with mystery by Sally Hawkins, falling in love with a U.S. government prisoner in 1962, who happens to resemble the Creature from the Black Lagoon. The film is also a heart warming tribute to the movies themselves, as two of the main characters share that passion – even living above a movie theater – and who escape their daily grind at the altar of the late show. The movie expresses its era precisely, with misfit characters symbolically standing in at times for the actual prisoner in chains, and they all break free through the energy of love.

Sally Hawkins is Elisa, an orphaned girl who cannot talk, and ends up being a janitor at a U.S. government lab facility in 1962. Her best friend is her gay neighbor Giles (Richard Jenkins), who is a graphic artist and recovering alcoholic, and her best work buddy is fellow scrubwoman Zelda (Octavia Spencer). Their lives are changed when a strange creature is brought to the lab, under the protection of Agent Richard Strickland (Michael Shannon).

But since this is the Cold War, a Russian scientist has infiltrated the facility, Dr. Hoffstetler (Michael Stuhlbarg). The U.S. government intends to dissect the creature, but Elisa (and in a way, Dr. H) falls in love with the being inside the lizard form. After negotiations, Elisa decides to kidnap her new infatuation. The actions she takes will have implications for all the lives around her.

“The Shape of Water” is currently in limited release nationwide, including Chicago. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Sally Hawkins, Richard Jenkins, Octavia Spencer, Michael Shannon and Michael Stuhlbarg. Written and directed by Guillermo del Toro. Rated “R”



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Floating: The Creature and Elisa (Sally Hawkins) in ‘The Shape of Water’

Photo credit: Fox Searchlight Pictures



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