

## Digital Review: Comeback Kid Rita Moreno in 'Remember Me'

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CHICAGO – Academy Award winner (in 1962!) Rita Moreno is in the midst of a big media comeback. The 86 year-old actress, who famously portrayed Anita in that Oscar-winning role in “West Side Story,” is in her second season of the “One Day at a Time” reboot on Netflix, and is featured in the indie film “Remember Me,” available now for download and Video On Demand.



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

Moreno is a centerpiece in the film, as a grandmother to two man-children who keep making bad decisions. Her scenes, as a kind of runaway senior citizen after her beloved husband dies, are poignant and funny, and compactly expressed many of the issues of aging. She both leads and is led by her two co-travelers, cousins who are somewhat mismatched and excitedly (to a fault) overwrought. The two are comic relief who frantically land some of their bits, while others die on the vine. But overall, it is Moreno's film, and she uses her experience and expands upon a career that is now incredibly 65 years old.



Barry (Joel Kelley Dauten, left), Vincent (Steve Goldbloom) and Nanna (Rita Moreno) in ‘Remember Me’  
Photo credit: Sparklight Films

Nanna (Moreno) is living happily with her husband (Ray Reinhardt) of over 60 years, when her adult grandchildren and cousins Barry (Joel Kelley Dauten) and Vincent (Steve Goldbloom) make their obligatory visits at the same time. While at the house, their Pappy dies, and they must work around Nanna to get her out of the house without telling her. Vincent’s father is recommending a care center, but Barry has other ideas – a trip to see him perform as a stand-up comic at a local club. How they break the news to their beloved grandmother, and their group adventures around that assignment, is part of the situation.

The film rises and falls with Rita Moreno, as the scenes with Dauten and Goldbloom alone seem like window dressing (for example, a bunch of story gymnastics occur – including a lot of unnecessary bumbling – having to do with making sure she doesn’t know her husband has died, until she is bluntly and unceremoniously informed). Moreno portrays the matriarch in a sassy and direct way, preferring to talk about sex rather than knitting, and often bamboozles the dorky cousins. The highlight of the film is the “stepping out” scene, where Barry and Vincent escort their Nanna to the nightclub in style.

Joel Kelley Dauten as Barry, who looks like a 12th generation copy of Mark Wahlberg, works like a dog with his role to keep the action generated, but a little more pullback could have made the character more authentic. He does return a pretty good joke at the end, and Barry needed more of those moments. Steve Goldbloom, who also wrote and directed the film, portrays Vincent as more low key, and does have some dry wit in reacting to Barry’s antics. Much of what he and Dauten do in the film comes off like improvisation, and more narrative focus would have helped both characters.

Regardless, the film is a tribute to the talents of Rita Moreno, one of 12 individuals in entertainment history to have a prized EGOT (Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony), and Goldbloom did give her a story to shine in. When she does utter the line “remember me” in the film, there is no chance that we won’t do so.

*“Remember Me” is available for digital download on iTunes, Amazon, Vudu, Google Play and more, and Video On Demand available through DirectTV, AT&T, Dish Network, RCN and other television providers. Check download sites and TV systems for availability. Featuring Rita Moreno, Ray Reinhardt, Steve Goldbloom, Joel Kelley Dauten and Mirando Kahn. Written and directed by Steve Goldboom. Not Rated.*



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