Podtalk: Director Marc Turtletaub Solves the ‘Puzzle’

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CHICAGO – When a notable indie film producer decides to direct, what does it feel like on that other side? For Marc Turtletaub, the connection was in his sophomore effort as director, “Puzzle.” The emotional drama features the impeccable Kelly Macdonald, as a stay-at-home Mom named Agnes who discovers a hidden talent.

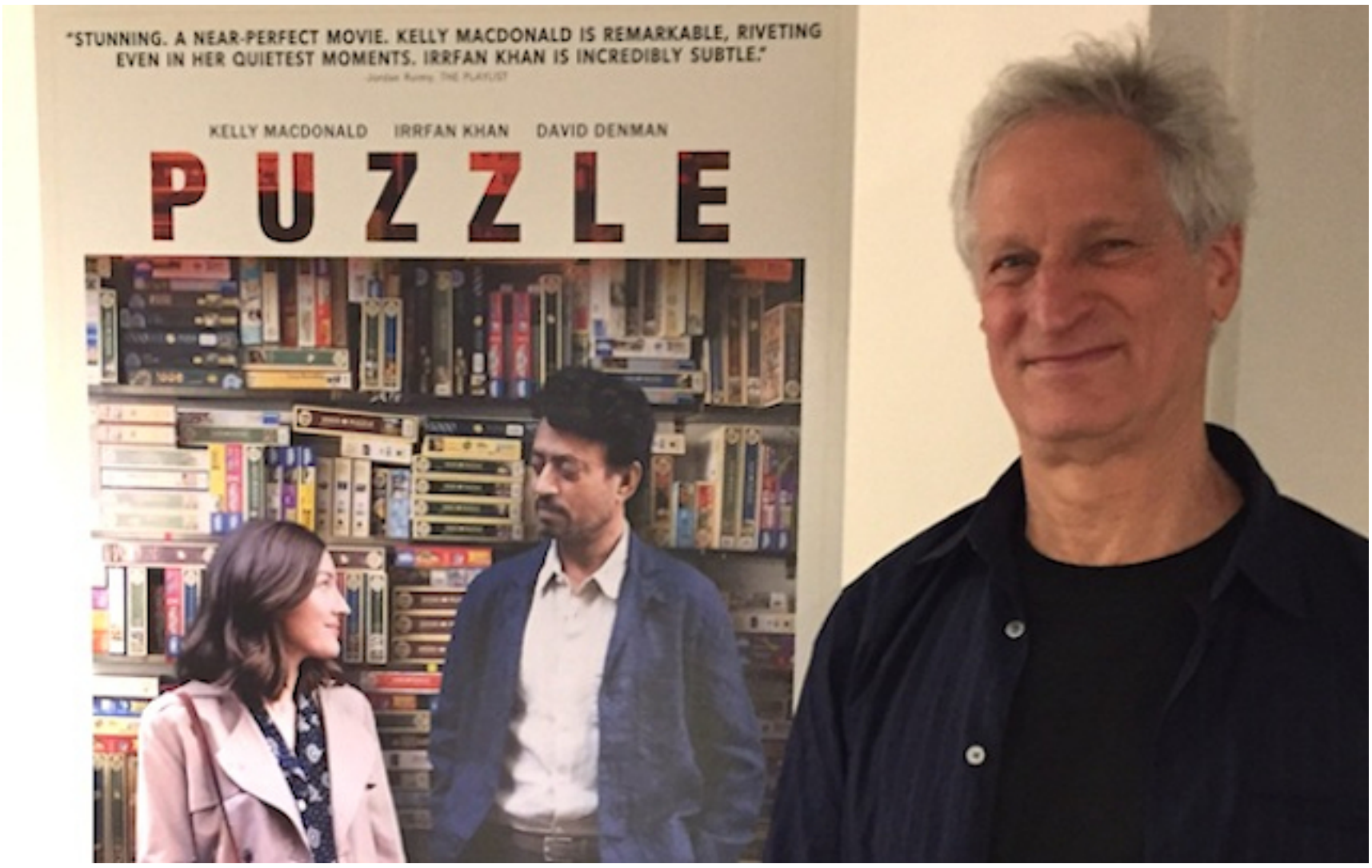


Kelly Macdonald in ‘Puzzle,’ Directed by Marc Turtletaub
Photo credit: Sony Pictures Classics

Her two boys are older, and her working class husband Louie (David Denman) has their life path mapped out. Everything Agnes does is perfection, the pieces of how she manages her life, family and church fit together in a rote and routine pattern. A couple days after her birthday, she has a moment to herself and opens one of the presents… a jigsaw puzzle. She puts the thousands of pieces in front of her and before the afternoon is up, she assembles it. This begins a journey for her. She seeks another “puzzler” in New York City, and lands on Robert (Irrfan Khan), a competitive puzzle champion who is in need of a partner. For the first time, Agnes has a talent apart from her family, but will that new purpose change everything?

Marc Turtletaub can certainly relate to that type of change in his own life. After years of being a producer on some of the most beloved indie films of the last ten years… including “Little Miss Sunshine” (2006), “Away We Go” (2009), “Safety Not Guaranteed” (2012), “Louder Than

Bombs” (2015) and “Loving” (2016)… he decided to try directing, and his first feature was the cultish “Gods Behaving Badly” (2013). He came upon the “Puzzle” script, adapted from an Argentinian film by Oren Moverman and Polly Mann, and made it his second turn in the director’s chair.



Marc Turtletaub in Chicago for ‘Puzzle’
Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

The film unfolds in a sensitive and empathetic way… virtually everyone has a hidden gem of possibility within them… sometimes discovered, sometimes hidden and sometimes never realized. All those scenarios swirl around Agnes, and they conflict throughout the film. Also notable is David Denman as Louie, her loving but perplexed husband. The way he handles her transition has roots in the character’s past, and the actors – under Turtletaub’s direction – brought that moment expressly to light. The “Puzzle” becomes life itself.

In the following PART ONE Podtalk with Patrick McDonald of HollywoodChicago.com, Marc Turtletaub reflects on the elements of “Puzzle” he felt closest to, and the admiration he had for his fantastic cast.

In the PART TWO, the second time director talks about lessons learned, both in guiding a film and being a producer on several great independent works.

“Puzzle” continues its nationwide release in Chicago on August 3rd. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Kelly Macdonald, Irrfan Khan, David Denman, Bubba Weller and Austin Abrams. Screenplay adapted by Oren Moverman and Polly Mann. Directed by Marc Turtletaub. Rated “R”

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