

Philip Seymour Hoffman Stars in Directorial Debut 'Jack Goes Boating'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 24, 2010 - 11:00am

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – One of the best working actors takes his skills behind camera in Philip Seymour Hoffman's "Jack Goes Boating," a character drama about one couple forming as another relationship falls apart at the same time. This gentle story of modern relationships is a subtle, slow-moving drama of moments and repercussions that works due to the talents of its cast and quality of its source material despite a few notable flaws.

Hoffman plays Jack, an awkward-but-gentle soul who it seems has had difficulty meeting the right girl. He works as a driver with the troubled Clyde (John Ortiz), a man who often buries the problems in his marriage to Lucy (Daphne Rubin-Vega) in booze but also clearly loves his friend Jack. The married pair chooses to set Jack up with one of Lucy's co-workers, a shy woman named Connie (Amy Ryan). After their first date, Jack begins a process of self-improvement to ensure he won't disappoint his new blossoming romance. He takes cooking lessons to prepare a memorable meal and Clyde teaches him to swim for the day, months from now, when Jack and Connie can go boating.



Jack Goes Boating

Photo credit: Overture Films

As played by Hoffman, Jack is not your typical movie man-child. He's a driver, so he must get along with people. But it feels like he's never met a woman who inspired him to action before Connie. And the action taken by Jack inspires Clyde to take a look at his own life and realize that there are issues in his marriage that could use some action of their own. It builds to a climactic dinner as both relationships reach their

inevitable turning point.

Based on a play by Robert Glaudini (in which Hoffman, Ortiz, and Rubin-Vega starred), "Jack Goes Boating" is a subtle, slow-moving character piece of small moments with large repercussions. When Connie tells Jack that she'd like to someday go boating, she probably has no idea that it will inspire him to take swimming lessons and that Jack's commitment could arguably be the inspiration that pushes Clyde to his breaking point. I've always had a soft spot for fictional tales of the ripple effect of small actions and, on a screenwriting level, I adore that aspect of "Jack Goes Boating." We do and say things every day that could have drastic impacts beyond our wildest imaginations.

Now, certain choices by Director Philip Seymour Hoffman result in a film that I don't believe is as powerful as its source. Hoffman could have gone two ways. He could have kept the locations intimate and stuck with the idea that "Jack Goes Boating" might work better as a filmed play. Or he could have really expanded the story and included multiple New York locations. He kind of tries to have it both ways and the result is a film that doesn't truly feel like either a play or movie. It's stuck in the middle with some of the tension of spending 90 minutes in the room with these four characters drained by adding other superfluous ones at various locations. It's possible that this is merely a story that works better as a play but the final act doesn't have the resonance that it needed to be fully effective.



Jack Goes Boating

Photo credit: Overture Films

I'm also a little concerned that perhaps Hoffman spread himself too thin by trying to star in his first directorial effort and perhaps underestimated the impact of that decision. His performance as Jack is a bit too understated, as is his direction, as if he was stretched too thin to fully commit to either. Surprisingly, Ortiz is the performance that resonates more in memory. I think there's a stronger version of "Jack Goes Boating" that stars Philip Seymour Hoffman and is directed by someone else or was merely directed by Hoffman and stars someone else. Shaping a very theatrical play into an effective feature film was enough of a challenge that it might have been wise not to star in it as well.

Despite these flaws, "Jack Goes Boating" is a gentle, interesting dramatic alternative with a very-talented cast. It could have been a bit stronger but, kind of like its love-seeking characters, Philip Seymour Hoffman's debut is an easy film to work for. And there's reason for hope.

"Jack Goes Boating" stars Philip Seymour Hoffman, John Ortiz, Amy Ryan, and Daphne Rubin-Vega. It was written by Bob Glaudini and directed by Philip Seymour Hoffman. It is rated R and opens on September 24th, 2010.



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