

‘Take This Waltz’ with Michelle Williams, Seth Rogen

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on July 12, 2012 - 8:37am

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Sarah Polley’s “Take This Waltz” both illustrates its director’s uniquely confident vision as a filmmaker and her room to grow as a screenwriter. Despite the best efforts from a very talented cast led by a fearless performance from Michelle Williams, Polley’s film is frustrating in its inability to reflect the real world. There are definitely things to like here, including the best use of an iconic song in years, a beautiful color palette, and the director’s strong work with talented actors, but it’s a film that constantly reminds you of its falsity, never finding the truth within its daring plotline.

“What’s the matter with you? You seem restless. Not just now...in a kind of permanent way.” No one talks this way. And if they do, the person to whom they’re speaking doesn’t have the perfect answer at the ready. Very few people have that kind of self-awareness, especially if they’re a character who is designed as one who is somewhat lost in life, afraid of missing connections in life (as she literally says in the world’s most pretentious meet-cute). In “Take This Waltz,” it’s merely an invitation for a monologue.



Take This Waltz

Photo credit: Magnolia

“Take This Waltz” does come from a writer trying to wrangle with daringly complex themes – mostly how longing & complacency are facts of life and how it’s in the way one responds to them and how much they perceive the grass to be greener somewhere else that matters. It’s about seeing something outside of your bubble of a relationship, marriage, friendship, etc. and choosing whether or not to take it. These are emotionally rich issues that writers have been wrangling with for centuries but Polley fails to ground them in reality, making a film with extreme situations that never register on a personal level because they feel more like arthouse cinema exercises than truth.

Polley's smartest decision was to cast the ridiculously talented Michelle Williams as her lead, Margot. This lovely girl is married to a wannabe cookbook writer named Lou (Seth Rogen). Like most marriages, they've gotten a little stale but not in an overly melodramatic way. She is often a bundle of neuroses and issues, unable to seduce him and shattered when her plans to do so don't work out. And so it makes sense that she's drawn to the neighbor, Daniel (Luke Kirby), who clearly wants her. He doesn't just want her, he seems destined to get her. He constantly crosses her path, finding her at the most unique times and always knowing what to say and do. It got to the point where I questioned if Daniel existed – if he wasn't just a figment of Margot's imagination, the symbol of the hunk who lives across the street and sweeps her off her feet; the Tyler Durden of arthouse romantic dramas. How else to explain how often he pops up out of nowhere or the bizarre turn their affair takes in the final act?



Take This Waltz

Photo credit: Magnolia

But if Polley meant Daniel more as a symbol than a character — the Prince Charming who shows up just when Margot needs him to save her from her boredom — it's both never developed fully to that extent and illustrative of her flaws as a writer. Daniel never feels grounded in either reality or symbolism and so neither does Margot's relationship with him. It would be fine to have Daniel be a little thin narratively since this is Margot's story but too much of the film consists of the two characters exchanging remarkably stylized, self-aware dialogue for it to be taken as anything other than purported truth. *"I thought to myself, I need to find out how she works, how every part of her works."* Put that line in a Katherine Heigl movie and critics roll their eyes but it's somehow seen as insightful here.

Thank God for Michelle Williams. She's easily the best thing about "Take This Waltz," finding truth buried in Polley's dense script. And she's one of those actresses who makes everyone around her better. Rogen and Sarah Silverman have arguably never been better. They seem invigorated to work with Williams, an actress who only seems to be getting stronger with each performance.

And it should be noted that Polley brings a strong visual sense to the film. She uses a bright color palette, shooting Toronto in unique ways, and finding moments in her story to offer cinematic beauty, such as in a breathtaking scene between Daniel & Margot set to "Video Killed the Radio Star." Although it's telling that the best scene in "Take This Waltz" features no dialogue.

"Take This Waltz" stars Michelle Williams, Seth Rogen, Luke Kirby, and Sarah Silverman. It was written and directed by Sarah Polley. It was released on Video On Demand on last month and will be released in Chicago theaters tomorrow, July 13, 2012.



[11]

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [12]

Content Director

HollywoodChicago.com

brian@hollywoodchicago.com [11]

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