

## Robert Pattinson Takes Interesting Ride Through David Cronenberg's 'Cosmopolis'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on August 23, 2012 - 4:07pm

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – One of our best living filmmakers, one of our best working authors, and a teen heartthrob who has largely been known for looks over skill get into a slow-moving limousine in David Cronenberg's adaptation of Don DeLillo's "Cosmopolis" starring Robert Pattinson in almost exclusively one-on-one scenes with some great supporting actors and actresses. The result is a purposefully disjointed, pretentious, philosophical, and deeply stylized journey through an exaggerated commentary on the haves, the have-nots, and those stuck in the middle. There is a lot to admire here even if the sum of this movie's many parts isn't quite as interesting as its individual moments.

*"You acquire information and turn it into something stupendous and awful."* Eric Packer (Pattinson) is a super-wealthy, paranoid, elitist, apathetic, nonchalant prick. DeLillo's 2003 book was a stunningly prescient examination of the gap between the 1% and the masses as Packer journeyed across New York in his souped-up limousine (complete with soundproofing so as not to hear the unwashed outside) just to get a haircut. The people in Packer's life meet him in his limo/office to discuss his business, his sex life, and the asymmetric nature of his prostate (which he gets examined right there in the limo while talking dirty to a female friend). If it sounds to you like the kind of material that's right in the wheelhouse of a man who has made some of his best work on the subject of technology, business, science and what these pursuits of advancement of each do to mankind (in films like "Videodrome," "The Fly," "eXistenZ," and more) then you know your Cronenberg.



Cosmopolis

Photo credit: eOne

So what exactly “happens” in “Cosmopolis”? That’s hard to say. Some scenes play like broad dark satire, such as when a woman (Samantha Morton) says to Packer, “*I deal in theory*” as a person lights himself on fire during a protest outside of the limo. DeLillo and Cronenberg present a world and the king of that world that is so distant from what goes on outside of it. As Packer keeps hearing of threats against his safety (usually from a security officer played by Kevin Durand), he is seemingly oblivious to any actual danger. It’s as if his detachment from humanity has drained him of his soul. He has a doctor that reports to him daily to check his entire system, including the aforementioned prostate exam and it first seems like he likely does so to make sure he’s not going to die when in actuality it’s probably the only thing that reminds him that he’s alive.

With a protagonist as distant and relatively loathsome as this, it’s easy to see how “Cosmopolis” could come off as philosophical more than visceral. It takes place in the playgrounds of a man like Eric Packer – limos, wine bars, a fancy hotel – and it’s purposefully distant. It may seem like the individual scenes of deeply philosophical conversations with co-stars like Juliette Binoche, Jay Baruchel, Emily Hampshire, and Paul Giamatti aren’t fully interconnected but that’s part of the point. “Cosmopolis” is purposefully distant. What I expect that many (especially those who want to see their favorite “Twilight” star and don’t know what they’re getting) will be disappointed by the cold, cerebral nature of the film but I also think that’s inherent in the material. It’s the only way to approach DeLillo’s book.



Cosmopolis

Photo credit: eOne

My problems with "Cosmopolis" don't lie where most film purists may think. When many film lovers over thirty heard that Cronenberg had cast "Twilight" star Robert Pattinson opposite heavy hitters like Binoche and Giamatti, there was a collective raised eyebrow. And yet Pattinson delivers completely and entirely, doing BY FAR the best work of his career. Cronenberg knew how to use Pattinson's natural detachment to the character's advantage and gets an amazing amount of quality work from the young star that I've always believed is the most likely to come out of the most successful supernatural franchise of all time with the most future potential. And, for the record, every film that has Juliette Binoche and Paul Giamatti, even if just for one scene, is better for it. They are great here.

What just misses about "Cosmopolis" for me is the same issue that forced "A Dangerous Method," Cronenberg's last film, to be "good not great." The man who once trafficked in such instinctual, visceral, gut-punching material has become a colder, more cerebral, philosophical filmmaker. I'm not saying that our artists shouldn't change but there's a human element missing from Cronenberg's last two films – a dirt, grime, and sexual energy that used to be his trademark and has been largely replaced by dialogue. Cronenberg is technically masterful but I miss the ragged edges when his recent work has been all streamlined, straight ones.

It doesn't help that DeLillo's book is a little thin in the center. The set-up of this unique protagonist, a shark who moves through the waters of big business in a stretch, is great and the final act is pretty riveting but some of the tangential scenes in the center sag, especially a bit about a rapper's funeral that needed another rewrite. However, by the time Packer, Cronenberg, and DeLillo get to the final extended scene, "Cosmopolis" had convinced me that it was something worth seeing again to dissect without expectation. It's definitely an interesting journey, if not a cinematically great one.

*"Cosmopolis" stars Robert Pattinson, Juliette Binoche, Sarah Gadon, Mathieu Amalric, Jay Baruchel, Kevin Durand, Emily Hampshire, Samantha Morton, and Paul Giamatti. It was written and directed by David Cronenberg from the book by Don DeLillo. It opens in Chicago on August 24, 2012.*



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By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [18]

Content Director

HollywoodChicago.com

[brian@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com) [17]**Source URL (retrieved on Sep 23 2024 - 5:54am):**<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/19634/robert-pattinson-takes-interesting-ride-through-david-cronenberg-s-cosmopolis>**Links:**[1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/briantt>[2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/brian-tallerico>[3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/cosmopolis>

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- [17] <mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com>
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