

Don't Say That You Love Me in Kevin Smith's 'Tusk'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on September 20, 2014 - 8:08am

- [A24](#) [2]
- [Canada](#) [3]
- [Génesis Rodríguez](#) [4]
- [Haley Joel Osment](#) [5]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [6]
- [Johnny Depp](#) [7]
- [Justin Long](#) [8]
- [Kevin Smith](#) [9]
- [Michael Parks](#) [10]
- [Movie Review](#) [11]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [12]
- [Podcasting](#) [13]
- [Tusk](#) [14]
- [YouTube](#) [15]



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – The headline is a quote (“Don’t say that you love me!”) from Fleetwood Mac’s song “Tusk,” which Kevin Smith gratefully includes in his film of the same name. The movie is either the most outrageous audacity of the year or a blatant middle finger from Smith to the audience. You decide.

I liked it, I hated it, I was mesmerized by some of the lengths the story took to stay on track. There were times during the proceedings where it seemed like the whole thing was a fraud, in the sense that Wizard-of-Oz like, Smith was going to walk on camera and say, “ha, dopes, you fell for it” (but he would have said something more piquant than “dopes”). The film defies logic, definition or a basis in dreamland, but it makes up in chutzpah, which has never been lacking in Kevin Smith. Whatever the final analysis will be, this is the type of movie that only the individual can put through their perspective to completely understand.

Wallace (Justin Long) and Teddy (Haley Joel “The Sixth Sense” Osment) are popular online podcasters. Their show consists of finding random video clips throughout the web and commenting upon them. They have an odd partnership – Teddy will not leave Los Angeles, so Wallace goes on the road to find the subjects of their derision.



Wallace (Justin Long) Reacts to His Fate in 'Tusk'

Photo credit: A24

One of the videos that they comment upon is the "Kill Bill Kid." The Kid lives in Canada, and Wallace takes to that road to interview him, much to the chagrin of his girlfriend Ally (Genesis Rodriguez). The interview comes to a dead end, so Wallace finds another subject, Howard Howe (Michael Parks), who turns out to be more than expected. When Wallace goes missing, it's up to Teddy, Ally and a hapless Canadian ex-police inspector, Guy (Johnny Depp), to find the missing podcaster before it's too late.

Guaranteed if you are a ardent filmgoer, you'll hear about this one from your filmgoer buddies. They may even try to spoil some elements of it, but don't fall for it. Go see it yourself. I cannot imagine the range of opinions that will fly for this one, I think it will be from masterpiece to "worst of" lists, and isn't that what gives a film a special reputation? The idea of the cinema art is to spark a reaction, and given Smith's track record ("Clerks II," anyone?), he might redefine the old question, "What is Art?"

There is some purposefully (I presume) strange acting in this, so why not put Johnny Depp in amongst the characters? His Guy is part-Inspector Clouseau and part-Sean Penn in "I Am Sam." I doubt Smith wrote any lines for him, as he ramshackles through dozens of explanations for his motives. There is a particularly weird spot where he does a flashback, and it's so pointless it generates a poignant absurdity.

Justin Long is ballsy as well in the film, as a person who lets his podcast fame go to his head and becomes an a-hole because of it. He has to go through a metamorphosis in his attitudes, because of the situation he gets himself into. Is this a symbol of regret that Smith himself is expressing? Is he pondering his own metamorphosis in going through the celebrity system? "Tusk" has some tantalizing insight into where Smith has been and where he may be going next.



Ally (Genesis Rodriguez) and Teddy (Haley Joel Osment) Are Perplexed in 'Tusk'

Photo credit: A24

Smith is also the first to make fun of the way his films look, and does his best in "Tusk" to stay true to the static conversation shots (lingering), crazy stretches of dialogue (improvisation) and looney violence (dismemberment). He still has that teenage boy attitude that started in "Clerks," and remains fascinated with the extreme and the bizarre. "Tusk" plays to that fantastical self.

Maybe more lyrics from the song "Tusk" can help us understand the movie..."Why don't you ask him what's going on? Why don't you ask him who's the latest on his throne?...Just tell me that you want me! Tusk!" You decide.

"Tusk" opens everywhere on September 19th. Featuring Justin Long, Haley Joel Osment, Michael Parks, Johnny Depp and Genesis Rodriguez. Written and directed by Kevin Smith. Rated "R"



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