Expansive 'Steve Jobs' is a Marvel of a Movie

Submitted by **PatrickMcD** [1] on October 16, 2015 - 2:07pm

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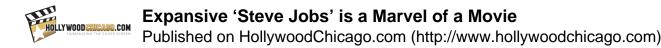- Walter Isaacson [21]

Rating: **5.0**/5.0

CHICAGO – You don't need CGI, entire cities being turned to rubble, or an army of assembling Avengers to make a great movie. All you need is a good story to tell and a team of people talented enough to tell it. Writer Aaron Sorkin, and Director Danny Boyle are just the right people to make "Steve Jobs" because their finished project positively springs to life on the screen.

Sorkin looks at Jobs' life through the prism of three different product launches, the original Macintosh, NeXt, and the iMac. At all three he is visited by key figures in the history of Apple, in the forms of Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak (Seth Rogen), Apple Engineer Andy (Michael Stuhlbarg) and Apple CEO John Sculley (Jeff Daniels). The ingenious structure allows for us to see the rise, the fall, and the rebirth of his career and gives it more focus than it might have had as a straight cradle to grave biopic.

Michael Fassbender is the Title Character in 'Steve Jobs'

Photo credit: Universal Pictures

But the engine that drives this story is the conversations between Jobs (Michael Fassbender) and his director of marketing Joanna Hoffman (Kate Winslet, sporting an eastern European accent). She refers to herself as his work wife and the two navigate Sorkin's crackling dialogue and walk and talks with impressive skill. These are not two people discussing talking points, or shouting at one another, but rather two people with very well formed worldviews having spirited discussions. And this extends to all of Jobs dialogues with the three main figures from his past. The difference is as distinct as the difference between sitting in on an informative discussion and whatever passes for discussion on cable news.

Michael Fassbender isn't afraid to play Jobs as a huge jerk, but he's also a jerk who just happened to have been right most of the time. He's a man at the cusp of a technological revolution who was literally decades ahead of his time, and fought to make the world, and his colleagues see his vision.

But lest the film tip over into hagiography, he was also rude to even his closest associates, and had a daughter that he denied paternity to for most of her childhood. Fassbender never stops being watchable and he finds a way to grasp the essence of what Jobs was all about. Winslet is meant to call him out on his more egregious moves and be a foil, but she's also fiercely supportive and able to see and cultivate the germs of compassion in this relentlessly driven person.

Michael Fassbender and Seth Rogen in 'Steve Jobs'
Photo credit: Universal Pictures

The rest of the cast is solid, with Stuhlbarg getting a shining moment as a trusted but frequently verbally abused Apple engineer. Seth Rogen in particular shows remarkable dramatic chops playing Wozniak as at first a fun kinda gearhead geek. But as the movie goes on he begins to show cracks in the exterior. He's part of the team yes, but he's an underappreciated part who is sometimes treated with condescension and not given the respect he deserves. As Rogen says in the movie "I'm tired of being Ringo, I should be John."

The film has three distinct settings, so it could almost be a play in three well formed acts. But Director Danny Boyle has a pretty keen eye for cinema. He largely eschews the visual trickery he brought to both 127 hours and Slumdog Millionaire, but he is able to make these spirited conversations just pop off the screen. It's a cliche, but in this case it's absolutely true. I was on the edge of my seat the whole time, and you can't ask for anything more than that during a night at the movies.

"Steve Jobs" opens in Chicago on October 16th, and everywhere on October 23rd. Featuring Michael Fassbender, Kate Winslet, Michael Stuhlbarg, Seth Rogen, Jeff Daniels and Katherine Waterston. Screenplay by Aaron Sotkin. Directed by Danny Boyle. Rated "R"

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