

Gravity of Poetic Dreams Carry Weight in ‘Paterson’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on January 20, 2017 - 11:08am

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Rating: **5.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – What is more ordinary than a man alone with his thoughts, and then applying those thoughts to paper in the form of poetry? “Paterson” is a celebration of such ritual, and other dreams in the working class. It never panders, it never makes the “hero” that heroic, but it does challenge him in an ordinary sense, to work it out as meaningful poetics.

This is a quiet and low-keyed film, directed by independent icon Jim Jarmusch (“Broken Flowers”), but it resonates with the power of words and purpose. The main character is a bus driver, but his status in life is not determined by what he does, but how he lives. He is devoted to his wife, who also dreams – not of words, but in the ideal of finding her passion in life. This is a concise character study that fires on emotions and intellectual stimulation, not because the persons in the film are smarter or more attached to their feelings, but because they keep striving to understand what to do with this short porch of a lifetime.

Paterson (Adam Driver) is a bus driver in Paterson, New Jersey. Between runs, and in his free time, he writes poetry based on his every day observations. His wife Laura (Golshifteh Farahani) is somewhat of a dreamer, and fixates on various activities that will advance her evolution (guitar playing, baking, decorating). They live a content but yearning middle class existence.



An Exact Change: Adam Driver is The Title Character in ‘Paterson’

Photo credit: *Bleecker Street Media*

Laura is always trying to convince Paterson to publish his poetry, and that time is getting close for him as well. The rest of the film follows Paterson's day-by-day activities...his job, the bar he hangs out at and his meditative observations, always ripe for verse. Even as his dog Marvin changes his life with a single act, Paterson finds a way toward his destiny.

Writer/director Jarmusch has a way with taking ordinary activities and giving them depth and virtue, and Paterson is his latest hero. The 63 year-old director also has a literary and poetry background, and the film could be an imaginary autobiography, as if what he became a bus driving poet rather than a film director? He honors his creations so much, and is able to nurture them throughout the film. For example, the role of wife Laura could have been perceived as a taker from less nuanced storytellers, but Jarmusch uses her as a source of inspiration for Paterson, a vital cog in the wheel of his creative spirit.

Adam Driver, one of the hottest actors of the moment, embraces his role with utmost care. He imbues Paterson with an inner mechanism, which fires up when he reflects upon a slice of his life. On the surface, he could be characterized as a sad sack, counting the days until his demise, if it wasn't for his quirk of literary pursuit. Portraying a working class man is tricky business, too much can smack as phony, and too little can seem pandering. He strikes the proper tone, right down to the panic when his bus malfunctions. This emergency begs him to be an authority figure, but he's just trying to get through his days.



The Poet with wife Laura (Golshifteh Farahani) in 'Paterson'

Photo credit: Bleecker Street Media

All of the supporting players have distinct messages for Paterson, and Jarmusch gives them a heft that is truthfully influential. Golshifteh Farahani as Laura is a charmer, a pretty flower in Paterson's life who also desires a separate reality for herself. There is a mysterious Japanese tourist that Paterson encounters, and every word in their exchange has weight. That meeting is a prime example of how Jarmusch has structured the film to that point...suddenly everything Paterson does has meaning.

One of the role models in the film is a poet who hails from the Paterson region in New Jersey, William Carlos Williams, and one of his quotes on the subject distinctly points toward Paterson the man..."It is difficult to get the news from poems, yet men die miserably every day for lack of what is found there."

"Paterson" continues its limited release in Chicago on January 20th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Adam Driver, Golshifteh Farahani, Nellie, Rizman Manji, Barry Shabaka Henley and Masatoshi Nagase. Written and directed by Jim Jarmusch. Rated "R"



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By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [18]
Writer, Editorial Coordinator
HollywoodChicago.com
pat@hollywoodchicago.com [17]

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