

‘A Cure For Wellness’ Provides a Much-Needed Temporary Fix

Submitted by [JonHC](#) [1] on February 17, 2017 - 12:50pm

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Gore Verbinski is no stranger to the spooky. He always creates these tense, terror-filled scenes that effectively frighten us. His films, from “Ring” to “Rango”, each are compelling enough to keep our attention, not matter how absurd they transform into. Boy, does he ever deliver in the gorgeously grotesque “A Cure for Wellness.”

I grew up in what can easily be considered the golden era of fucked up cartoons. My formative years were filled with outrageous, absurdist shows like “Ren & Stimpy,” “Rocko’s Modern Life,” “Aaahh!!! Real Monsters,” and “Courage the Cowardly Dog.” Each of them probably has something to do with my macabre sensibilities and Gore Verbinski perfectly mirrors my own predilections. The most powerful part of any Verbinski is the visual storytelling and “A Cure for Wellness” proves that he works best when the camera tells the story for him. The best way to describe his visual aesthetic is to say that it looks like if Tim Burton made films only for adults. Verbinski also uses a similar color palette with bright, vibrant hues offering a stark contrast to the often dark subject matter.



Lockhart (Dane DeHaan) explores the sinister mysteries inside of ‘A Cure for Wellness’

Photo credit: 20th Century Fox

“A Cure for Wellness” takes place atop a gorgeous mountain resort of the damned in a town that time forgot. The breathtaking natural beauty is meant to juxtapose the cold and sterile city life our main character is coming from. The warm tones mask a dark secret as Verbinski channels gothic forces in this film. While his cinematography captivates, it also ends up trying to provide a distraction for a weak story. We explore this world, meet all these interesting, yet mysterious people and we automatically know something is amiss. For the first half of the film, Verbinski is the master of the pacing and tone. He takes the scenic route as he expertly builds suspense and intrigue, dangling a carrot in

front of us as it draws us deeper down a rabbit hole. Part way down, our cautious descent turns into a freefall as the story takes control of the film, and with it goes much of what made this film beautiful.

Verbinski is no stranger to the strange. He teams up again with "The Lone Ranger" writer Justin Haythe to come up with this story. Perhaps seeing how well "The Lone Ranger" did should have been a warning sign, Haythe turned the story into a screenplay. The first half of the film take a meandering gothic approach as we get to know the grounds and begin to realize that there is something wrong with this resort. This is all fairly standard for these types of films and works well for the movie because while plot details are vague, the imagery is plentiful. Imagery like how power lies in the eyes, or how the water there symbolizes the unquenchable thirst of the work-focused and overly ambitious. It's nice, nothing new, but still effective. This takes a turn once the true sinister nature of everything is revealed, but much of it feels hastily developed. One of the biggest reveals in the film can easily be figured out early on by even the smallest of sleuths. The problem doesn't lie in the film's predictability, but in how the end turns into something you would have never thought of because there was little to no build up to it. The climax at the end offers reveal after reveal after reveal, much of it without previous context while the rest just seems too ridiculous to merit any of our emotional investment.



Hannah (Mia Goth) shows us how coyfully EEL-ectric she can be in 'A Cure for Wellness'
Photo credit: 20th Century Fox

The performances bring parts of this dead film to life. Dane DeHaan feels like he is channeling a bit of Leo DiCaprio in "Shutter Island" in a role that felt like it was written with Johnny Depp in mind. He proves to be a convincing protagonist as we see him transform from ambitious businessman to reluctant hero, and we empathize with him every step of the way. DeHaan keeps the film centered with his performance and becomes the conduit through which we witness (and sometimes even feel) the escalating series of terrible events that wait ahead of him. With the film's anchor (DeHaan) firmly in place, it takes the freedom to introduce some eccentricities through characters played by Mia Goth, Jason Isaacs and Celia Imrie, each adding an extra layer of kooky-spooky to a forebodingly somber tone.

When taking medicine, most of the time all you care about how it takes care of the pressing symptoms. As long as it provides a cure for the moment, you don't much care about the endgame since that will be a worry for another day. "A Cure for Wellness," although fundamentally flawed near the end where it turns on itself, provides that momentary relief we look for in escapist-pleasure filmmaking. It provides twists, turns and enough visual splendor to more than make up for its ending. When the other current horror film option is "Rings," any film is leagues above it.

"A Cure for Wellness" opens everywhere on February 17th. Featuring Dane DeHaan, Mia Goth, Jason Isaacs, Celia Imrie, Ivo Nandi and Harry Groener. Screenplay by Justin Haythe. Directed by Gore Verbinski. Rated "R"



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