

Aubrey Plaza Steers the Unsettling 'Ingrid Goes West'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on August 23, 2017 - 6:04pm

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Aubrey Plaza (“Parks and Recreation”) is an actor who always seems to do something memorable in her performances. In “Ingrid Goes West,” she carries an entire movie on her quirky and sometimes disturbing character... that of a bipolar stalker who can't find balance.

The interesting element of the film is that they establish that Plaza's character of Ingrid is unbalanced from the first scene. She viciously attacks someone, and is sent to a mental health facility to do time and rehabilitation. What happens when she is let loose from those restraints is the guts of the movie, and it eventually devolves into an unexpected “anti-hero” story of a person who can't get what she wants, until she does. As a smaller independent film, co-writer and director Matt Spicer gives it room to breath, and at the same time allows it to express its inevitability. Ten years ago, this film couldn't have been made – social media is a specific plot point – and in a sense it does show the implications of human interaction with electronic devices that give instant communication and either gratification or difficulties.

Ingrid Thorburn (Aubrey Plaza) commits an attack upon a friend at a wedding, and must do time in a mental health facility in lieu of jail. After release, she is back on her own, with an unexpected inheritance. Connecting to social media, she discovers Taylor Sloane (Elizabeth Olsen), a California woman whose life is seemingly perfect. Ingrid then goes west to California to pursue that same dream.



Aubrey Plaza Goes Through the Electronic Mirror in 'Ingrid Goes West'

Photo credit: Neon

She arrives and takes residence near Sloane's house, under the auspice of landlord Dan (O'Shea Jackson Jr.). Through a series of events she meets her prey, and Taylor's husband Ezra (Wyatt Russell). The "friendship" develops, but soon Taylor suspects something is not quite right, and that is amplified by her brother Nicky (Billy Magnussen). The ultimate rejection of Ingrid is followed by some unintended ramifications.

The film works in being diversionary. Director Spicer sets up a redemptive situation for Ingrid, she might really find a connection and become whole within it. But life isn't often like that, as Spicer then points out, and it can take the tiniest tweak or turn in a new relationship to have it crash down. It's as if Ingrid doesn't change, but her circumstances do, and in a movie story we always hope that those circumstances will provide the absolution. What makes "Ingrid Goes West" most telling, is that it chooses to let the characters drive what happens next, and mistakes can easily be made in human nature.

The film also comments on the superficiality of social media. We all know it's superficial, but we participate anyway, because we can create ourselves as the centerpiece of our own making. Taylor's "perfect" life is the bait for Ingrid, but the switch occurs when Ingrid desperately wants to be a part of that life. Elizabeth Olsen is subtle as Taylor, who is somewhat perfect as she has created herself, but also humanely dire as she ignores her many negative traits.



Taylor (Elizabeth Olsen) and Ingrid Get Some Peace in 'Ingrid Goes West'

Photo credit: Neon

Billy Magnussen as Taylor's brother Nicky steals the picture at one point, as a mirror to what Ingrid actually is (he's just a bit more successful at it, and never looks back). He also figures into the weaker last quarter of the story, which seemed unnecessarily cruel. It propels Ingrid into her final confrontations, and her ultimate social media proclamation. The results are open ended and somewhat unsatisfactory, but for Ingrid it could have been the only way to go.

I'll highlight this review on Facebook and Twitter per usual, telling myself I'm creating a "brand," much as Taylor did in the film. This brand becomes the hyper realization of me, and at the same time is formulated by me. It's just another page on the web, spun within it and trapped there at the same time.

"Ingrid Goes West" is in select cities nationwide. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Aubrey Plaza, Elizabeth Olsen, O'Shea Jackson Jr., Wyatt Russell and Billy Magnussen. Written by Matt Spicer and David Branson Smith. Directed by Matt Spicer. Rated "R"



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