

Dull Origins in 'Professor Marston & the Wonder Women'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on October 17, 2017 - 8:01pm

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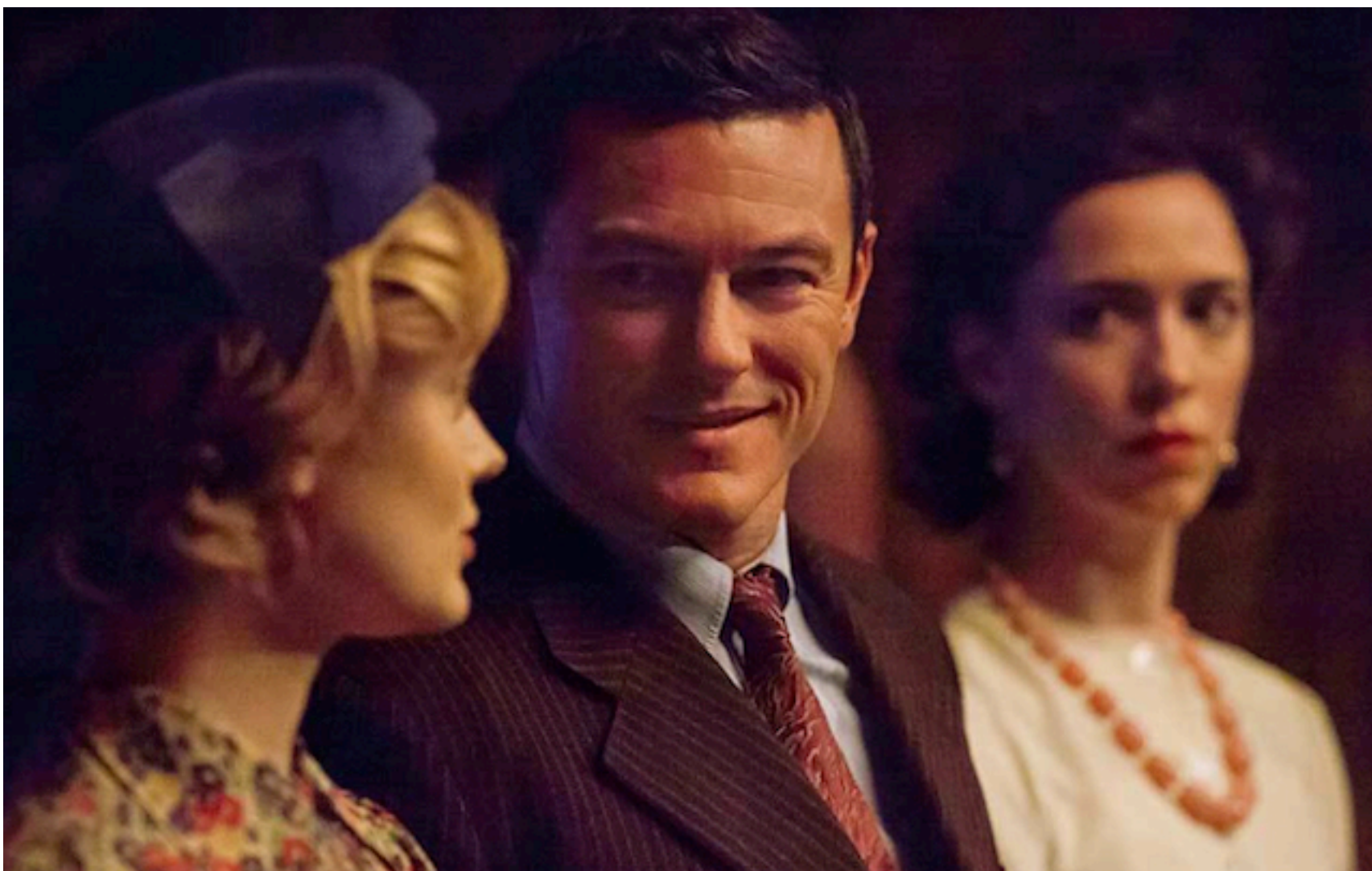


Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – For a film that has free love, lie detection, bondage, the origin of a great comic superhero and 3-way carnality, “Professor Marston & the Wonder Women” still comes out rather flat... quite a achievement. Wonder Woman is the comic hero, and this is the rest of her story.

The film is sincere in its effort to explain one of the more unusual creators of an enduring comic book character, one who applied his lifestyle to the characteristics of Wonder Woman. William Moulton Marston was a man who at his core wanted to create a hero of peace and love, with the additional traits of her built in as a result of his own careful research. The performances are good and worth noting, but the story – written and directed by Angela Robinson – gets stuck in the man-ahead-of-his-time rut, with the forces of censorship bringing the Wonder of the Woman down faster than any villain. It’s also supposed to be erotic, as the good professor loved his kinks, but ends up kind of sanitary in its sexuality. Overall, it should have, and could have, been more interesting.

Professor William Moulton Marston (Luke Evans) is an academic specializing in human behavior. His wife Elizabeth (Rebecca Hall) became his colleague and encouraging source, and was game for anything. When a lovely young coed named Olive (Bella Heathcote) looks for an associate position, William and Elizabeth finds her bewitching enough to propose a double “encounter.”



Three is a Magic Number in 'Professor Marston & the Wonder Women'

Photo credit: Annapurna Pictures

As this occurs, Marston also dabbles in the science of behavior, and develops a machine that detects shifts in body reactions that indicates lies. The three way affair turns into a live-in arrangement, which includes experimentation in kinky bondage. All of these factors come together in a “eureka” moment, and Marston pitches an idea of a Wonder Woman comic character to National Comics editor M.C. Gaines (Oliver Platt).

The ramp up to Wonder Woman is the slowest part of the film, as each new discovery by the professor and his arrangement become the basis for what would eventually become the hero. But first there is the free love, bondage and ahead-of-its-time feminism that becomes the inspiration for the comic. Once the story goes into a meeting with National Comics (the precursor to D.C.), the film becomes more fascinating, yet even WW is up against an unnecessary censorship trial, which slims down the interest again toward the end.

The three leads are game, and give decent performances. Luke Evans is the glue that holds together the story of Marston's arrangement, and Rebecca Hall is always impressive in how she inhabits a character – at this point I'd watch her read the phone book. Bella Heathcote is properly alluring as the third, but both women gets shuffled to the background once the living together begins, and Professor Marston heads to the comic book company.



The Familiar Emerges in 'Professor Marston & the Wonder Women'

Photo credit: Annapurna Pictures

The previews and marketing play up the sex of the story, but the actual presentation of the act only goes so far. The hints of bondage are most effective, and there is a good laugh when one of the ladies emerge in a costume that would later serve as the armor of Wonder Woman. But strangely there wasn't enough of it, and what was there was fairly dry. These scenes needed to be turned up to eleven, but couldn't get past about six or seven.

Though in essence, it was cool to see how the invention for the Wonder Woman character was drawn, especially as this was the “summer” of the character, and it was even cooler that it was relevant to feminism. But to use the famous baseball metaphor, it needed to be a home run, not held up rounding third.

"Professor Marston & the Wonder Women" is currently in nationwide release. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Luke Evans, Rebecca Hall, Bella Heathcoate, Connie Britton, Oliver Platt. Written and directed by Angela Robinson. Rated "R"



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