

Funny 'The Disaster Artist' Takes Us Back to 'The Room'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on December 1, 2017 - 11:44am

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – “The Room” is a post-millennial cult movie that plays the midnight and college movie circuit, entertaining audiences with its sheer badness. Its story is told in the “The Disaster Artist,” featuring James Franco as the director of “The Room,” and he also directed the film. Very meta.

There is a shooting-fish-in-a-barrel quality to the story, because the “movie within the movie” is notably terrible and Tommy Wiseau, the creator and star of “The Room” that Franco portrays, is an easy to parody odd duck. Having said that, the movie is winsome and funny, and the sincerity of the performances go a long way towards making it work. There are amazing recreations of “The Room,” including a side-by-side comparison during the end credits, and the film is done with a passion toward its subject, in both making fun of and celebrating it... basically it’s a buddy picture about being in the picture.

We first meet Tommy Wiseau (James Franco) in an acting class, where his schtick is clearly outside the mainstream. A fellow classmate named Greg Sestero (Dave Franco, co-starring with his brother) is taken with the mysterious Tommy, and connects with him to become a better actor. The acting mates take it a step further... they move from Northern California to Hollywood to pursue their dreams of being in the movies.



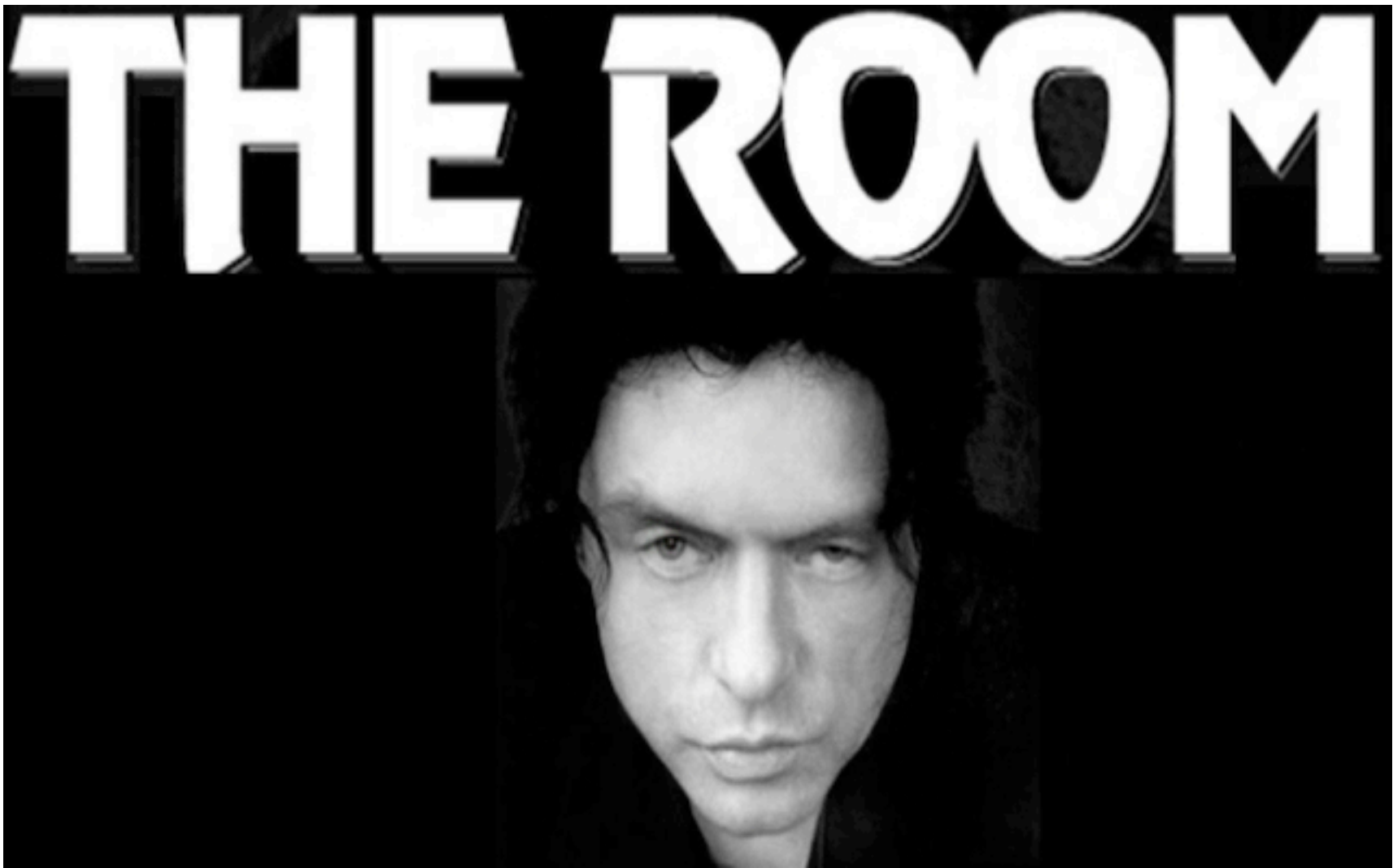
Greg (Dave Franco) and Tommy (James Franco) of 'The Disaster Artist'

Photo credit: A24

Tommy's past, his age and his source of income is vague, but Greg lives on his dime, even as he pursues a relationship with Amber (Alison Brie). As both acting careers stall in La La Land, Greg suggests that they make their own movie. Tommy responds by writing "The Room," and foots the bill for the production of his vision. Cut to the hijinks and hilarity of filming a bad movie.

The James Franco "gang" is part of the production, which made it feel like an inside joke on an inside joke. The film begins with celebrity endorsements of "The Room," by Hollywood hipsters including J.J. Abrams, Danny McBride, Keegan-Michael Key, Adam Scott, Kristen Bell and Kevin Smith, and then the cast is filled with the usual suspects of Seth Rogen, Zac Efron, Allison Brie, Megan Mullally and Ari Graynor (Rogen's wife). Throw in roles for Sharon Stone, Melanie Griffith and Jacki Weaver and it's a cult wrapped into a cult wrapped into an enigma (not really, I just wanted to type that sentence).

The film is funny, which best recommends it. Even though some jokes are obvious, they still land, and Dave Franco uses his wide-eyed persona to perfectly foil his brother's hammy performance as Tommy... their chemistry is good, honed by years of brotherly love, and that doesn't always happen. The story itself is slight and the result is predictable, but the "brothers in arms" survival instinct of Tommy and Greg is well honored, and a reminder that especially in filmmaking, no matter the result, that it takes a village to accomplish it.



The Real Tommy Wiseau Promotes 'The Room'

Photo credit: A24

This is also a must-see for fans of "The Room," much as the fans of "Psycho" loved the insider film "Hitchcock" of a couple years back. I'd certainly revel in a movie about one of my favorite movies, or in this case a movie about a cult favorite, much like "The Rocky Horror Picture Show." The success of "The Room" on the cult circuit was organic (like "Rocky"), and even the making-the-sausage elements of "The Disaster Artist" only adds to "The Room" mystique.

The other night, the real Tommy Wiseau appeared with James Franco on "Jimmy Kimmel Live." After years of saying his odd accent was based in New Orleans, Tommy offered to Jimmy that he originally was from "Europe." This flabbergasted the usual unflappable James F., and in a sense Tommy W. just derailed the interview like he had derailed the film exhibition world. Very meta.

"The Disaster Artist" has a limited release, including Chicago, on December 1st, and will open nationwide December 8th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring James Franco, Dave Franco, Seth Rogen, Zac Efron, Alison Brie, Ari Graynor and Jacki Weaver. Screenplay adapted by Scott Neustadter and Michael H. Weber. Directed by Ruben James Franco. Rated "R"



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