

The Tumbling Delicacy of Life in ‘Blindspotting’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on July 20, 2018 - 11:17am

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Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – How can we understand the day-to-day factors of men and women who continued to be judged by their skin color, economic circumstances, difficult jobs or gender fluidity, if we are not any of those categories? Our art can help us, as given a great example in the new film “Blindspotting.”

Actors Rafael Casal and Daveed Diggs wrote the film and performed the lead roles, that of two men going through different transitions in their lives. It also puts a spin on the differences in racial components for law enforcement, and socio-economic factors in the dynamics of wealth infiltration (gentrification) in Oakland, California. This is a film of the now, vibrant and alive with current trends, alive with street poetry and contemporary language. Directed by Carlos López Estrada in his major film debut, at its centerpiece is the melting pot of the American Dream, drifting and dancing through each other. Welcome to here.

Collin (Daveed Diggs) is a convicted felon, who has three days left in his parole term (he has to report into a halfway house for a year). Trying to stay out of trouble is difficult when dealing with his best friend Miles (Rafael Casal), who has a loose attitude towards life and his destiny. While Collin is driving home to make his curfew, he witnesses the street execution of a fellow African American man by law enforcement.



Collin (Daveed Diggs) and Miles (Rafael Casal) of 'Blindspotting'

Photo credit: Summit Entertainment

This witnessing upends the last days of his parole, the dealings with his ex-girlfriend Val (Janina Gavankar) and his continuing grunt work with Miles for a moving company. This gets them involved in the heart of the economic changes in Oakland, now getting Silicon Valley money after years of neglect. There seems to be a path that will lead to confrontation, and Collin is skipping along that path.

Daveed Diggs was in the original cast of "Hamilton" on Broadway, and is also a rapper. Free rap-style verse permeates the story, and informs it all the way to an unforgettable confrontation. Diggs uses all the emotional resonance in his arsenal, from disaffected ex-con to guilt-ridden African American to a man desperate for freedom. His performance is both race representational and character oriented. The sadness is in his fear... the fear of what he knows and doesn't know. Diggs delivers a subtle and artistic rendering to this role.

His story writing and performing partner, Rafael Casal, has his own conflicting resonance. His Miles longs for the respect associated with the "gangsta" life, in all its fraud, while he tries to gently raise his son and be a partner to his baby mother. He wears the grill, he waves the gun and he perpetuates his anger, mostly connected to economic frustration. The redemption of Miles is different than Collin, but in a sense they are both coming from the same direction.



Collin and Val (Janina Gavankar) of 'Blindspotting'

Photo credit: Summit Entertainment

The story elements are scattered a bit, but all of them become necessary to complete the cycles for the main players. Despite some of the performers seeming unlikely for their roles, such as Janina Gavankar as Collin's ex-girlfriend, all of the performances are passionate and delicate, as if all the supporting roles were walking on eggs around Miles and Collin... and in a sense they are. Key to the conclusion is the cop (Ethan Embry) that did the shooting that Collin witnessed. His deliverance is unexpected, but just as vital to the story, which became surprisingly necessary.

The creation of art to keep our societal debates alive is not-more-than-ever necessary. While our news media lays down their influence to propaganda and economics, artists will still express our ills and anger, and will tell the truth when we need it most, even as it sometimes ends up outside our own blind spots.

Listen to Patrick McDonald of HollywoodChicago.com talk to Daveed Diggs and Rafael Casal of Blindspotting, by [clicking here](#). [21]

"Blindspotting" opens in Chicago on July 20th, with a wider nationwide release on July 27th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Daveed Diggs, Rafael Casal, Janina Gavankar, Jasmine Cephas Jones, Ethan Embry and Tisha Campbell-Martin. Written by Daveed Diggs and Rafael Casal. Directed by Carlos López Estrada. Rated "R"



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