

Blu-ray Review: Stale Screen Culture Drama 'Men, Women & Children'

Submitted by [NickHC](#) [1] on January 22, 2015 - 3:54pm

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CHICAGO – In “Men, Women & Children,” director Jason Reitman not-so-audaciously reflects onto viewers their world of silent screens and awkward impersonal interactions. As many stories (“Don Jon,” “Disconnect”) have taken on the torch of showing how we are, gasp! — connected to the world yet disconnected from those close to us — Reitman’s tale is just another one for the batch.



Rating: **2.0/5.0**

When the aliens of another planet excavate our digital ruins to understand what we thought of what we wrought, “Men, Women & Children” shall stand out as the film that angled the screen society through the lens of absurdities and perversions, more by the parents than their title kin. Jennifer Garner and Judy Greer portray parents who exhibit control over their kin, enabled by the connectivity and mass audiences awaiting a simple post on the internet. In an example of screen culture absurdity, a stoic Garner is a vehement watchdog over all of her daughter’s activities, who has to find asylum in an anonymous Tumblr page; as for the film’s take on social media perversions, Greer plays the next tier of stage mom, exploiting her underage daughter with a skewed idea of how to become popular on the internet to anonymous fans.

“Men, Women & Children” wants to be the “American Beauty” for the iMessage era, without the performances or suburban wisdom. (It does, however, have two angst-exploding teens played by Ansel Elgort and Kaitlyn Dever whose love becomes a continual innocence while everyone loses their minds). Aside from them, the teens are as conflicted as their parents; young ones are swallowed hole by the access that the internet has to influence their perspective on they self worth, while parents (such as the mother and father played by Rosemarie Dewitt and Adam Sandler, respectively) face this new fangled contraption and see what opportunities it provides them when they are dissatisfied.

Beginning with a winking Emma Thompson voiceover over an episode of a work-attitred Sandler standing at the gates of online porn, “Men Women and Children” begins with a lightness that it trades for self-seriousness not long after. Instead of toying with these awkward reflections, the movie decides to become an arduous, straight-faced diagnosis, and embed its tone into the fleeting innocence of high school hormones and the quiet, grave dissatisfaction that their parents have with themselves. “Men, Women & Children” provides presentation pretending to be revelation, its many arcs taking more time than they need to teach these characters a final lesson about unplugging.

“Men, Women & Children” was a massive flop at the box office, earning \$705,908 in the domestic box office total, despite its 608 theaters, making Reitman’s previous streak (“Thank You for Smoking,” “Juno,” “Up in the Air,” “Young Adult”) seems like the work of a different reincarnation. A costly, ultimately indifferent experiment, “Men, Women & Children” became the project’s unexpected diagnosis about the culture that didn’t want to interact with it. It’s not that we’re afraid of a movie that wants to engage handheld screen culture and reflect it back at us — it’s probably more that, at the blunt heart of it all, we already know this. And in the damning shrug that it inspires, we don’t really care.