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Sundance FILM REVIEW: â??Kajillionaireâ?• Get Rich or Get Lost

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

The quirkiest film I watched at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival was *Kajillionaire*, written and directed by Miranda July whose body of work has drawn international acclaim for its profound insights into human connection and encompasses performance, fiction, filmmaking, public art, and an app. *Kajillionaire*, stars Evan Rachel Wood (*Frozen 2, Westworld*) as Old Dolio Dyne, Gina Rodriguez (*Jane the Virgin*) as the deft and light-hearted outsider Melanie, and Academy Award-nominated actors, Richard Jenkins and Debra Winger as the narcissistic parents, Mr. and Mrs. Robert and Theresa Dyne. *Kajillionaire* follows the Dynes on a madcap race as they comb the streets of Los Angeles plying their minor grifts to keep a roof over their heads.

July had this to say about the family, â??The Dynes are proud outsiders, self-righteous, and frowning on everybody else. In this sense, they are an extreme version of a lot of families, each of which has a unique way of setting itself apart from other families. Apart and above.â?• One of the great telling lines and one that got a rise from the Sundance audience came from Robert commenting on â??all the nitwits who drive by all the treasures that are there for the takingâ?¦Amazon packages, coupons, coins.â?• Nobody in *Kajillionaire* has any money, but money propels the narrative as the family searches the city for money on foot.

The film opens with the family waiting at a bus stop when the filmâ??s lead character, the androgynous-looking Old Dolio (Wood), suddenly goes into a well-choreographed semi-acrobatic routine in what turns out to be a surreptitious way to avoid the surveillance camera outside a United States Postal Office location in Los Angeles, Calif. The gig is for Old Dolio to reach through an accessible post office box and grab whatever is available in the neighboring boxes. Dutiful and with a stoic manner, Old Dolio performs her familial breadwinner role while splitting the proceeds equally with her family members.

But the fun doesnâ??t stop there as the family adopts the adventure-seeking Melanie (Rodriguez). Melanie takes the family business to another level as the unit finds itself sending an isolated elderly man off to eternal paradise with an all too real yet somehow unimaginable warm, heartfelt dynamic â?? despite the overt fraud and embezzlement trying to unfold inside the dying manâ??s home. Moreover,

cracks in the family dynamic surface and cannot be contained.

July makes full use of various camera setups, lighting techniques, soundtrack, and production design. Production design (Sam Lisenco) is well-placed in the City of Angels (Los Angeles) and the filmâ??s mise-en-scene lends itself well to the filmâ??s thematic qualities. In addition, the actors emanate an improvisational quality as the â??familyâ?• journeys through significant ups and downs with some in and outs as they face powerful earthquake tremors, death, and a psychological and emotionally revealing birthday. And, in the end, the Hollywood narrative wins out with redemption and salvation.

Kajillionaire is a fun film with a not-so-subtle social commentary and made its world premiere at Sundance 2020. Very warmly recommended!

Category

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Tags

1. Miranda July

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