

Stiller directs, stars in captivating 'The Secret Life of Walter Mitty'



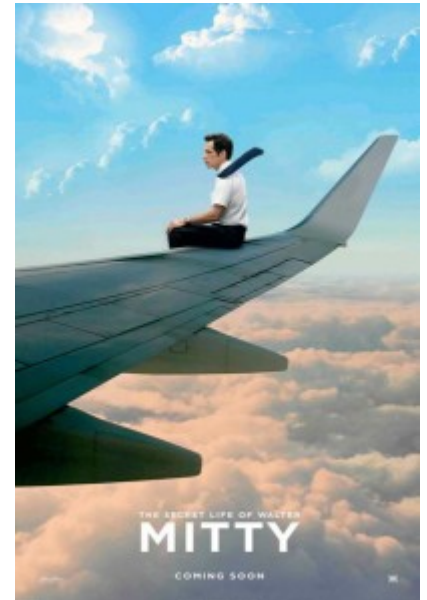
By Jeremy Miller

"The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" is the newest film from director Ben Stiller who also stars in it. It's based on the short story by James Thurber.

Co-starring we have Kristen Wiig, Jon Daly, Kathryn Hahn, Sean Penn and Adam Scott.

Walter (Stiller) is a lowly photo processor for *Life* magazine. He creates fantastical daydreams to escape the sad life he lives daily. The dreams center around his love interest Cheryl (Wiig) who's his quirky co-worker. In the dreams he plays the hero, sex appeal, and courageous adventurer he wishes he were. He slips off into his daydreams randomly and often during conversation, opening him up to mockery and rather harsh

teasing from those around him.



The magazine is shutting its doors to the world of print and begins a switch to digital headed by Ted Hendricks (Scott) the antagonist of the film. He's a ruthless corporate cliché who sets his crosshairs on Walter from the get go.

Walter receives a package from photographer and deified badass Sean O'Connell containing his latest pictures for the magazine. Said to be included is frame 25, the greatest picture Sean has ever taken; the problem is that it's not there.

With heavy pressure from Ted, and a bit of a push from Cheryl, Walter decides to embark on a journey in the real world that is far more climactic and daring than any of his fantasies trying to track down the elusive Sean O'Connell and retrieve the missing frame. He travels across the world, always in the shadow of Sean's footsteps, and along the way, and rather inadvertently, transforms into the hero of his daydreams.

The movie overall was very uplifting and the music matched the emotional tone of the film, which I think really added to its emotional power. The extremely dramatic nature of Walter's fantasies was really something. There was one scene that particularly caught my attention in which Kristen Wiig performs a version of Bowie's Major Tom and the entire scene

was absolutely serene. It had me smiling ear to ear and cheering aloud, along with 80 percent of the audience.

I give it a three because there were a few times it almost lost me. I remember thinking, "OK, OK I get it, let's move forward" but like I said, that only happened a few times. Its PG rating should give away that it's very subtle and at times a little fluffy. Ben Stiller really nails it in front of and behind the camera. I also thought it was particularly entertaining how he made himself go from puny, pathetic and repulsively boring to super model status as the film progressed. If I were directing myself, I would too! His performance was extremely charming, and the film overall was a huge achievement visually.

Sean Penn, who shows up for 10 seconds (it seems like) somehow manages to steal the show and absolutely knocked it out of the park. Kristen Wiig really outdid herself as well. You fall in love with her character almost instantly. The sequencing of the film was fluent and smooth. The plot moves exactly as you want to, and where you want it. The ending was an explosive crescendo that left me perfectly satisfied. Minus the few hiccups of temporary boredom, I loved it.

Overall, it was a fun movie and I recommend it to those whose imagination runs wild like mine.

South Lake Tahoe resident Jeremy Miller has more movie reviews online.