

'Birdman' – a near perfect movie

By Jeremy Miller

Ever wonder what has-been actors do when they've got one last shot to get back on the grid? Wonder no more. "Birdman" is the answer.

Riggan Thomas (Michael Keaton) was once the iconic super-hero Birdman however his choice to steer clear of the fourth installment of the franchise had bigger consequences than he had foreseen. He's under the impression that if he writes/directs/stars in a hit play on Broadway, people will remember who he is and possibly catapult him back to the top. Unfortunately for Riggan his main actor flaked out, his daughter Sam (Emma Stone) is fresh out of rehab, his manager/best friend Jake (Zach Galifianakis) is overworked and overly anxious and his marriage dissolved leaving him in a pretty awkward rebound with one of the play's actresses.

The play is ambitiously titled "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love" and its dialogue is equally as ambitious. When the lead actor bails, Riggan calls upon the talent of renowned actor Mike (Edward Norton) who's as arrogant as he is naive. He's probably the best representation of a cliché Broadway actor I've seen in a movie.



The Miller Meter – 4.5 stars out of 5.



Mike shows up and immediately restores Rigger's faith in his play, as Mike brings some serious talent to the screen. The film takes place over the course of a weekend, the first night being the preview during which everything that could have gone wrong did.

Rigger has moments of panic that unlike most include serious introversion and telekinetic powers.

Two days into the weekend Rigger runs into the most reputable theater critic in New York Tabitha who very overtly announces that she will do everything and anything in her power to destroy his play.

Throughout the weekend dealing with Mike's Prima Donna antics, his manager's haphazard organizational skills and his daughter lurking around making everything super weird, Rigger has to handle one problem after the next, ultimately climaxing in one of the most beautiful endings in its genre.

Now I am a huge and very loyal fan to Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu. He's given me some of my all-time favorite films such as "Babel", "21 Grams", "Beautiful", and "Amores Perros". I was beyond excited to see him take a stab at comedy, especially being that it's a dark comedy. He set out to give his film the feel that it was filmed in one continuous shot, which is a daunting feat for any filmmaker and he absolutely nailed it.



Alejandro's strong suits are emotionally driven visuals and exploring realistic human emotion and response, sometimes painfully so. The script and story were loads of fun and full of suspense and sadness as well.

There's a scene in which Mike (Norton) takes hold of Riggen's script and transforms it into something watchable. Watching these actors play actors was absolute bliss. The entire cast brought incredible performances that left a lasting impression on me after I left the theater. Keaton gave one of the best performances I have seen all year and wouldn't be surprised if come Oscar season he starts getting a lot of buzz. It was a perfect blend of touching, vulnerable and desperate.

I loved the cinematography, a one-shot movie definitely aided in the story taking place over a weekend. I felt like we watched all of it go down, which was the whole point.

There are many suspicions about what exactly took place at the end, which I loved as well. I love when a movie leaves it up to you to decide what happens. I'll tell you one thing for sure, the movie was a perfect blend of darkly humorous, sad, and touching.

The only reason this thing didn't creep up to a 5 on the meter is because I felt that a few scenes were just a tad drawn out and though the score was good, I felt it could have been more emotionally in tune with the story.

Overall, a great movie, and definitely worth the watch.

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