

Movie Review: Shutter Island, a dream come true for fans of film

by Steven Adam Renkovish

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It is well known Martin Scorsese is a master filmmaker. Decade after decade he has continuously defied conventional formulas and provided artful films that explore all sides of the human condition. Granted, most of his films delve into the darker recesses of the human mind, and Shutter Island is no exception.

It is a haunting experience, a film which uses both abstract and concrete techniques to tell a story. It may connect with mainstream audiences and it may not – but this much is true: in a society where Avatar can gross over \$600 million and receive a nomination for best picture of the year, Shutter Island is a welcome luxury. It's like a drink of cool water after a particularly dehydrating hike in a desert abounding with the sort of intellectually devoid effects-driven action films, inane romantic comedies, and manipulative tearjerkers which are transforming American audiences into mumbling, drooling philistines year after year.

The film opens in 1954, as a lone ferry arrives on an island which is reminiscent of Alcatraz, only it is not a prison in the usual sense. Rather, it is the location of a prestigious mental institution which houses only the most threatening patients, most of which have been committed for murder. After the disappearance of a vastly disturbed female resident, two U.S. marshals are summoned and arrive on the site to investigate, and fall upon one shocking revelation after another.

This film is drenched in atmosphere from beginning to end. From the opening strains of Gyorgy Ligeti's haunting chamber piece "Lontano", to the initial appearance of the island itself, there is no doubt – you "feel" this film. Once the mood settles in during the first few moments, it stays with you until the credits roll. Through this expertly crafted juxtaposition of atmosphere and musical selection, Shutter Island springs to life.

The performances are uniformly amazing. Leonardo DiCaprio gives another knockout performance as Teddy, one of the marshals assigned to the case. Like Robert DeNiro and Harvey Keitel before him, DiCaprio's acting sensibilities have captured the attention of Scorsese, who has continued to cast him in several notable roles over the past few years, the most significant of which is his role in *The Departed*. Through Scorsese's direction, DiCaprio has been able to grow as an actor, and the results of this partnership are clearly on display in Shutter Island.

Mark Ruffalo plays Teddy's partner, Chuck. Ruffalo exudes the necessary amount of intensity required by his character, and is wholly convincing. Scorsese also manages to draw some fantastic performances out of screen legends, Ben Kingsley and Max Von Sydow. These two men convey a palpable sense of dread throughout the film in varying degrees. Watching the two men work under Scorsese's sure-fire direction is worth the price of admission alone. Patricia Clarkson also appears and in a memorable supporting role, and the same can be said of Michelle Williams.

As far as the direction itself, if you want to see a master at work, look no further than this

film. It is a marvel in all aspects. This is Scorsese in top form. This is a film that simply cannot be missed.

Rated R for disturbing violent content, language and brief nudity. 138 min.

***** out of *****

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