

Weight of Water, The (2000)

reviewed by
Steve Rhodes

THE WEIGHT OF WATER

A film review by Steve Rhodes

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RATING P0 TO *****)Q **

Fresh from her big budget bomb, K-19: THE WIDOWMAKER, Kathryn Bigelow is back with a smaller film, THE WEIGHT OF WATER, a movie that will make you yearn for Neil LaBute's directorial skills. Like LaBute's POSSESSION, THE WEIGHT OF WATER is a dual-time movie with the characters in the present attempting to solve a century old mystery and with the action switching back and forth between the past and the present. While LaBute skillfully meshed the two storylines, Bigelow is never able to properly link the two. Her film is like a beautiful food entrée that isn't heated properly, so that it ends up a bit cold and relatively flavorless.

The story concerns Jean Janes (Catherine McCormack), a photographer sent to a remote island to take pictures of the house in which an infamous multiple murder took place in 1873. Accompanying her is her famous poet husband, Thomas (Sean Penn), his brother, Rich (Josh Lucas), and Rich's gorgeous girlfriend, Adaline Gunne (Elizabeth Hurley). They make the voyage to the island on Rich's sailboat, which provides plenty of opportunities for Adaline to bath topless while sucking ice and making eyes at Thomas. He reciprocates by ogling her, giving the impression that he is trying to resist but his libido is making him do it.

Flirtations abound in THE WEIGHT OF WATER, but, in one of the few times that anything approaching a satisfying sex scene starts, it is abruptly stopped. In a clichéd line, Jean apologizes to her husband for putting him off, telling him, "It's not you Thomas. It's me."

The scenes set in the past are more satisfying, as Sarah Polley gives a lovely performance as Maren Hontvedt, the only woman to have survived the murders. Ciarán Hinds plays Louis Wagner, the accused man whom Jean is convinced didn't do it. Viewers will quickly guess who the killer was. The script gives this away too easily and too early. Prolonging the mystery would have helped the story enormously.

My favorite ridiculous action is the men's bravado. When all hell breaks loose at sea, the men on deck give the women in the cabins below life preservers and tell the women to wear them. Let's save the little ladies, but we guys would rather die than admit we need help. Life preservers are for sissies, I guess.

The movie may be underwritten and underdramatized, but it is mildly entertaining. The sound effects of the category four storm are especially awesome.

THE WEIGHT OF WATER runs 1:45. It is rated R for "violence, sexuality/nudity, and brief language" and would be acceptable for teenagers.

The film is playing in nationwide release now in the United States. In the Silicon Valley it is showing at the Camera Cinemas.

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