

Two Reviews: “Get Low” and “Wake”

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Review by Tom Sims, Executive Director, Cape May Film Festival

I’m not sure if I’ve ever said this about a movie: I wanted it to be so much better. And don’t get me wrong... “Get Low” starring Robert Duvall, Sissy Spacek, and Bill Murray was very good—better than most movies today. It has all the ingredients of a superior film: excellent dialogue, some of the best performances from a stellar cast, and beautiful cinematography. But maybe there was too much exposition, maybe there was too little interest in a core story event. Whatever the case, the movie fell a little flat when it started with such effervescence.

That said (and I repeat), it’s still better than most films out there. Robert Duvall gives one of the best performances as outcast town hermit Felix Bush. Town folk tell stories about Felix, although none of them have particularly outlandish stories to tell. Felix wants them to tell all their stories... at his funeral... with him present! Bill Murray plays Frank Quinn, the local undertaker who complains about how slowly people die in this town. He’s approached by Bush to host the funeral—and he is more than willing to oblige.

Sissy Spacek is also wonderfully cast as the Felix’s long-lost companion, Mattie, who stirs up the secrets of Felix’s past. But I wasn’t so impressed with those secrets as I was in the slowly crafted (maybe at times too slowly) and wonderfully shot sequences leading up to it. The rest of the cast was all properly placed, especially Bill Cobbs (one of the busiest and finest character actors in history) as Rev. Charlie Jackson, who seems to know the secret to Felix’s past. The film was directed by Aaron Schneider, a relatively new director who won an Academy Award for his short film “Two Soldiers” in 2004.

I would recommend this film for all its stylish cinematography as well as its performances from an Oscar-winning cast. Its slight let down ultimately does not negate its clear merits. Trivia Question for one free weekend pass to the first person who can name one of the Academy Awards won by either Sissy Spacek or Robert Duvall (two passes goes to the first person who can name both plus the Oscar nomination for Bill Murray). Send answers to capemayfilm@hotmail.com.

And a final note: We are reviewing films for the 10th Annual Cape May Film Festival, and there are some notable films. “Wake” is a film which will have its New Jersey Premiere at the Cape May Film Festival. This is an unbelievably uplifting and poignant story of loss and honor. Beautiful camera work, wonderful acting, and tender storytelling will undoubtedly leave a lasting impression. Join us October 22-24, 2010, at the Chalfonte Hotel. Email us if you want to be informed of other updates.