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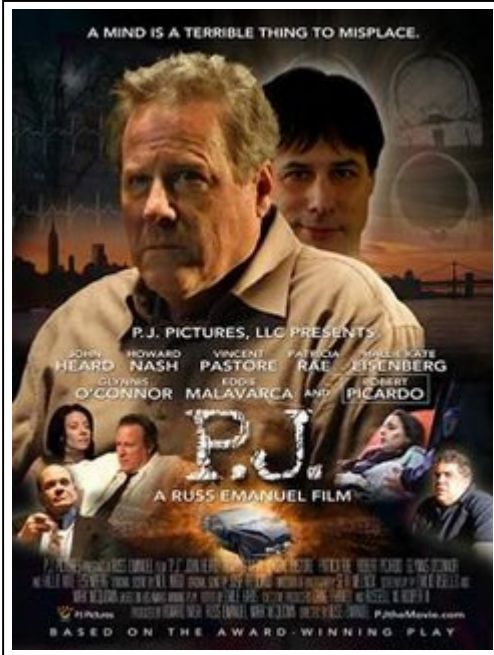
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FRIDAY, APRIL 4, 2008

## P.J. Review - written by dASH



*(\*This is one of three reviews I promised to do for people before I permanently deleted filmfanatix.com. These reviews are coming about a month late, but you know what I say-- better late than never! Many thanks to the always wonderful TonyD for allowing me to post the reviews here and get the word out on these films. Thanks!\*)*

If I could do it all over again and go back to the days of my graduate psych program, I would definitely write a thesis on “Why do first time writers tend to push their existential crises on others?” Why? Because I find it prevalent in so many independent films. Sure, I’ll admit, I’m guilty of it too. I think everyone is. When we say we want to sit down and write “The Great American Novel,” we don’t mean that we want to write something that encompasses the true essence of this great land of ours. No. What we *really* want to do, is to have an excuse to write about our issues with faith and perceptions of god, and the ever-puzzling “Why are we here?” complex.

And this is what P.J. (directed by Russ Emanuel) was to me-- 90

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minutes of getting inside a writer's mind who is struggling with some existential issues. According to this writer (*actually, two writers: Mark McQuown- story/screenplay; Emilio Iasiello- screenplay*), he wants us to understand and accept the importance of the idea that there are "some things modern science can't explain." Do I fault him for this? Not at all. I think it's great and I tend to agree with that statement. Writing is a very therapeutic tool and, when done properly, can touch many peoples' lives and cause them to reflect. So did that happen here? Well, let's examine the rest of the aspects of this film first before I go into further detail on that topic....

If you like shows like ER and CHICAGO HOPE and, heck, why not-- TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL--, you'll love P.J. Because that's what P.J. reminded me of: a slightly longer, more poignant episode of one of the aforementioned shows, with lots of actors who make you say, "Hey, I know him/her!..."

The film's plot basically revolves around a mystery patient who is nicknamed "P.J." due to his amnesia and subsequent "multiple personalities." His hands have been badly burned in an accident, and his appointed psychiatrist, Dr. Alan Shearson (*John Heard*), is trying to figure out who P.J. is, why he keeps slipping in and out of reality, and where those gosh-darn burns came from.

Naturally, there are some subplots occurring at the same time, including a humorous look into the "magic" of horse racing involving Burt (*Vincent Pastore*), a phone number belonging to a woman ("*Shelly*"/*Patricia Rae*) who might be able to unravel the mystery as to whom P.J. really is, as well as Dr. Shearson's own personal family crisis. Throw in a cameo appearance by Robert Picardo, and you've got yourself a movie, boy!

I do not want to give too much away by going further into the religion/faith plot, but I will say this: the plot, itself, is not what bothers me. Sure, I do not share some of the views the writer

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does, but I do not fault him for it either. When I watch a movie, I either want to be: 1) entertained, 2) challenged, or 3) both. P.J. fits the bill by allowing me to just sit back and enjoy a sweet, uplifting story. I don't necessarily have to believe everything the writer is trying to urge us to, but I can still enjoy it for what it is: a well-directed film full of hope. At times, yes, I found the acting to be a bit awkward in places (which surprised me due to the cast), but again, I think this was more of an issue with the script than the actual actors and directing. Again, it's not the plot that bothered me, but the actual writing. For instance, there were a few times I cringed at the lack of research done by the writer (i.e. What psychiatrist in their right mind ever says the words "cure" and "patient" together?).

But this is just my personal take on P.J. The day I write a script and get it made into a movie is the day I really have the right to go picking apart certain aspects of someone else's. I do not support the idea of putting down someone's vision or art because it's not congruent with how I think it should be. When we do that, it's almost as if we're putting down the person. (And all of you reviewers out there who don't think this preachy paragraph belongs in a review like this-- you've just realized the point I was trying to make. \*grin\*)

All in all I found P.J. to be a very entertaining and positive experience. The music was beautiful (*ala composer Neil Argo*) and fit the feeling and flow of the film quite well. The cast was impressive, the directing and editing were precise and told the story well, and the plot was touching, although the writing could have had a few more revisions. In short, it's a lovely film to watch if you're looking for something to lift your spirits. And if you're of a certain faith or belief system, it might also cause you to reflect more into the possibilities life has to offer.

So what are you waiting for? Go visit <http://www.pjthefilm.com/> to check out more information on the film, director, cast, and lots of other goodies!

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Thanks for reading!

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- Tara

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(aka dASH)

POSTED BY DASH AT 11:18 AM   
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Randy said...

Cool, dash, very cool. I am looking forward to seeing this.

APRIL 4, 2008 3:11 PM

dASH said...

thanks, sweetie. i'm sure you'll enjoy it! :)

APRIL 4, 2008 3:16 PM

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