

Sylvia – Movie Review

A few CPA members had the opportunity to go to the premiere of Sylvia, a movie starring Gwyneth Paltrow as the legendary American author and poet Sylvia Plath. Daniel Craig portrays British Poet Laureate Edward (Ted) Hughes to highlight how this brilliant married couple emerged as two of the most influential writers of the 20th century. Sylvia with such works as Ariel and The Bell Jar, and Ted with Birthday Letters.

With the poet so dear to my passion, I wanted to do a movie review. However, I found this a difficult task when the preconceived fulfillment of the film didn't materialize.

The point of the movie was to make a story line of the relationship between Ted & Sylvia appeal to more than poets, be accurate in the portrayal of their lives, and flood the audience with emotion. In order to do this, the writer needed to have us connect to Sylvia before the inciting incident, which was her meeting Ted. Sadly, this wasn't done. It was casual filler, not the embed of a poet's desire to be published which we could have related to, or the absolute devastation of her soul as a result of her father's death. This was the fatal error. I'm not sure if they were banking on our knowledge of her history but by time the polar antics of a woman in torment started to occur I couldn't relate, wasn't connected, and as a result she simply appeared unbalanced.

She was portrayed as obsessed with Ted and success, jealous of both, but underlying in the sub text it had to be much deeper to have her exist on the brink of suicide at all times. This wasn't properly conveyed, except for a few tripe expositions. If the key to Sylvia's demise was her father, the first 20 minutes should have been that relationship so by time she met Ted all we felt was the loss, betrayal, and an insatiable pit that only a man who made her the center of his universe could fill.

The other major deficit was the simple repetition of perceived bad events for Sylvia, versus the emotional roller coaster that her life certainly had. From a glance of a student to Ted, touch of a hand, work responsibilities, to subplots that all end the same with throwing and breaking, burning books, violence and eventual suicide. It became so predictable and boring, that I started to notice the actors and scenery – a sure sign of death for any film.

By time the movie finally reached the ending, it was anti-climactic. I should have been in a puddle of tears at the tragedy of the loss of this woman to the literature world and her children. I cry at soap and phone commercials. But instead I thought how selfish and cowardly, and I would hope that's not what it really was. Without the proper introduction and beginning this movie didn't have a chance.

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