

'Long Shot' defies the odds; ends on top

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 10 May 2019 07:22



Rating: «««« out of «««««

Running Time: 125 minutes

Truthfully, romantic comedies are often about as predictable as it gets. Countless versions feature a down-on-her-luck woman making a change in her life, becoming more assertive, and in the process finding the charming man of her dreams. *Long Shot* is the latest genre effort to arrive on cinema screens, and thankfully, it offers a couple of enjoyable variations on the tropes frequently seen in these types of features. The result is a likable and entertaining flick bolstered by its charismatic lead performances.

Fiery journalist Fred Flarsky (Seth Rogen) finds himself in a difficult situation after the publication he works for is bought outright by a wealthy media magnate. Angry, he quits the newspaper and sets out to confront the right-wing businessman at a public event, but unexpectedly finds himself in the company of Secretary of State Charlotte Field (Charlize Theron). The popular public figure has been informed that she will be endorsed by current president (Bob Odenkirk), if she chooses to run in the next election. Against the wishes of her advisor Maggie (June Diane Raphael), Field decides to hire Flarsky as her speechwriter. While on the road, a relationship between the two begins to develop, causing complications when it is noted that the shabby Flarsky hardly looks like a proper compatriot to the Secretary of State.

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As readers may have guessed by now, this is actually a rom-com with the gender roles reversed. Field is the sharp, assured and powerful figure at the top of her game, while Flarsky is the bright, but unkempt and more awkward character who can't believe his luck when the woman of his dreams begins to show an interest in him. It's an amusing variation on the formula, particularly when the insecure lead's looks and manners are compared unfavorably by Field's team to other potential romantic suitors like Canadian Prime Minister James Stewart (Alexander Skarsgård).

Of course, a movie like this is only as good as the onscreen chemistry between its main characters. Surprisingly, Theron and Rogen are an excellent if unexpected pairing, trading casual conversations and personal in-jokes along with more heated exchanges on political policies and beliefs. There's a lot of amusing back and forth between the pair, resulting in some great bickering and numerous laughs. The screenplay also does a solid job of rationalizing their affection for each other; it is revealed early on that the two seemingly very different characters share many of the same points of reference, because they grew up in the same neighborhood, and Field was Flarsky's babysitter.

The movie mostly charms over the duration of its running time as all of the characters open up about the difficulties they face in their lives as public figures. Naturally, the movie isn't all perfect. It runs over two hours and as such there are a few slow spots, in addition to a well-intentioned, but forced plea for Democrats and Republicans to just get along and come to accept each other's differences. And while funny, a big gross-out joke that is introduced late in the film and becomes a running gag, does feel out of step tonally with the earlier material. Still, these are all very minor issues.

Honestly, one wouldn't have thought that a romantic comedy starring Seth Rogen and Charlize Theron could have worked this well. The movie is sharply written and over the course of the story, the performances between the central cast members ultimately get viewers to believe in the potential for a relationship between these different characters. In the end, *Long Shot* defies the odds and comes out on top.

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