'The Girl on the Train' isn't a classic, but provides some pulpy sights

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: «««« out of 4 stars

Running Time: 112 min.

Right off of the bat, I'll admit that I haven't read the hugely popular 2015 book upon which this week's high-profile movie release is based. I went in cold, knowing almost nothing about the story or what it entailed. Even as a complete novice, *The Girl on the Train* still wasn't what I anticipated. But if you set your expectations a bit lower and allow yourselves to appreciate its voyeuristic chills, it will provide a few good moments.

Rachel (Emily Blunt) is a downcast alcoholic who rides the train daily to and from Manhattan. The route is so familiar that she recognizes many of the same people passing by. One day, she sees something very out of the ordinary. Without giving too much away, Rachel begins to investigate a disappearance. Yet her own blackouts and odd behavior end up making her a suspect. While this is occurring, two women from the neighborhood, Megan (Haley Bennett) and Anna (Rebecca Ferguson), share their own recollections leading up to the strange event.

While primarily narrated by Rachel, the timeline and point of view frequently shifts between the three female leads. The device is effective in keeping viewers engaged and off kilter; one's mind can't help but attempt to put these broken pieces together. As portrayed by Blunt, the Rachel character is quite sympathetic. Despite her sad, suspicious, and often drunk state, the actress manages to leave viewers feeling empathy for her plight.

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And the blackouts add a bit of interesting unreliability to her narration and storytelling.

There's also some interesting camerawork, with the lens often extremely close to the character, and a few distortions present during her stumbling, alcoholic-fueled actions.

I'll be direct here. This isn't high art or great cinema and it doesn't come close to matching similarly themed suspense thrillers like *Gone Girl* (sorry, one can't help but make the comparison). In fact, it becomes clear early on that the approach taken is that of a pulpy suspense flick. Sure, it's introspective to a degree and addresses a couple of serious issues. However, the wild romantic escapades seen and imagined that often take place in clear view of passersby and other complications add a level of sensationalism to the proceedings.

It also isn't quite as tense as it could be. Everyone should be a suspect, but while it's interesting, the movie doesn't build on the fear or paranoia between characters as well as it could.

Also, when all is explained, the climactic reveal isn't as shocking as it should be.

As a viewer considering all of the wild possibilities as the story was developing, the finale was far simpler and more straightforward than anticipated. A late scene involving a particular kitchen instrument is very entertaining on a surface level, but it's depicted in a manner that feels a bit on-the-nose.

If you are anticipating a high-minded psychological thriller with deep intellectualizations, you won't find it here. Still, the cast and female characters are strong, and the story is presented in a more unusual manner than many other films of its ilk. It's generally engaging in a goofy-thriller sort of way, even if it ultimately doesn't deliver quite as much suspense or as big of a final twist as hoped for.

The Girl on the Train isn't an epic journey and won't be remembered for very long, but there are worse ways to pass the time.

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