

REVIEW: COMING THROUGH THE RYE

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COMING THROUGH THE RYE

based on a true story

PLOT: In 1969, a young man obsessed with the novel “Catcher in the Rye” is inspired to write a play based on the book. Soon, he finds himself on an illuminating road trip searching for J.D. Salinger to get his permission to perform his work on stage.

REVIEW: There is something truly special about a coming-of-age drama that manages to create wonderfully flawed and conflicted characters. *THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER* did it. *THE SPECTACULAR NOW* and *ME AND EARL AND THE DYING GIRL* both hit in a magical sort of way. And now we have a little something called **COMING THROUGH THE RYE**, a heartfelt and beautifully positive tale of facing your own fears. Exceptionally written and directed by James Steven Sadwith, this story of a young man searching for meaning in his life while at a boarding school rises way above what could have been a sappy ever after tale. It is a moving story that also happens to be based on Sadwith’s own journey.

Alex Wolff is Jamie Schwartz, a young man who is a bit of an outcast at an all-male boarding school he attends in 1969. Constantly referred to by the other students as “asshole,” he has donated his time to writing a play based on the famous novel “Catcher in the Rye.” After speaking to one of his favorite teachers (played by Adrian Pasdar) he realizes the best way to put on the production for his senior assignment would be to get J.D. Salinger’s permission. Failing to find the elusive novelist through writing letters, he and his best friend DeeDee (Stefania LaVie Owen) set out on a road trip to find the author and ask for his blessing.



Let's start off with the cast, specifically Wolff and Owen. As powerful a tale as this may be, you must credit Sadwith for the perfect casting. The two actors are marvelous together. Wolff, who has the challenge of carrying the film, portrays Jamie as a flawed yet passionate young man. And speaking of passionate, the friendship he shares with Owen is so damn appealing. Both actors are incredibly natural, and it is impossible not to fully accept their quirky budding romance. Some may question her surprising kindness to him, but we ultimately see what she sees in him. The quietly tender scenes they share in a motel room are rich with smart dialogue and terrific chemistry. What a refreshingly beautiful take on love and companionship.

This is a great script. And more so, it is an exceptionally shot film. Sadwith, along with cinematographer Eric Hunt, bring a real beauty to New Hampshire. In one scene Jamie explains to DeeDee that they have to look for something that is Salinger-ish (or something along those lines). If there is ever a movie that had that, this would be it. From a gorgeous sequence in a field of dandelions that have lost the yellow, to a fantastic shot of Schwartz returning to school, this is just a lovely film in nearly every possible way.



As perfect as it all may sound, it did take a bit for me to fully embrace *COMING THROUGH THE RYE*. Part of that may have been the crush Jamie has on a pretty blonde actress named Maureen (Kabby Borders). While it is a pretty typical cliché in films like this where our hero loves a girl he can never have, this particular instance isn't fully realized. Yes we get that he has a crush and wants to cast her in his play, but we really don't get much of a sense of Maureen aside from her being pretty and popular. It would have been nice to get a stronger idea as to who is the girl that originally held onto Jamie's heart.

COMING THROUGH THE RYE is a much needed dose of joyful charm. The soundtrack is filled with soundtrack purchase worthy songs, and it is simply a delightful film. James Steven Sadwith has taken a very personal tale and made it something truly special. While Chris Cooper (as J.D. Salinger) is quite good, it is of course both Owen and Wolff who are just terrific on in this sweetly told romantic story. If you want a film that will put a smile on your face and give you a mountain of inspiration, *RYE* is about as good as you can get.

