



ENTERTAINMENT INSIDERS

AFI Fest 2004: Capsule Reviews, Part One

11/8/2004

by Warren Curry

Invitation to a Suicide

85 minutes, U.S., Directed by Loren Marsh, Cast: Pablo Schreiber, David Margulies, Katherine Moennig, Joseph Urla, Matthew Rauch

I'll give director Loren Marsh credit for being an innovator. His film, "Invitation to a Suicide," is like no other comedy I've ever seen, but it'd be dishonest to claim that I connected with this film's humor. I'm not quite sure what to make of this movie.

The very good Pablo Schreiber stars as Kaz Malek, a young man living in a Polish neighborhood in Brooklyn, who runs afoul of a ruthless Russian mobster named Ferfichkin (Joseph Urla) in a botched robbery attempt, and winds up owing him \$10,000. The price to be paid if Kaz can't come up with the money is his father's life. Kaz then hatches the twisted plan to sell tickets to his own suicide for a \$1000 a pop in order to raise the funds to pay back Ferfichkin.

Such grim topics as death and suicide are played for laughs in this odd movie. Marsh never flinches -- he sets a bizarre tone and doesn't waver to make the comedy more conventional. Schreiber is completely engaging as Kaz (the acting is fine all around), and Marsh's direction is sharp, but I just don't think my sense of humor exists in the same universe as this film's. Given that the laughs from the audience were few and far between, I'm probably not the only one in this camp. But geniuses are often misunderstood, so maybe Marsh is onto something here and the rest of us need to catch up.

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