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BEFORE MIDNIGHT

Movie Details

Post Author: Matt Ho June 27, 2013 0

OUR RATING 

DIRECTOR RICHARD LINKLATER

WRITER E. HAWKE, J. DELPY, R. LINKLATER

 4.2/5 votes

US BOX OFFICE \$4.6M

RUN TIME 1 HR. 49 MIN. **RATED** R

YOUR RATING

GENRE ART HOUSE, CAROUSEL, DRAMA, ROMANTIC

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STARS [Ethan Hawke](#) [Julie Delpy](#)

SYNOPSIS

Nine years after the conclusion of *Before Sunset*, we now find Jesse (Ethan Hawke) and Celine (Julie Delpy) a couple and parents to twin girls on vacation in Greece.

REVIEW

The final minutes of *Before Sunset* showed Jesse sitting in Celine's apartment watching her dance to Nina Simone's *Just In Time* while he smiles adoringly. As we watch hoping he misses his flight back to New York, hoping for something to finally happen, the film cuts to a black screen. Did they? Didn't they? Turns out they did. Director/writer Richard Linklater, alongside co-writers and stars Hawke and Delpy, deliver *Before Midnight*, the third in their brilliant romantic drama trilogy that began almost two decades ago. Nine years after the events of the second film, we learn that Jesse never caught his plane and stayed with Celine, who got pregnant with twin girls that same night. Since then, the two

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U.S Box Office

Weekend Box Office for 7/5/2013

Despicable Me 2	\$83,517,315
The Lone Ranger	\$29,210,849
The Heat	\$24,763,907
Monsters University	\$19,716,347
World War Z	\$18,408,963

Source: *The Numbers* - Movie Box Office

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have been living together as a family in Paris.

Like its predecessors, *Before Midnight* takes place within a day where we find the main characters engaging in deep conversation while traversing through a European locale—this time with the breathtaking Greek Peloponnese peninsula as the setting. Linklater retains the minimalist charm that made the first two installments a success, but strips it down even further with less walking and longer intimate scenes within static environments. While the basics of the formula remain, *Before Midnight* is very distinct from *Before Sunrise* and *Before Sunset* given where we now find Jesse and Celine in their lives. Here, we see if Celine’s words from 2004, “maybe we’re only good at brief encounters,” holds true.

If *Before Sunset* discussed “what could’ve been,” then *Before Midnight* is the harsh response to a question often left unanswered. Linklater, Hawke, and Delpy explore a fresh, new dynamic with their aged characters that are wiser, slightly more cynical, and wearier having now shared the same tolls of life as partners. While the prolonged union of Jesse and Celine is one we’ve hoped for, the second film made it clear that it’d be under less desirable circumstances. *Before Midnight* takes a hard look at the ramifications of Jesse’s decision to leave his now bitter ex-wife and a son he rarely sees. That human cost becomes a seed of conflict that grows and for the first time, it’s the heavy friction between the characters that powerfully draws you in, as opposed to romantic antics. There’s an enormous weight of tension where arguments escalate into larger unresolved issues stemming from Jesse’s struggle to be a father to Henry, and Celine carrying the burden having been partly responsible for their difficult situation.

Eventually, it all erupts in the revealing hotel scene where the outstanding dialogue offers a biting perspective on how parenthood, sacrificed ambitions, and spousal resentment have severely drained their relationship. We begin to fear that their theory of hating each other as echoed in the past may be a crude reality to their once fairy tale romance. You wanted Jesse and Celine as a couple? Well, that’s exactly what you get.

This place is so full of thousands of years of myth and tragedy, and I thought something tragic was going to happen. -Celine

In spite of the serious undertone though, there is a masterful balance of drama with a lightheartedness that will put smiles to faces. There's less chatter on magic and the universe; however, compelling discussions on grandeur subjects continue to remain as the heart of the film. There's a fair share of comedy too, with charming anecdotes that keeps things cheery, particularly in the fantastic dinner table scene where minor characters make an impression as intriguing conversationalists.

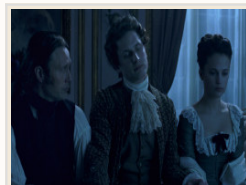
Before Midnight may be the least romantic in the trilogy, but it's surprisingly the funniest with witty quips to keep you laughing. There's also a welcoming air of nostalgia with the dialogue making several references to the other two films, so it's highly recommended you watch those first. It also helps you understand the characters and the story as a whole much better.

The acting, in a word, is phenomenal. Hawke and Delpy are once again an absolute delight to watch onscreen. This is the third time they've reprised their roles and it's wonderful to see how well they've grown into their characters over the years. The talented actors capture a flawed Jesse and Celine as a couple riddled with problems to perfection and somehow, they still make us root for them at their worst. But all is not lost with age. Hawke and Delpy still preserve the young, intelligent, imaginative personalities that attracted us to their characters in the first place. Their chemistry is stronger than it's ever been, and it shows in an impeccable organic performance that feels all too real.

VERDICT

Before Midnight is without a doubt one of the must-see films of the summer. Linklater, Hawke, and Delpy have amazingly pulled off a hat trick and they did it without superheroes saving the world. This is a beautifully written follow-up to *Before Sunset* with *perfect* dialogue, stunning cinematography, and a story that's captivating, extremely emotional, and pleasantly comedic. This is also the most difficult of the three films to watch. A fourth *is* possible, but if *Before Midnight* is the last we see of Jesse and Celine, then Linklater, Hawke and Delpy have left us on a high note with a practically flawless trilogy.

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