PRODUCTION
Film Discussion Group
CAST Bay Area Film Enthusiasts

LOCATION
Mission Coffee
151 Washington Blvd.
Fremont, CA 94539

DATE Meet Monthly
Sunday evenings

TIME 6:30 pm

FILM: **BEATRIZ AT DINNER**

FDG RATING: 2.2 ☺☺○○○

Film Discussion Group (FDG) Scale is 1-5 (5 is best)

Miguel Arteta: *Director*
Salma Hayak: *Actress, Beatriz*
John Lithgow: *Actor, Doug Strutt*

DATE: July 23, 2017

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **BEATRIZ AT DINNER**

Dining with wealthy, self-absorbed, insensitive, condescending, business dinner guests at an LA ocean-side mansion, sounds pretty distasteful. Especially when the host's business partner, Doug Strutt (John Lithgow), is a boorish, racist, egomaniacal billionaire who enthusiastically kills big game for sport. That was the situation that Beatriz, a Mexican immigrant and massage therapist, who works mainly with cancer patients at an alternative-healing center, found herself after her old VW breaks down as she leaves her massage session with a wealthy client, Cathy. To the disapproval of Cathy's power-broker husband, she has invited Beatriz (Salma Hayak) to stay for dinner and spend the night since Beatriz's friend can't come to get her until the morning. If the obvious clash of life values wasn't enough, Beatriz happens to live in a small cottage with dogs and goats in her bedroom and just before leaving for her appointment with Cathy, she discovered someone has maliciously killed her goat.

Most of our film discussion group participants had no patience for the obnoxious dinner guests and felt the treatment of such serious themes was done inappropriately. The characters were like cardboard stereotypes, as one reviewer noted, with no dimension, no complexity. Two polar opposites in confrontation: Beatriz representing extreme spiritual healing goodness and the dinner guests loudly and loquaciously represented by the selfish, evil destroyer persona of Strutt. A war of words and emotions ensues without resolution, each side passionately justifying their chosen life values.

A few of our reviewers appreciated the extreme dissension as a successful attribute of the film. They found it thought provoking and recognized the social commentary as a parable of our times. One reviewer, who at the out-start dreaded where the film seemed to be heading, ended up liking it. Others noted that just as the wealthy business partners and their wives were obnoxious, Beatriz interjected herself and her beliefs much more than she should have (possibly due to drinking a lot of wine) and was just as irritating.

Emotions on both sides escalate and the photo of Strutt proudly killing a rhino drives Beatriz over the edge. She imagines herself murdering Strutt and then realizing that she has sunk to that level, she cannot live with herself.

The ending raises the question: what is the point of the film? Are we all capable of horrible acts? Not a very satisfying conclusion. Was the ending believable? Confusing but poetic according to another resident reviewer who appreciated the film's metaphors. But too many aspects didn't gel, especially the idea that Beatriz would drive from Altadena to Santa Monica to Newport Beach in one day. (Our LA virtual participants particularly attested to that fact.) And many of us questioned the candle-lit paper lanterns that they tossed in the air to float in the night breeze, but perhaps that was to illustrate the elitist complete disregard for the eminent fire danger.

One of our reviewers suggested an alternative ending that might be more interesting: Strutt would have a heart attack at dinner and Beatriz instinctively or reluctantly would save him. Another observation from our virtual participant in Iowa is that Beatriz is a manifestation of their subconscious; the guests are denying a nagging sense of their destructive selfish tendencies. They dislike Beatriz's because they know she is right.

Even if the intent was worthwhile, the film was disappointing for most of us, even horrible for a few, Our ratings for this film also experienced extremes ranging from .5 to a single 4.5 but a lot of 1s and 2s resulting in a cumulative unappetizing score of 2.2 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best.)

See you at the movies!

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[Film Discussion Group](#) (FDG) organizer