FILM: **EVERYTHING, EVERYWHERE, ALL AT ONCE**

FDG RATING: 3.6 ☺☺☺☺○

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

Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert: *director, writers*
Michelle Yeoh: *actress, Evelyn Wang*
Ke Huy Quan: *actor, Waymond Wang*

DATE: June 19, 2022

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **EVERYTHING, EVERYWHERE, ALL AT ONCE**

Maybe it's a generational gap, but most of our discussion participants either stopped streaming it, walked out of the theater, or obediently sat through the entire 2 hours and 19 minutes trying to appreciate the film, while our millennials loved it.

A mash up of sci-fi adventure and action fantasy with tongue in cheek spoofing comedy, the film is a bit overwhelming, bombarding the viewer with non-stop imagery that is multi-layered with so many other movie references, it's hard to believe the director fit it all in. One published film review said that the Daniels' command of modern cinematic tropes is encyclopedic, and also eccentric.

"The movie is a metaphysical multiverse galaxy-brain head trip," quoted a known movie critic. And beneath it all is a tale about an exhausted Chinese American woman, Evelyn Wang, (Michelle Yeoh) who owns a Chinese laundromat with her timid, somewhat nervous husband, Waymond. She can't seem to finish her taxes which necessitates a dreaded audit meeting with the unpleasant IRS agent played by an unrecognizable, paunchy Jamie Lee Curtis, who hilariously takes over the scene whenever she appears.

It's cosmic chaos on steroids. Evelyn's father who all but disowned her when she married Waymond, is visiting to celebrate his birthday. Waymond is filing for divorce, which he says is the only way he can get his wife's attention. Their edgy teenage daughter, Joy has self-esteem issues and also a girlfriend named Becky and Evelyn doesn't know how to deal with Joy's teenage angst or her sexuality.

Somehow an interdimensional rupture to the universe occurs that unravels reality, sparking a surprising change in Waymond who springs into a combat-ready space commando with super powers, wielding his fanny pack as a deadly weapon. He hurriedly explains to Evelyn that the stability of the multiverse is threatened by a power-mad fiend named Jobu Tupaki, and that Evelyn must train herself to jump between universes to do battle. The leaps are accomplished by doing something crazy and then pressing a button on an earpiece.

It's the perfect platform to show off Evelyn's amazing special effects martial arts that are reminiscent of Michelle Yeoh's performance in Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon. Streams of other film references race by including recognizable Ratatouille, definitely Bruce Lee, plus so many more. One that none of us understood was the humans with hot dogs for fingers. But the ever prevalent giant bagel made some sense. Joy says, "I got bored one day and put everything on a bagel. Everything. All my hopes and dreams, my old report cards, every breed of dog, every last personal ad on Craig's list. Sesame. Poppy seed. Salt. And it collapsed in on itself. Because you see, when you really put everything on a bagel, it becomes this. The truth." Another bagel quote: If you have an everything bagel, what else do you need?" Perhaps the silly philosophical observations were a bit too much.

If you are willing to hang on for the ride, you come away appreciating Evelyn's self-empowerment and the importance of kindness which restores her relationship with her daughter. In one of the final scenes she says lovingly, "No matter what, I still want to be here with you. I will always, always want to be here with you." It's also a story about the roads not taken with parallel multiple galaxies allowing glimpses into alternate paths. The "what if?" of life's choices.

The ride is zany, bewildering, and bizarre. Cleverly ambitious but too silly for some viewers. One discussion participant commented that the editing must have been a huge challenge to pull together all the incongruous pieces. Another commented it was too much all over the place.

Not counting the participants who decided not to watch it or started watching, didn't like it, and turned it off, those who stuck it out gave the film relatively high marks which evaporated a bit with a few lower scores, landing Everything, Everywhere, All At Once with a zinging 3.6 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best.)

See you at the movies!
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