



FILM: **JANET PLANET**

FDG RATING: 2.7 😐😐😐😐😐

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

Annie Baker: *director, writer*

Julianne Nicholson: *actress, Janet Planet*

Zoey Zigley: *actress, Lacy*

DATE: September 22, 2024

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **JANET PLANET**

The 2023 American coming of age drama film, *Janet Planet*, focuses on the exceedingly close relationship of 11-year-old Lacy and her divorced acupuncturist mother, during a hot humid summer in rural Massachusetts. It's 1991 but the characters and ambiance have a 60s-70s hippie-communal vibe.

What is striking is the exaggerated sounds from the loud chirping of the crickets in the opening scenes to crowded bird calls, and a noisy lawn mower, all arousing the sense of steamy days with the constant presence of nature. The creative use of sound dominates the first part of the film, over shadowing the minimal, quieter dialog. The pacing is slow which many discussion participants thought added to the feeling of a hot heavy summer but others found boring.

The mother-daughter bond and divergent personalities of Lacy and her mother, Janet, are exposed in the first scene which immediately engaged most discussion participants. We see Lacy calling her mom from the summer camp's outside telephone box and dramatically stating that she will kill herself if her mom doesn't pick her up from camp. Her devoted mom of course comes to get her, but when Lacy sees her mom's latest boyfriend, Wayne, with her, she is visibly irritated and asks why he is there. Janet replies that she's not going to tell Wayne to leave just because Lacy wants to come home from camp early. At this point, Lacy says she's changed her mind; that she thought no one liked her but she was wrong. Her mom says she's already requested a refund so Lacy reluctantly leaves with her Mom.

The story is presented in four parts. Three parts focus on specific individuals, one at a time, that Janet has a relationship with and that intrude on the close relationship Lacy has with her mother. The last part titled Fall, shows that both Lacy and her mother have evolved. Some discussion participants disagreed, saying that Janet was going to continue her pattern of getting a man to like her for short term superficial relationships. But Lacy, who on the first day of school, refused to board the school bus claiming she was ill, a few days later we see her board the bus.

One discussion participant especially liked the examination of the mother daughter relationship. A significant conversation was when Janet confides to Lacy that she never told anyone but that although she isn't exceptionally pretty, she knows she can make any man fall for her. Many felt this was inappropriate and reveals a very immature side to Janet. Lacy tells her to stop doing that. A criticism was that the story may be important to Baker who based the film on her own experience growing up with her divorced mother, but there wasn't a need to make a film about it. It was self-indulgent. Another discussion participant said it was depressing; the young girl needed friends and activities independent from her mother.

Despite creative use of sound and pacing, excellent cinematography with extreme close-ups of faces, and very good acting, the story didn't appeal to most of our audience resulting in a languid 2.7 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best.)



See you at the movies!

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