



FILM: **LINOLEUM**

FDG RATING: 3.0 😊😊😊😊😊

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

Colin West: *director/writer*
Jim Gaffigan: *actor, Cameron Edwin*
Jim Gaffigan: *actor, Kent Armstrong*

DATE: June 18, 2023

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **LINOLEUM**

Just as we wondered what the title of the 2022 film, *Linoleum*, had to do with anything, we also wondered why the time period seemed to be jumping from 80s to 60s (judging from attire worn by the characters). And the dated-classic family station wagon appears in several scenes, followed by the 90s racy red sports car that drops out of the sky in another scene, and the same actor plays the main character, sad sack Cameron Edwin, as well as the younger scientist-engineer who moves in across the street and appears to be a younger version of Cameron. Yes, it's all very confusing, purposely engineered that way by Colin West who wrote and directed the film starring Jim Gaffigan. Based on West's experience with his grandfather's dementia, the craziness starts to make sense, sort of, in that context. One discussion participant absolutely loved the film and all the twists and surprises. Another less enthusiastic discussion participant admired the movie for what it was trying to do, but didn't like watching it.

Set in a magical-realist version of 1980s Ohio small-town suburbia, 50 year old Cameron Edwin lives a rather boring life with his wife Erin and teen age daughter Nora. Cameron always wanted to be an astronaut, but his dream was buried in the shadow of his more successful scientist father so he and his wife, Erin, hosted a children's science show on television which was eventually banished to a midnight time slot. Erin, has started divorce proceedings as she prepares to move another city where she accepted an aerospace museum job. Cameron's hopes are briefly raised when PBS makes a deal for rights to his science show, but quickly dashed when he learns he'll be replaced by Kent Armstrong, a smug, overly charismatic, rude, selfish, ex-astronaut who is living a somewhat luxurious life. Kent has achieved everything Cameron had dreamed of, and "looks like a younger, better-looking version of me," laments Cameron. Kent has just moved into the house across the street. He also looks like the more-dead-than-alive passenger of a red sports car that fell out of the sky, landing near Cameron while he bicycled home one afternoon. Maybe that is a bit of foreshadowing or mirroring. as the plot really begins to play out when a space module falls out of the sky, landing in Cameron's back yard. Identified as an Apollo-era booster rocket, and in this altered universe where evidently security restrictions don't apply, Cameron decides to repair the rocket for use in a DIY spacecraft he plans to build in his garage and pilot to any other universes that might exist in space. Most of us found this part of the film very entertaining. The only person who supports Cameron's quest is Kent's teenage son, Mark.

Then there is the dementia element. Cameron regularly visits his father, Mac, who is living in an elderly care facility. To perk him up, Cameron brings him home to help build his rocket. Mac has trouble recognizing people and places, but the parts of the rocket he was able to identify in a second. If the film's discombobulated-ness is a reflection of how confused and disoriented Mac is, as time periods fold into each other, then that technique is quite effective. Many of us described the scenes as disjointed, and difficult to watch. Too many relationships, too many universes – all aspects and ages of one single character seen in all those aspects and time periods in the forms of the other characters. "It just didn't work for me" was a comment from one confused viewer. While another added that Mac's mixed up mind is an accurate portrayal of the disease.

Where the disparate elements did coalesce for one discussion participant, was in the final scenes. Cameron has boarded his rocket ship, ready to launch, and a close-up of Mac shows him wearing his space helmet seemingly ready to launch, but as the scenes roll, we see that Mac is actually on a stretcher, being loaded into an ambulance. At the beginning and end of the film, we hear someone saying, "Cameron, can you open your eyes for me?"

It's definitely original, creative, and a fun fantasy romp for those who joyfully went along for the ride. For others, Cameron, his father Mac, and his alter ego Kent, were a collision of characters complicated by wife, Erin, daughter Nora, and Kent's son Mark, with a plot that was a spider web and we were caught in the tangles not to mention multiple universes and time dimensions. A mash-up of science-fiction and fantasy realism. Too many fantasy-sci-fi elements thrown in hodge-podge. A bit too messy to enjoy.

So what does the title have to do with the film? Several scenes show the corner of linoleum floor in a room in Cameron's suburban house, and there is a red toy car laying upside down on the linoleum. Maybe, it's just setting the tone for a mundane life in a middle age crisis. And maybe the message is that it's never too late to chase your dreams no matter how messy life gets.

A squeaky score of 3 for *Linoleum* on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best.)



See you at the movies!
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