



FILM: **MAY DECEMBER**

FDG RATING: 2.6 😐😐😐😊😊

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

Todd Hayes: *director*
Natalie Portman: *actress, Elizabeth Berry*
Julianne Moore: *actress, Gracie*
Charles Melton: *actor, Joe Yoo*

DATE: February 18, 2024

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **MAY DECEMBER**

Some people avoided watching Todd Hayes 2023 film May December because the film is loosely based on the 1990 scandalous relationship of a 35 year old high school teacher and her 12-year-old student. Convicted of statutory rape, she went to prison for 5 years, but the two continued their relationship, married and had 2 children together.

When the film begins, we see Gracie and Joe have been happily living a normal life with their two daughters in a small community. Gracie admits that appearances are everything and is acting her part to be the good mother, wife, neighbor, business woman. She makes homemade pies to order but one neighbor says she buys them because she feels sorry for Gracie. Gracie has graciously agreed to allow actress Elizabeth Berry into their home so the actress can study everything about her to prepare for her role in an independent film about the scandalous love affair with the understanding that Gracie will be treated kindly in the story. Also, Joe says people see him as a victim and he does not consider himself a victim.

When Elizabeth first arrives at Gracie's home, Gracie says that the actress looks much taller on her television series, and she is surprised that they are about the same height. Elizabeth ominously replies, "Yes, we really are the same.." hinting at Elizabeth's desire to "become" Gracie and lays the theme of exploitation and predatory behavior. It's an intriguing psychological study as we watch the three main characters interact and reveal their emotional needs. Interesting that Joe is now 36, the age that Gracie was when she seduced him, and Elizabeth is also 36.

Elizabeth inserts herself in Gracie's home life, but there are several disturbing scenes where Elizabeth seems to be stalking both Gracie and Joe.

A strong negative comment about the film was that there were no redeeming qualities and a waste of time to watch voyeurism, sociopathic behavior, and arrested maturity. On the flip side, both actresses were brilliant in the opinion of one discussion participant. Julianne Moore was nominated for a Golden Globe for her role as Gracie and Natalie Portman won a Golden Globe for her role as Elizabeth. Another discussion participant commented that Elizabeth is the most interesting character. She has an inflated view of herself. In one of the final scenes we see her acting out her role as Gracie seducing Joe in the pet store where she works but her acting is not very impressive, yet she insists on another "take" saying she can do the scene better, but actually performs it exactly the same.

What appears to be a film about the predatory behavior of an older woman and teenage boy, also questions the role of art and shows how art can be predatory/invasive and questions where to draw the line.

We drew the line for May December at 2.6 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best.)

See you at the movies!

Adriane Dedic, adedic@pacbell.net
www.filmdiscussiongroup.com

