

Cannes 2015: Carol (Todd Haynes, 2015)



It has been eight years since Todd Haynes last made a movie. The inventive Bob Dylan biopic 'I'm Not There' gained Cate Blanchett an Oscar nod for her performance. The tables have now turned from music to love affairs in Carol – his adaptation of a Patricia Highsmith novel that surely gives the actress a fighting chance at grabbing another nomination, if not the statuette itself.

In a 1950's department store, young, aspiring photographer Therese Belivet is dreaming of a more fulfilling life when she encounters Carol Aird – an alluring woman of high society whose marriage has fallen apart. With a shared sadness in their broken relationships, the two become friends and later lovers; taking to the road to escape the lives they wish to leave behind.

As Cate Blanchett stares deep into the eyes of a department store clerk, we are dutifully reminded that we have one of the greatest actors of all time in our era. A sultry, doyenne of cinema, her talents are not wasted with the character created by Patricia Highsmith. Her mannerisms and words are beautifully controlled, oozing from her lips as if she had never lived in the motor-mouthed 21st century. Blanchett's embodiment of her role may have been not too challenging for a woman like herself (Carol does, in fact, share traits with her lead character in Woody Allen's Blue Jasmine) but all that matters is that her execution is without fault.

Rooney Mara remains one of Hollywood's most underrated actresses of the moment. To think that the same woman that plays the tentative Therese was responsible for The Girl with

the Dragon Tattoo's Lisbeth Salander is breathtaking. Her performance is deft, subdued and affecting; a welcome emotive break from Carol who often tries to maintain a rather steely facade. Pair this with two supporting performances from Sarah Paulson and Kyle Chandler and we have one of the most exciting, inventive cast ensembles in recent memory.

It plays out almost like theatre; conversation as important as the visual aspect which, admittedly, are striking. Todd Haynes collaborative cinematographer Ed Lachman paints filmic pictures that resemble grainy, ageing photographs; the lustrous set design still pulsating through the screen.

Unlike most runaway romance tales, Carol has a stunning sensibility that never veers into the unfeasible. Saying this, it does manage to throw surprises and twists into the loop that keep it from becoming a bore. As with all romantic dramas, love scenes are involved, but with suggestive nods to the action rather than a sordid, salacious presentation.

Carol sails through its two hour running time without a hitch. Star performances and a nuanced approach let this rich, effortless romance seduce you – a future classic and irrefutable source of inspiration for all filmmakers.



Carol has its world premiere at the 68th Festival de Cannes on Sunday May 17th