

Movie Review: The Man From Earth

When it comes to low budget sci-fi, there's always a tendency to overcompensate with highbrow special effects or an oversaturated colour scheme.

It's understandable from a creative standpoint to want to elevate your movie to the point of apotheosis, yes indeed.

And to the point where your low budget starts to become invisible, absolutely, but, more often than not, such an endeavor often just results in your very low budget becoming even more noticeable.

So really, the trick you have to pull when dealing with a very low budget is to simply not use any special effects or oversaturated colour schemes at all.

(I know that last one is actually very easy to pull off in Premiere Pro. It doesn't cost anything, after all.

But still, it can often look cheap if you don't know how to use it effectively.)

And so the movie in question, wherein these problems really don't apply, is the 2007, soon-to-become-indie-cult-classic, *The Man From Earth*...

The Man From Earth is one of those films that absolutely takes the cake when it comes to writing a compelling story with a great concept.

If you're unfamiliar with the plot, you can read my previous article on the basic set up and premise of the movie for further details.

What I really want to talk about here is the way the film translates to the small screen...

There's something deeply compelling about this film that's made me want to watch it now several times over.

And after repeat viewings I think I've finally managed to identify its feat.

Put simply, I think it's all to do with the tone the movie creates.

For comparison, I like to use a more familiar parallel to describe it to those who haven't seen it.

Imagine, for example, that a village elder is gathered around a campfire, telling stories to a group of cavemen thousands and thousands of years ago.

In an age when the mysteries of the world and indeed the entire universe were as mysterious as they ever could be.

The elder has captivated you because he's the only one who has all the knowledge and he's one of the few who knows only what the best of his race knows.

That right there is where this movie excels in its tone.

Because the parallel I'm describing relates to a similar scenario where the lead character - a 14,000 year old immortal - is gathered around a group of intellectuals in a cosy cabin with a

fireplace, telling his story on the history of the world and his perspective on the burdens of immortality.

It's a captivating story that examines many topics that a lot of mainstream audiences don't seem to care for.

It looks at the complexities of anthropology, biology, religion, the cosmos and the moral implications of living for 14,000 years.

At one point, one of the characters even says to the immortal...

"Art has told me that some of your early fellows feared you were stealing their lives? Have you thought that perhaps you were? Perhaps you are! There have always been legends of such a thing, a creature, not quite human, taking not the blood, but the life force itself?..."

"Or are you a vampire, John? Even an unknowing one? Do you stand alive and tall in a graveyard that you helped to fill? Perhaps you're lonely because your heart cannot keep its treasures. Is that what you're doing?... Have you led a wrongful life?"

At that point, the recipient pulls a gun on the immortal, threatening him in frustration after he decided to take his story too far.

It turns out that the recipient recently lost his wife to cancer and, with all the emotional baggage that goes with something like that, it's understandable why he was angry at the prospect that someone would dare to call themselves immortal.

This is the kind of complexity the script ventures to tackle.

And while the story does explore very weighty, scientific subject matter, it still has a solid investment in human emotion -

Something the immortal is all too familiar with.

So as an exercise in low budget movie making, I'd highly recommend *The Man From Earth*. It's a movie that will more than likely become immortalised in just a few thousand years from now!