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# Knock at the Cabin: A Queer, Apocalyptic Depiction of Love and Sacrifice [REVIEW]

Chloe Platt, Managing Editor

M. Night Shyamalan is notorious for his inconsistency. Where “The Sixth Sense,” succeeded, “After Earth” left audiences bored and unsure of Shyamalan’s future projects. In the wake of Shyamalan’s latest thriller, “Knock at the Cabin,” audiences were anxious to see where it fit in amid the list of his undependable previous works.

A piece of a greater unpredictable portfolio, “Knock at the Cabin,” stands proudly amongst Shyamalan’s successes.

The film begins in an idyllic setting, a solitary wooden cabin isolated within a hazy meadow, where Wen, the seven year old child of two fathers, is catching grasshoppers. Through a series of wide-angle shots, we see a large man (Dave Bautista) approaching her.

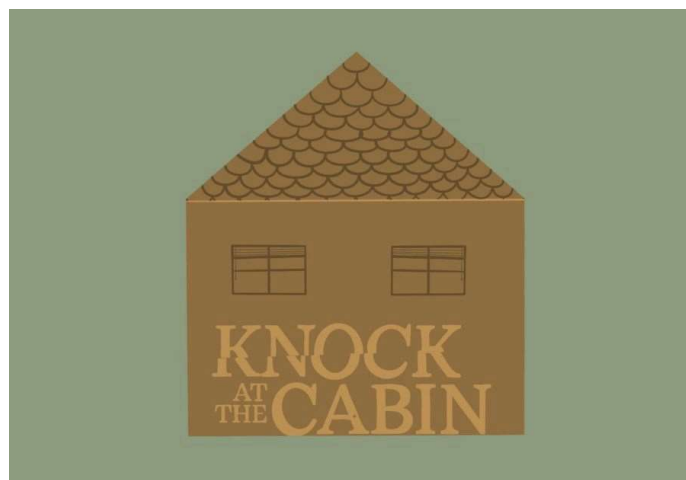
What ensues is an unnerving conversation between Wen and the man, Leonard, about a choice her and her fathers (Andrew and Eric) must make, which we soon learn is to sacrifice one of them (at the hands of the others) in order to countervail an approaching apocalypse.

Leonard is an elementary school teacher, joined by gas company employee Redmond, line cook Abby Quinn and nurse Sabrina, wielding crudely fashioned weapons. Each character is immediately striking in their humanity. As they tear through the walls of the cabin, they apologize and refurbish their damages, expressing to Wen and her fathers that they are deeply troubled by the necessity of their invasion.

Shyamalan poignantly humanizes each invader through individual monologues that depict their lives and the apocalyptic, esoteric “visions” that brought them to the cabin. The primal terror painted on the faces of Wen, Andrew and Eric is augmented by the despair that markedly contorts each invader’s demeanor.

At first, the audience is persuaded by Andrew’s exclamations of psychoanalysis to believe that the group is part of a doomsday cult, driven crazy by their shared paranoia of an impending armageddon. Each time the trio refuses to sacrifice a member, one of the invaders is ritualistically killed by the other members of the group, as the family is forced to watch.

After each death, the news flickers on the TV, portraying images of global destruction, just as the invaders had warned. Slowly, Eric comes to believe the invaders, and the family is tasked with battling their own skepticism and desire to be together.



Madison Oswalt

"Knock at the Cabin" is innovative in that it places a queer couple at the forefront of its story. The story emphasizes the love between the characters and societal trauma they have faced as a same-sex couple with an adopted daughter, rather than utilizing their queerness as a performative attempt for recognition and profit.

The film is interwoven with scenes of the couple falling in love, being assaulted at bars for publicly displaying their affection, tearfully adopting their daughter under the false pretense that Andrew was Eric's brother-in-law, joyful car rides singing together, pictures of the two beaming men as Wen grows and detached conversations with their parents as they express their sexualities.

The cultivation of a devastatingly authentic portrayal of queer love and parenthood is an unexpected triumph from Shyamalan's newest apocalyptic thriller. This achievement is made ever more touching by the memorable, raw performances of Jonathan Groff (Eric), Ben Aldridge (Andrew) and Kristen Cui (Wen).

While the advent of an approaching decimation of humanity is the main plot motivator, "Knock at the Cabin," is made memorable not by its suspenseful and chilling nature, but by the relationships featured throughout. The audience let out more tears than gasps, with a majority of viewers leaving the theater with dampened cheeks and captivated hearts.

What could have been an undistinguished psychological thriller was made exceptional in its pursuit of benevolence, family and sacrifice.