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# TALE

of its suspense, but there’s a twist or four in store. Becket keeps insisting the tale is a “tragedy” but our hero doth protest too much. At the end of it all, Ford blanches from true bleakness, letting Becket have it both ways.

But this is also an ensemble piece, and the film is at its best in its broader comedic moments in the first half. The three youngest cousins on

whom Becket sets his sights are caricatures of rich monsters, and Ford and the actors nail these parodies. Raff Law plays a version of Dickie Greenleaf in “The Talented Mr. Ripley” - the character that made his father Jude famous - in a wild “Wolf of Wall Street”-inspired setting, and his particular demise harks to the plot of the Patricia Highsmith novel too. Zach Woods

steals the show as a terrible trust fund kid, an artist who refers to himself as the “white Basquiat” (if any of his quips and barbs were improvised, well done, Woods). Then Topher Grace almost steals it all out from under him as an overly coiffed and corrupt mega-church preacher.

This all works thanks to the colorful character work, but our protagonist at the center of it all is a void. Becket is a chameleon, unknowable to those around him, but also unknown to the audience.

His desires seem surface-level, and his reasons for continuing his dangerous quest are shoehorned in via an awkward plot device in the form of Margaret Qualley as a childhood crush, Julia, who waltzes back into his life. Qualley feels like she’s in an entirely different movie than everyone else, an oddball femme fatale clad in boucle Chanel skirt suits with mysterious motivations and a deadpan attitude.

Ford wavers between full-blown satire and cautionary tale, and the unwieldy tone and emphasis

on plot over character means that “How to Make a Killing” never quite coheres. It looks and sounds amazing, with rich, grainy, saturated cinematography by Todd Banhazl and a piano-based score by Emile Mosseri, and sports a terrific cast. But Ford doesn’t seem to know what to do with the real people at heart of his story, both Becket, and his love interest, Ruth (Jessica Henwick). She serves as a representation of his conscience, perhaps, something that Becket learns to quiet to a whisper.

Ultimately, Ford hedges his bets with “How to Make a Killing,” and lands in an unsatisfying no man’s land. It’s not exactly a skewering of the billionaire class, but he never depicts being rich as all it’s cracked up to be either. If Ford insists it’s a “tragedy” via Becket, we can take that at face value, but that’s not entirely convincing either. Unfortunately, this “Killing” just isn’t the windfall that was expected.

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# MOVIE REVIEW

important mission - to alter an artificial intelligence that has made his time “a nightmare apocalypse.”

Rockwell (“Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri,” “Jojo Rabbit”) is terrific in this extended sequence, as he illustrates that he’s met all these folks before, that he’s still trying to find the right combination that will lead to a successful outcome and that, if anyone tries to leave, he’ll blow them all up.

It all started with the phones, he says of the coming mess, folks turning the first few minutes of the day in bed with their devices into all-day affairs, resulting in a population that can’t even be bothered to rise to its feet. Algorithms feed them content they find compelling, and medical devices, hooked to them with tubes, keep them alive. He’s here to right a wrong on the level, he says, of Adolf Hitler and the Seg-

way scooter.

Unfortunately, this crackly opening stretch is the high mark of the comedy-heavy science-fiction adventure penned by Matthew Robinson (“Dora and the Lost City of Gold,” “Love and Monsters”). “Good Luck” is an unfocused mishmash of ideas.

Still, there’s fun to be had in some of the wildness that awaits after The Man From the Future finally collects this night’s band of brave souls: teachers Mark (Michael Peña, “A Million Miles Away”) and Janet (Zazie Beetz, “Joker”), distraught mother Susan (Juno Temple, “Ted Lasso”), prickly Uber driver Scott (Asim Chaudhry, “People Just Do Nothing”), the allergic-to-tech Ingrid (Haley Lu Richardson, “Unpregnant”) and a couple of other folks who don’t hang around long enough to justify learning their names.

(The Man originally declines Ingrid’s offer to



Briarcliff Entertainment TNS

The Man From the Future, portrayed by Sam Rockwell, center, tries to persuade folks eating at a diner to join him on a dangerous endeavor in “Good Luck, Have Fun, Don’t Die.”

help - saying something about her creeps him out, that he doesn’t need the off-her-meds vibes - but a potentially prophetic spinning bottle of hot sauce that points to her when it stops changes his mind. And thus Ingrid, who gets nose bleeds from Wi-Fi and cellular phones, obviously will prove to be important to the narrative.)

The band of adventurers embarks on a journey that’s both relatively short and, as The Man has promised, is laced with dangers. The intended destination is a house in which a 9-year-old boy is

only a brief time away from completing the digital god. There’s no stopping this powerful entity from being created, The Man says, but if the AI safety protocols developed years later can be added to the code now, the future will be saved.

Along the way, Verbinski and Robinson flesh out a few of the characters with flashbacks, starting with Mark and Janet, as the issue of high school students being addicted to their phones is satirized effectively. Let’s just say the word “zombies” comes to mind to describe them.

A flashback involving Janet is less successful, the film attempting to offer commentary about the prevalence of school shootings in the United States. One daring early joke lands, but this section goes too far, as well-intentioned as it may be.

Lastly, we learn about Ingrid, whose analog-forward boyfriend, Tim (Tom Taylor), is mysteriously gifted a cutting-edge device.

“Good Luck, Have Fun, Don’t Die” doesn’t give off the vibe that it’s all that concerned with making sense in the end, which is good, as it doesn’t. It’s also, at best, vaguely trying to keep a secret.

At the end of the day, it’s a time-loop movie, the rare one where we see only one small, if crucial, part of the circle the protagonist is traveling. And, you guessed it, the fun of witnessing other iterations of this hero’s journey is sorely lacking.

It certainly doesn’t help matters that the ending is bloated, contributing to a runtime that’s a bit longer than it needs to be.

This is Verbinski’s first film since his underrated 2017 effort, “A Cure for Wellness.” “Good Luck” lacks the striking looks of that movie and is less close in quality to 2003’s “Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl” and more toward that fun adventure’s first two lackluster sequels, which he also helmed.

Clearly no fan of AI, Verbinski, according to the film’s production notes, read Robinson’s script back in 2020 and sent it to Rockwell two years later. It finally arrives in theaters, at a time when AI is used regularly by many of us, so its relevancy remains. On the other hand, we are being bombarded with AI-inspired cautionary tales, and this one, while just slightly more entertaining than not, fails to stand out from the crowd, despite all its zaniness.

At best, if watched later at home, it may be a reason to put your phone down, at least intermittently.

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# FANS

plained her decision to enclose the film’s title in quotation marks, saying, “You can’t adapt a book as dense and complicated and difficult as this book.”

“I can’t say I’m making ‘Wuthering Heights.’ It’s not possible,” the director said. “What I can say is I’m making a version of it.”

Here are some of the ways Fennell’s interpretation of “Wuthering Heights” differs from its source material.

**FENNELL’S HEATHCLIFF IS WHITE**

Brontë’s “Wuthering Heights” leaves Heathcliff’s racial identity ambiguous, with characters referring to him as a “gipsy brat,” “lascar” and “Spanish castaway” at different points throughout the novel. But one thing is clear: He is not white.

As the Louisiana State University professor Elsie Michie writes in the academic journal article, “From Simianized Irish to Oriental Despots: Heathcliff, Rochester and Racial Difference,” Heathcliff’s

racial othering is how “he becomes, for others, a locus of both fear and desire.” In other words, Heathcliff’s role in the novel, and thus his fraught romance with Cathy, is predicated upon his non-white identity.

Fennell’s film instead relies on class differences - and a meddling Nelly (to be discussed later) - to form the rift between its love interests.

**CATHY’S BROTHER DIES YOUNG**

When Mr. Earnshaw presents a young Cathy with her companion-to-be early in the film, she declares that she will name him Heathcliff, “after my dead brother.”

For the remainder of the film, Brontë’s character Hindley Earnshaw is subsumed into Mr. Earnshaw. Rather than Hindley, it is Mr. Earnshaw who devolves into the drunk gambling addict whose vices force him to cede Wuthering Heights to Heathcliff. Mr. Earnshaw’s abuse of young Heathcliff in the film makes the latter’s revenge

plot more personal than his book counterpart’s against Hindley.

**CATHY MEETS EDGAR LINTON AS AN ADULT**

In Brontë’s novel, Cathy and Heathcliff first encounter their neighbors, the Lintons, after an outdoor escapade gone awry. Cathy gets bitten in the ankle by an aggressive dog and stays at the Lintons’ for a few weeks to heal.

Cathy sustains a similar injury in the film, but this time, she’s an adult woman, who falls from the Thrushcross Grange garden wall after attempting to spy on its grown residents Edgar and Isabella. (In the book, the two are siblings. Here, Isabella is referred to as Edgar’s “ward.”)

Aside from providing some comic relief, Fennell’s revision also fast-tracks the marriage plot that severs Cathy and Heathcliff.

**NELLY IS A MEDDLER, AND A SPITEFUL ONE**

Whereas Brontë writes Nelly as a largely passive narrator, Fennell abandons the frame narrative structure altogether and instead fashions the housekeeper into a complex character with signif-

icant control over Cathy’s life.

It is she who ensures Heathcliff overhears Cathy as she laments how marrying him would degrade her, causing him to flee Wuthering Heights and leave Cathy to marry Edgar. Nelly’s ploy comes shortly after Cathy de-means the housekeeper, claiming that she wouldn’t understand Cathy’s predicament given she’s never loved anyone, and no one has ever loved her. Thus, Nelly is characterized as vengeful toward Cathy - although, as the latter lies in her death bed, the two share a brief moment that complicates their relationship to each other.

Regardless, Fennell gives Nelly and Cathy’s relationship psychological depth that Brontë’s novel doesn’t seem to afford them.

**CATHY AND HEATHCLIFF HAVE SEX (AND A LOT OF IT)**

Brontë’s Cathy and Heathcliff never explicitly (in the text) consummate their professed undying love, save for a few kisses just before Cathy breathes her last.

Fennell’s “Wuthering Heights,” on the other

hand, grants them an entire Bridgerton-style sex montage - they even get hot and heavy in a carriage. It’s nearly impossible to keep count of the “I love you’s” exchanged during the pair’s rendezvous.

**ISABELLA IS A WILLING SUBMISSIVE**

One particular still of Alison Oliver’s Isabella is already making the rounds online, and for good reason. The shot, which depicts the young woman engaging in BDSM-style puppy play, is a stark contrast to Brontë’s characterization of Isabella as a victim of domestic violence.

In Brontë’s book, Isabella marries Heathcliff naively believing he might shape up into a gentleman and flees with their son when she realizes that is out of the question. In the film, Heathcliff is clear from their first romantic encounter that he does not love Isabella, will never love her and pursues her only to torture Cathy - and the young woman still chooses to be with him.

**THERE IS NO SECOND GENERATION**

Perhaps Fennell’s most glaring diversion from her

source material is her complete omission of the second half of Brontë’s novel, which centers on a second generation comprised of Cathy and Edgar’s daughter Catherine Linton, Heathcliff and Isabella’s son Linton Heathcliff and Hindley and his wife Frances’ son Hareton Earnshaw.

In her introduction to the Penguin Classics edition of “Wuthering Heights,” Brontë scholar Pauline Nestor writes that many literary critics interpret the novel’s latter half as “signifying the restoration of order and balance in the second generation after the excesses and disruption of the first generation,” while others contend the violence that stains Cathy and Heathcliff’s relationship is bound to be replicated by their children. Either way, the structure of Brontë’s novel encourages readers to interpret each half through the lens of the other.

Fennell’s film instead ends where Brontë’s first act closes, hyper-focused on Cathy and Heathcliff. In the same way the doomed lovers see each other, Fennell figures them as the center of the world.

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# SHOW

radio exposure to promote it.

“Where we come from, we have our own genre of music called Texas Country,” Canty said. “It’s basically country music with loud guitars and heavy drums. That’s always something we’ve been exposed to where we live. It comes out of the concerts that we went to when we were in high school and junior high. We would try to get into those shows however we could.”

When asked about specific influences, Canty unleashes of avalanche of far ranging acts and artists: alt-country rockers

Cross Canadian Ragweed, veteran country renegade David Allan Coe, the Texas country-based Randy Rogers Band, punk-pop pioneers Blink 182 and fellow West Texas song stylist William Clark Green. The latter will be featured as an opening act at Treaty Oak Revival’s Saturday show at Rupp.

“We listened to a lot of Lynyrd Skynyrd and plenty of metal music, punk and pop-punk music,” Canty said. “We just grew up around a lot of rock ‘n’ roll, a lot of country, a little hip hop.”

What distinguishes the music on the third and

newest Treaty Oak Revival album, “West Texas Degenerate,” is how the band’s fearsome guitar and drum charge is balanced with a melodic stride that would make the music seemingly appealing to commercial radio and major record labels.

“That’s where the pop-punk stuff comes in. We get a lot of our melodies from pop-punk, Midwest emo, emo rock music, Southern rock, classic rock and metal. That’s where a lot of our stuff comes from as far as the melodies go,” Canty said.

“With ‘West Texas Degenerate,’ we were trying to write a record about growth, but also a record that talks about where the band comes from. Each of those songs,

and the album in general, did a perfect job of doing that. We want to play these songs for people all over the world and bring some West Texas their way,” he said.

To reach arena-level while maintaining indie-status, however, remains a remarkable feat for any band. Treaty Oak Revival briefly flirted with major labels on a 2025 Inter-scope-distributed offshoot album called “The Talco Tapes.” Curiously, the band’s lone major label venture was its least commercial-oriented project.

The recording was a collection of acoustic reworkings of songs from the band’s first two albums, 2021’s “No Vacancy” and 2023’s “Have a Nice Day.” The associ-

ation was cordial enough, but underscored Treaty Oak Revival’s preference for the indie ranks.

“We do things a lot differently in our organization than a lot of people in the music industry do,” Canty said. “We’re trying to reset the standard on that. But I think the way that we did things and the way the label did things just didn’t really match up at the end of the day. I think we’re a lot happier and we work a lot better if we just do it all ourselves because that’s how we’ve always done things.”

At the core of how the band operates is treating all members of the staff and band with respect, Canty said.

“Obviously, our business is run like a business,

but our crew runs like a family,” he said. “When we’re on the road, we do everything together. It’s not just us five. It’s everybody. A lot of the times, the band is the priority and everybody else is second fiddle. But here, we try to make sure everybody feels included, respected and accounted for.”

**TREATY OAK REVIVAL WITH WILLIAM CLARK GREEN AND GANNON FREMIN & CCREV**

**When:** Feb. 21 at 7 p.m.

**Where:** Rupp Arena, 430 W. Vine

**Tickets:** \$68.50-\$165.75 through ticketmaster.com.