'Cloud Atlas' complex, but fantastic storytelling

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Sitting in a very empty theater, I realized that “Cloud Atlas” is a film that’s less about conveying a singular idea or story, but rather more about the way in which the stories of six events spanning across thousands of years are relatable to one another through the human spirit.

It would be nearly impossible to convey what “Atlas” is “about” because it tells six different stories, from time periods ranging from 1850 to 2344 and everything in between. Based on the 2004 novel of the same name by **David Mitchell**, “Atlas” really is a wonderful experience, but most likely won’t make very much money as its form isn’t massively appealing.

Written and Directed by **Lana** and **Andy Wachowski** and **Tom Tykwer**, the film opens with just enough from all six stories to get hooked on each of them. It bounces from one to the other, but not in an incoherent way.

They are all stories of love, freedom, finding the truth, overcoming society’s boundaries and how the actions of one individual can affect countless lives. I couldn’t possibly name every member of the amazing cast, nor the characters they play.

Since the stories jump from one time period to another, every actor portrays multiple characters and sometimes those characters are of different age, race or sex than the last. “Atlas” really is an unbelievable feat of acting and directorial skill, as well as writing.

Notably, the cast includes **Tom Hanks, Halle Berry, Hugh Grant, Hugo Weaving, Keith David, Jim Broadbent, Susan Sarandon** and manymore. Hanks for example plays a doctor in the 1850s storyline, a nuclear physicist in the 1970s, a criminal author in 2012 and a primitive villager named Zachry, in a post-apocalyptic Hawaii.

Berry plays the wife of a famous composer in the 1930s, an unbelievably good investigative reporter in the 1970s and all the way to Meronym, a member of the last technologically advanced society on Earth, which she plays next to Hanks's primitive villager.

My favorite pieces of the film are the stories between a young, aspiring composer Robert Frobisher (**Ben Whishaw**) and his love of Rufus Sixsmith (**James D'Arcy**) as Frobisher attempts to compose the "Cloud Atlas Sextet" and their love struggles to survive in the 1930s.

Also, the story of Zachry and Meronym as she comes to the primitive world seeking a guide up what Zachry's people believe is a demonic mountain. At the top is the gateway to both societies' survival, which leads to an ending that is absolutely wonderful.

The story of 19th century lawyer Adam Ewing (**Jim Sturgess**) and his saving of a stowaway slave is phenomenal.

The acting is out of this world and the ability of each actor to convey different people with such skill and ease is amazing. Also, the directors deserve credit for handling such a cast and the shifts between times and people are perfectly achieved.

I hope to see "Atlas" at least once more, and I am determined to read the novel and dive deeper into the large amount of fascinating characters. I can't say that "Atlas" is definitively "about" this or that, but I can say it is completely worth the time to sit and absorb the six tales as they unfold, and not worry so much about "what it all means."

Sometimes, artwork is made for the telling, not necessarily to communicate some idea, but to immerse the reader or audience in the world and carry them along to see its wonders. “Atlas” seems to be such a work, urging us to just enjoy the ride and connect with each character.

Because, really, that is what it’s all about, I guess, the way in which we, as people, connect to one another, whether by choice or accident. We are all here together and as many say in “Atlas,” “by every crime and every kindness, we birth our future.”

“Cloud Atlas” is now playing and is rated ‘R’ with a runtime of 2 hours and 52 minutes.

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