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Review: Maps to the Stars

Cronenberg's latest deranged drama tries to do too much. [Kate Barlow](#) reviews

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Director: David Cronenberg

Starring: Julianne Moore, Mia Wasikowska, Robert Pattinson

Running time: 111 minutes

Rating: ★★☆☆☆

Cronenberg is a director known for his ability to shock an audience. However, in this over-the-top tale of family trauma and the dark side of the Hollywood industry being purely disturbing is not enough making it easy to come away feeling empty.

Maps to the Stars starts as a telling of the futility of chasing fame and the hollow lives of the Weiss family: 13-year old child star Benje, who reminds one of a Justin Bieber-esque brat in the making, is pushed into fame by his parents, the controlling Christina (Olivia Williams) and the egotistical TV psychologist Dr Stafford (John Cusack), while their estranged pyromaniac daughter Agatha (Mia Wasikowska) tries to regain contact with the family with the help of wannabe writer turned limo driver Jerome (Robert Pattinson). The fact that Agatha, named a "disfigured schizophrenic", is one of the few vaguely likable characters is testament to how screwed up this film is. In a performance of true hysteria verging on insanity Julianne Moore adds to the crazy of the characters as Havana Segrand, an aging actress determined to nab a part in a remake previously played by her deceased mother. So far, so messed up.

From disquieting beginnings the film gets only increasingly more cynical. Cronenberg's perceived bitterness towards the falsity and corruption of the Hollywood industry is told with unrelenting force. However, it strays too far from any sense of realism or honesty. Every character has a dark secret past

that haunts their present (and for Havana and Benje this strays into the horror region as their hauntings come in physical form). From incest and mental illness to fame and ambition, each story is told with a sense of distance which ultimately rings a little cold and eventually becomes simply boring. The problem with providing no element of subtlety or range in emotion is that cynicism becomes old quickly. By the end of the film we are so used to seeing the characters act in ways so deranged and unrealistic the dark and chaotic ending no longer surprises the viewer.

One positive thing that can be said of the general disarray that is *Maps to the Stars* is that its star-studded cast undoubtedly put on one hell of a performance. Moore throws herself fearlessly into the role with a sense of pure raw emotion. Wasikowska also delivers a strong performance, becoming one of the only sympathetic individuals on screen. The only issue is that every motivation for every action seems to be a result of some form of past, often childhood, trauma, an unoriginal excuse which feels like a bit of cop out.

Ultimately, this is a film which tries to be too much – part horror flick, part commentary on fame, part family incest drama – making it easy to come away with nothing.



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