

# ENTERTAINMENT

## Movie Review:

# Much to Admire in New Robin Williams Flick, 'One Hour Photo'

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In "One Hour Photo," Robin Williams continues to try to atone for the decade's worth of touchy-feely, totally sacchrine film roles that preceeded his recent spate of "edgier" work.

Following on the heels of "Death to Smoochy" and "Insomnia" earlier this year, "One Hour Photo" completes his current troika of Bad Guy roles, in what looks to be a campaign to re-establish his professional credibility.

Toward that end, Wiliams dials everything back in his performance as creepy one-hour photo guy Sy Parrish, to squirm-inducing effect.

Seeing Williams under such extraordinary self-control here is a shock to the system. It's the cinematic equivalent of taking a big gulp of milk that you thought was going to be Pepsi.

At first, it's tough to swallow.

Esteemed MTV director Mark Romanek,

known for his eye-popping videos for Lenny Kravitz, Fiona Apple, Janet and Michael Jackson and more, takes a much, much less-is-more approach here, and acquits himself admirably.

Nowhere near as splashy and flashy as most video directors' big-screen efforts (McG, David Fincher, et al), this movie is uncharacteristically about content, not form.

Williams' Parrish is the kind of middle-aged loner who is just one piece of bad news, a rifle and a clocktower away from the lead spot on the six o'clock news.

Parrish works at his city's megastore, Sav•mart, in the photo processing department. Over the years, he's developed (no pun intended) an unhealthy obsession with one beautiful family in particular, Mom, Pop and Junior Yorkin, played by Connie Nielsen, Michael Vartan and Dylan Smith.

From fawning over Mom and Junior when they come to his counter, to upgrading their print size on his own intitative, all

the way to the wall in his house, covered top to bottom with a montage of surreptitiously snatched prints from the lifetime of the Yorkin clan, Parrish's relationship with the unsuspecting family has "red flag" written all over it.

Gary Cole, so brilliant as family-killing marine Jeffrey MacDonald in the TV miniseries "Fatal Vision," as well as the sadistic boss in Mike Judge's cult classic "Office Space," adds another heartless jerk to his resume as Sy's overbearing, self-impressed supervisor.

Eventually, Sy's picture-snitching transgressions come to the attention of his boss, who seems to have been waiting for an excuse to pounce, and he jumps at the opportunity to give Sy the sack. This is about the same time Sy discovers his ideal family's dad has been cheating on his little wife, which along with his sudden unemployment, pushes poor old Sy right around the bend.

Sy's response to his own rage is probably the most interesting thing about this film.

While remaining pent-up, repressed and minimalist, even in his passiveness, Williams manages to scare the bejeezus out of much bigger, stronger personalities — onscreen, as well as in the theater.

There's a revelation at the end that, while explaining much about Williams' character's motivation, just feels too pat and obvious, compared to all the graceful subtlety that has preceeded it.

Even so, my first instinct was to write this film off as being all portent, no payoff — a largely bloodless thriller, where nothing happens, according to my notes.

Upon reflection, and recognizing that I'm used to being beaten over the head with obviousness in American films — a tendency exacerbated in no small part by Williams' own contributions to the culture in such brain-sucking drek as "Bicentennial Man" and "Mrs. Doubtfire" — I found a lot more to admire about "One Hour Photo" than I found to criticize.