

Sweet Endings

Celeste and Jesse break up, charmingly

CELESTE AND JESSE FOREVER: Directed by Lee Toland Krieger. Written by Rashida Jones and Will McCormack. Cinematography, David Lanzenberg. Editor, Yana Gorskaya. Music, Zach Cowie and Sunny Levine. Starring Rashida Jones, Andy Samberg, Ari Graynor, Eric Christian Olsen, Elijah Wood, Chris Messina and Emma Roberts. Sony Pictures Classics, 2012. R. 92 minutes. ★★☆☆☆

"Likable" might not be the first word that comes to mind when you imagine a semi-romantic comedy about a pair of divorcing thirtysomethings, but it might be just the word for *Celeste and Jesse Forever*. Writer and star Rashida Jones, who's arguably most familiar from *Parks and Recreation*, turned what could have been a one-note role in *I Love You Man* into an actual character, and has a slippery, almost prickly warmth; she radiates a sense that she's a lot of fun to be around until you piss her off. Here, she's equal parts charming and frustrating, a flawed and slightly uptight trend forecaster whose marriage — to artist Jesse (Andy Samberg, nicely mellow) — has, at the start of the film, already fallen apart.

It's a clever choice to start at the end. The credits play over a montage of Celeste and Jesse's early years, and when we reach the present, they seem perfectly comfortable, their relationship a mishmash of conversational shorthand, goofy running jokes, genuine affection and the easy habits of longtime companionship. It's not until their friend Beth (Ari Graynor) freaks out at them over dinner that we learn they're technically separated.

Celeste and Jesse Forever never offers a simple reason for this split, and it never has to: As easy as the title characters can be, they've clearly slipped in opposite directions. She's successful, opinionated and outgoing; he's a struggling artist with a quiet side. Their familiarity masks a hard-to-describe — and hard to cinematically display — disquiet that comes when nothing is wrong and nothing is exactly right, either. Jones and her cowriter Will McCormack (who plays the couple's stoner buddy, Skillz) have set themselves a considerable task: Their story needs to be compelling despite being about a relationship that's anything but, and their characters need to be interesting and sympathetic even when they're turning nasty and falling apart.



They pull it off with a light touch, a careful measure of comedy and cringe, and the occasional moment of tootcuteness. *Celeste and Jesse* occasionally veers toward humiliation comedy, but it always manages to ground those moments in believability and turn even briefly seen characters into important foils for its central couple. (Emma Roberts is particularly perfect as a sullen teen pop star.) The film is full of close-ups on Jones' liquid expressions, which slip easily between sulk and room-brightening smile; it's really her story, but Samberg's Jesse gets just enough screen time, and character growth, that we can see them slipping apart and pulling themselves together.

Mostly, the film succeeds because it doesn't paint in broad strokes. Celeste is career-focused, but the movie never tells us she can't have it all because she cares about her job; when she screws up at work, she's in trouble, but life isn't capital-O over. Friends get mad at each other; people do stupid things and are forgiven; people do stupid things and maybe don't quite get entirely forgiven, but their friends know how to at least let it go. Mainstream romantic comedies have taught us to expect the overwrought and the overwritten, and to accept a level of grandiosity that has little to do with how people really interact. *Celeste and Jesse* isn't looking to wow you; it's just looking to charm (sweetest breakup comedy ever?) and maybe asking you to think a little bit about how sometimes relationships end not because you don't love the other person, but because you can't love them the same way anymore. **EW**

arts SHORTS

Paint the Town Brown

Local rockers **Cosmic Jelly** are sort of an elusive band these days. They're fading away into fond memory and separating officially, but it wouldn't be like them to go out without a bang. On Sept. 2 the group will have a screening and CD release day for their new video, "Let's Talk About Poop," which is designed to knock the shit (or should I say poop?) out of your ass.

"[The video] was a summer project," says director, producer and Cosmic Jelly guitarist Brett Sisun. "We started in June and worked through until now. We like to think of it as anti-art that is art." He goes on to explain that this is the intended message behind one particular image in the video, which features a "Poop Monster" shoving his head through a painting. "People are either horrified by it or love it," he says.

I'll come clean: Feces totally amuse me, and "Let's Talk About Poop"—whose title is derived from Sisun's suggestion that it would make a great name for a TV show—is downright hilarious. The song "Let's Talk About Poop" is awesome, too, and fits perfectly atop the video's images of splattering defecation, porta-potties and mustache stroking on the john. OK, so perhaps this isn't as highbrow a project as anything Da Vinci ever came up with, but it's art nonetheless, and Cosmic Jelly is highly attuned to the ways of Eugene's artistic community.

"We're all shit smears," says Sisun. "You can't be too serious but at the same time you absolutely have to be serious. 'Let's Talk About Poop' is weird, fun and affordable, and that's what makes it perfect for Eugene."

"Let's Talk About Poop" smears itself across the screen 5 pm Sunday, Sept. 2, at Kesey Square; FREE. — *Andy Valentine*

8/30 THU	schedule for 8.30 - 9.6		8/31 FRI	9/1 SAT	9/2 SUN	9/3 MON	9/4 TUE	9/5 WED	9/6 THU
NEIL YOUNG JOURNEYS 4:30 8:00 ENDS TONIGHT!	CELESTE & JESSE FOREVER (R)		3:20 5:30 7:40 9:45	1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:45	1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:45	5:30 7:40 9:45	5:30 7:40 9:45	5:30 7:40 9:45	5:30 7:40 9:45
BERNIE 6:40 ENDS TONIGHT!	TRISHNA (R)		4:00 6:30	1:30 4:00 6:30	1:30 4:00 6:30	6:30	6:30	6:30	6:30
	MOONRISE KINGDOM		9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00	9:00
WHERE DO WE GO NOW? 5:15 ENDS TONIGHT!	NEXT: SEARCHING FOR SUGAR MAN								
	SLEEPWALK WITH ME								
	AI WEIWEI: NEVER SORRY								
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