

Remember

“Remember” is a memory test for a man losing his, one Zev Guttman, near 90, who has just lost his wife and resides in an assisted living facility. Zev (Christopher Plummer) is a Jewish holocaust survivor from Auschwitz whose friend at the home, Max Rosenbaum (Martin Landau) was also at the camp. After his wife has died, Zev, suffering dementia, has made a pact with the disabled Max to hunt down the Nazi guard from the camp who was responsible for the slaughter of both their families. To that end, Zev has cash saved up to both buy a gun and travel as needed to seek out one Rudy Kurlander, a pseudonym the ex-Nazi uses. Max has traced out four living German men of that age living in North America

Directed by Atom Egoyan, the film follows Zev’s halting search for the Kurlanders, undertaken without his family’s knowledge and guided by Max’s detailed written instructions to him. Zev learns that the first Rudy (Bruno Ganz) was in service during the war, but with the German Army in North Africa, while a second Rudy (Heinz Lieven), living in Canada, is—whoops!—a Jew himself. The third Kurlander, in rural Idaho, has recently died, and his son John (Dean Norris), tells Zev that his dad was an Army cook and merely a wannabe Nazi. In the meantime, Zev’s son Charles (Henry Czerny) is frantically trying to trace his father’s peregrinations around the States and Canada.

The fourth Rudy (we eventually learn that the real name of the Nazi guard was Otto Wallisch) is living in a quiet cottage off Lake Tahoe. This Kurlander (Jurgen Prochnow) is a soft-spoken old man whose voice Zev immediately recognizes and who quickly admits “I always knew you would find me.” By this time, Zev, barely able to control himself, points his gun and....

The film ends with a whiz-bang twisteroo that cannot be revealed here.

Egoyan, one of Canada’s most versatile filmmakers (“The Sweet Hereafter,” “Ararat”), crisply develops screenwriter Benjamin August’s compelling script. What Egoyan does even better is masterfully guide the redoubtable Plummer (now 86). This always-elegant actor finally gets to play his age fully in “Remember,” a man slowed in walk and wit but still with a spirit of dogged determination. This time the handsome Plummer visage shows a lifetime written in his face but the actor still possesses that plummy voice and a singular presence. This late-blooming Oscar winner (for 2010’s “Beginners”) continues to cap a career with great performances in his golden years. (*The film is rated “R” and runs 94 min.*)

(March 2016)