

## Steve Jobs

Apple's revered and castigated Steve Jobs is one contemporary figure worthy of serious dramatic treatment, and filmmakers Danny Boyle and Aaron Sorkin have aimed to achieve that in the new film baldly titled "Steve Jobs." Boyle, as director, and Sorkin, as screenwriter, have settled on telling Jobs mercurial life story through three parallel episodes in Jobs' professional life, all of them triggered by a new product he is ready to introduce.

These momentous moments are the 1984 launching of the Macintosh, the 1988 presentation of the NeXT computer, and, finally, the landmark debut of Apple's iMac in 1998. The tripartite structure does automatically create some inherent drama, as we see, in each sequence, Jobs behind the scenes contending with product details, staff contentions, and family quandaries.

Sorkin boiled down Walter Isaacson's lauded biography of Jobs (from 2011) to focus on the three key presentation moments, and, for the most part, has crafted a pointed and mostly lively script. Still, in musing on the film, I remain somewhat critical of its three-episode structure: it produces an effect that is inevitably repetitive and too thin to reveal a full portrait of Jobs (in each period he is essentially arguing with the same people). The filmmakers played with a kind of time travel in shooting the film. The first episode, in 1984, was shot in 16mm, the second third was done in 35 mm, while the final sequence was made using digital format, thus paralleling the standard film stocks of the different times. A nice gimmick to entrance the cinephiles, I suppose, but probably not noticeable to the standard audience.

The versatile Michael Fassbender, as Jobs, is fine overall, verbose and driven, but his dramatic range was inevitable cramped as—in each episode—he portrayed a man ever at fever pitch and constantly confronting those around him (Sorkin contributed to the frenetic backstage feel with his trademark "walking and talking" ambulatory conversations which he perfected with "The West Wing."). There are a few flash back sequences included, but they do not complete a rounded portrait.

Another fault in the script is the running theme of Job's testy relationship with his ex-girlfriend, Chrisann Brennan (Katherine Waterston) and the daughter he disowns. While understandably dramatic for movie-going audiences, even titillating, this focus on his rejection of paternity and ill treatment of a mother and her child smacks of facile soap opera within the larger consequence of the man's life.

Both Seth Rogen, as Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak, and Michael Stuhlbarg as Andy Hertzfeld, one of the original members of the Apple Macintosh development team, offer a sort of "revenge of the nerds" flavor, both being ex-stalwarts who have been turned aside by the lordly Jobs, and Sorkin gives them each a few good lines to chasten their imperious ex-boss.

However, the true standout in this cast Kate Winslet, just terrific as Joanna Hoffman, the loyal, dogged marketing chief for Apple for many years—the one person, many felt, who could challenge Jobs and get away with it. Here Winslet, unrecognizable in a dark wig, big round glasses, and with a tincture of Polish accent, scores as the long-

suffering but practical counterweight to the narcissistic Steve Jobs. For me, she immediately contends for the end-of-year awards race.

*(“Steve Jobs” is rated “R” for adult language and runs 122min.)*

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