



Double Discourse: Zendaya’s performance makes a racquet

BY: ELLA BARRY AND OLIVIA NORDYKE / ON: APRIL 29, 2024 / IN: FEATURES

In a bangin’ year for Zendaya’s career, the tennis love triangle film “Challengers” has been teasing a hot and heavy plot. As the semester nears the end and we both prepare to graduate, we bought two tickets for our last Double Discourse.

In “Challengers,” young tennis legend Tashi Duncan (Zendaya) meets two best friends Art and Patrick (Mike Faist and Josh O’Connor). The boys try to capture her attention, each having their own relationship with her.

After a career-ending injury for Tashi, the three have a falling out. Years later, Art faces Patrick for one last match with Tashi as his coach.

Olivia’s Review

4 out of 5 stars

I’m not the most athletic, but I like tennis and I love Zendaya. Like any good bisexual, I’ve been excited to see “Challengers” for the past few months. What could have been a typical sports movie about a guy who wants to win and his overinvolved coach-wife was actually stunning.

Director Luca Guadagnino took every opportunity to showcase his creative muscles, using cinematography to elevate what would otherwise have been boring sequences of regular tennis. I thought the ongoing bit of audience members’ heads turning was so funny and made Tashi’s fierce demeanor stand out in a crowd even more.

The performances are flawless; Faist’s stoicism and Zendaya’s intensity are stunning. There’s the perfect amount of humor and the visuals are great.

My sole complaint is that we basically know everything that happens based on the trailer. There weren’t many surprises left while watching the feature length film, except for one...I’m unsure how else to say it...this is the horniest movie I have ever seen.

It shouldn’t be a major surprise. The previews heavily imply a threesome between the main characters. I’m not clutching my pearls at one steamy scene, but the sexual tension is maintained throughout the entire film. I think Ella and I were both surprised at how homoerotic it was. I’ll leave it at this: the grunting was hilarious, more full frontal than I was anticipating.

At the climax, I began dreading how things were going to wrap up. Both possible endings seemed like they’d be super cheesy. Instead, I was left extremely satisfied. As with all things, it’s important to know when to end it.

Ella’s Review

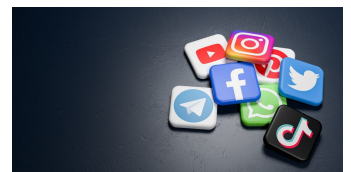
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4 out of 5 stars

I've been dying to see Zendaya play a tennis prodigy since I saw the "Challengers" preview months ago. I was expecting the film to be a classic inspirational sports movie with a lot of Tashi Duncan on the court and a bit of a love triangle on the sidelines.

Instead, the film was an incredibly lustful narrative in which Zendaya's character is romantically involved on and off with best friends Art and Patrick, who also have their own homoerotic will-they-won't-they dynamic.

"Challengers" plays through the lens of tennis, but really, it's a story of trust and betrayal that blurs the lines of friendship and romance.

Though it wasn't what I'd expected, the film was enjoyable. The non-linear plot kept me intrigued, wondering how the scenes from the past would finally lead up to the scenes of the present day.

As the plot's two timelines neared each other, the suspense built, until it finally ended abruptly. When the film ended, I sat in the theater staring at the credits for quite some time trying to process what I had just watched. I still can't decide if I want more or if the cutoff was the right decision on the filmmakers' part.

The three actors had great chemistry, which was vital since there weren't really any side characters, at least none that appeared for more than a few scenes. While I do recommend this film, let's just say their chemistry isn't something you'll want to watch with your parents.

The film's release is also perfect for the transition from spring to summer. The preppy tennis aesthetic was calling out to me through the screen, and if there's one thing I felt leaving the theater, it was a strong desire to get outside and play some tennis.

Our farewell —

Our last Double Discourse feels like it's come too soon. The two of us will certainly continue to watch movies and try new things together (and tell others our opinions very loudly), but we'll miss sharing them with you.

Writing Double Discourse together has been a fun way to tackle reviews, and we hope our perspectives, whether we agreed or not, have provided well-rounded insight for you.

Double Discourse was meant to be a series where readers could get to know our tastes. It's been a great opportunity to write together as friends. Maybe it will reincarnate with another pair in the future and give readers another set of opinions to rely on.

Photo courtesy of The Hollywood Reporter.



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Scribe@uccs.edu

University Center Room 106
1420 Austin Bluffs Parkway
Colorado Springs, CO 80918

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