

Review: 'Cheerful Weather' a spot-on period piece

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JOHN DeFORE

The Hollywood Reporter= LOS ANGELES (AP) — A sustained balancing act between dry upper-crust cynicism and pent-up passions, Donald Rice's "Cheerful Weather for the Wedding" maintains its uneasy stasis long enough to frustrate some romance-hungry viewers while tantalizing those for whom withheld pleasure is the whole point. Spot-on production values and a fine cast should help it win enough of the undecided to make a strong showing at art houses.

Buzzed about in part for the presence of "Like Crazy's" Felicity Jones, the film requires mostly opaque inaction from her as Dolly, an ambivalent bride-to-be hiding out upstairs while her extended family prepares for her nuptials. The screenplay holds its cards so close we're forced to guess at the reasons she's marrying Owen (James Norton) instead of Luke Treadaway's Joseph, who romanced her the previous summer before taking a job in London. (Throughout the winter-hued film, we get summery flashbacks of time the two spent together, with jumbled chronology mixing their polite initial flirtations with a fraught, rain-dappled farewell.)

Fortunately for Treadaway, Jones's silence creates lots of space for him to fill as Joseph hangs out downstairs, playing the charming family friend while angling for a way to see Dolly before she says "I do." Treadaway carries the day, charming and anxious at once, flirting in a big-brother way with Dolly's man-hungry sister Kitty (Ellie Kendrick, bubbling with impatience at her lack of prospects) and dodging the disdain of her mother (Elizabeth McGovern), whose every overly cheery gesture is intended to iron out just the kind of wrinkle a bride's ex-boyfriend presents.

The script, by Rice and Mary Henely Magill, offers plenty of mildly wicked slang (an unattractive pair of socks are "pure catsick") and subterfuge to keep the ensemble busy while Dolly frets upstairs, swigging from an unwholesomely large jug of rum and trying the patience of Millman, the all-seeing housekeeper.

Joseph grows more and more anxious as the wedding time nears and it seems clear Dolly won't see him. While some will find her behavior (and by extension, the film's) unbearably coy, Treadaway's performance of this path through hope to lovesickness gives "Cheerful Weather" a beating heart to balance the refined aesthetics of the storytelling.

Bottom Line: Finely crafted English period piece works best for those who

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like their love stories romantically doomed.

"Cheerful Weather For the Wedding," an IFC release, is not rated. 92 minutes.

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