

'Last Weekend' could have been much better

By David Rooney, Hollywood Reporter

Imagine that Cate Blanchett's "Blue Jasmine" character had been evicted from her bubble of complacent privilege not by calamity and public humiliation but by the veil of melancholy that descends with fraying family bonds and the encroaching awareness that the sun is setting on life's most joyous moments. That more or less describes the character played with dry humor and complexity by Patricia Clarkson in "Last Weekend".

Restrained and elegant to a fault, this first feature from co-directors Tom Dolby and Tom Williams is too muted in its catharsis and too overcrowded with superfluous characters to be fully satisfying, but the delicate central performance keeps it watchable.

Dolby's screenplay wears its influences quite transparently, from Woody Allen through Chekhov. And with its fetishistic attention to sumptuous living – gastronomical pleasures, floral table arrangements, a dream house out of *Architectural Digest*, bursting with collectibles – "Last Weekend" could almost be the indie equivalent of Nancy Meyers lifestyle porn.

Clarkson plays Celia Green, the well-heeled wife of San Francisco fitness magnate Malcolm (Chris Mulkey). Looking to recapture her family's carefree past, she painstakingly curates an idyllic Labor Day weekend for her adult sons, Theo (Zachary Booth) and Roger (Joseph Cross), to remember the gorgeous Lake Tahoe house where they grew up spending their summers. Rather than actually engage with their lives or give serious attention to their partners, however, Celia is more worried about finding the perfect sunflowers for the dinner

table or whether she's bought enough salmon. It's a credit to Clarkson's nuanced exploration of character that she can make this vaguely daffy, head-in-the-clouds aesthete sympathetic.

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