

A Stage of Twilight Goes Gentle

Death. As the saying goes, it's one of the few things inevitably shared by all humans. Yet when it's pending, we often don't know how to deal with it - and in cinema this reluctance is often reflected. Film is full of funerals and spectacular, world-saving sacrifices, but tends to flinch from confronting the slow, inevitable road to demise most of us will eventually face.

A Stage of Twilight does not flinch. It's an intimate, real drama with a primary storyline that follows Barry (William Sadler, "Deep Space 9"), his wife of decades, Cora (Karen Allen, *Raiders of the Lost Arc*) and their extended family friends after he learns he has about a month of increasingly failing health left. There is a touching coming-of-age subplot involving a teen choosing between relationships, the family business and a chance to go to college, but the heart of the story by director Sarah Schwab lies in looking at how Cora and Barry cope with end of life issues that don't typically make it to the screen.

The film unfurls at a slow but engaging pace, and features many moments of subtle humor. The rural setting and small-town feel are brought to life by lovely cinematography and seasoned actors with nothing left to prove but a great deal of talent still to share.

The director is not afraid to let her actors' work hold the camera with close-ups that range from thoughtful to intense, and it's a rare eye that won't have at least a little tear jerked from it by the end, but *Stage of Twilight* keeps it simple, without the melodrama that can infect an end-of-life story. And there are enough twists and surprises to keep you guessing. You'll come away with something to talk about, and it might be something we don't talk enough about.



RI Film Office's Steven Feinberg interviews Allen, Sadler and Schwab at the RISD Museum Auditorium screening