



CHANGELING

Clint Eastwood's *Changeling* finds John Malkovich giving a thoughtful, restrained performance as a righteous pastor, and Michael Kelly giving an exceptional one as a dogged detective. Oh, and the period design for the film's 1928 Los Angeles setting is quite good. Having gotten that out of the way, the rest of the movie is so awful - so maddeningly phony and contrived - that I wanted to hurl things at the screen.

From its balefully tedious piano score (an Eastwood specialty) to its stagnant composition to its *Marat/Sade*

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loony-bin scenes, this missing-child drama is almost stunningly oppressive and one-dimensional, and features more rotten acting in the guise of

great

acting than I'd have thought possible from the director of

Unforgiven, *Mystic River*,

and

Million Dollar Baby.

With its moustache-twirling villains and lacquered, selflessly heroic lead, almost no scene in the film's entire 140 minutes rings the slightest bit true. (You may have heard that Angelina Jolie - staring down the camera as if

daring

the Oscar voters not to genuflect - is magnificent in it. You've heard wrong.) I've seen worse movies this year, but none that angered me so much as

Changeling

; it turns a horrific true-life story into a shamelessly manipulative and obvious "prestige" tearjerker without a whiff of spontaneity or surprise. Not that the movie doesn't smell of *something*

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The Weak in Review: "Changeling," "RocknRolla," "Zack & Miri," and "The Haunting of Molly Hartley"

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Wednesday, 05 November 2008 02:29

