

MIAMI INT'L FILM FESTIVAL MARCH 7, 2016 1:40 PM



# In 'The Lobster,' falling in love is difficult – and mandatory

## HIGHLIGHTS

Plays at 7 p.m. Tuesday March 8 at Tower Theater and 9:15 p.m. March 11 at Regal South Beach as part of Miami International Film Festival.



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The Lobster Official International Trailer #1 (2015) - Rachel Weisz, Colin Farrell Movie ...  



In his movies, Greek writer-director Yorgos Lanthimos sets up surreal, outlandish premises and then pulls you inside, so the nonsensical takes on weighty, emotional import. In 2007's Oscar-nominated *Dogtooth*, the lives of the members of a screwed-up family served as an exploration of misbegotten parenting and the perils of strict idealism. In 2011's *Alps*, a group of eccentrics hired themselves out to people mourning the recent death of a loved one, examining the ways in which we all sometimes role-play or take on different personas when we think that is what is expected of us.

*The Lobster*, Lanthimos' English-language debut, is another strange, sometimes harrowing exercise in absurdity that resonates despite its weirdness. The movie is set in a near-future in which being single is not an option — it's illegal. After his wife leaves him, David (Colin Farrell) is forced to move into a hotel-prison governed by strict rules. He has 45 days to find a romantic companion. If he fails, he will be turned into an animal of his choice.

“This is not something that should upset you or get you down,” the hotel's officious manager (Olivia Colman) tells him. David should think of becoming an animal as a second shot at true love. But he should choose carefully, because not all animals play well with others. For example, a wolf and a penguin would never work out. Neither would a hippo and a camel. “That would be absurd,” she says dryly. “Think about it.”

Although he knows most people choose dogs, David settles on a lobster, because they live for 100 years, stay fertile and are blue-blooded, just like rich people. He is congratulated for making such a wise choice.

Except for David, none of the other characters in *The Lobster* have names. Instead, they are known by their peculiarities: The man who limps (Ben Whishaw); the guy who lisps (John C. Reilly); the heartless, cruel woman (Angeliki Papoulia); the woman prone to nosebleeds (Jessica Barden). Reducing people to a single trait makes it easier to navigate the treacherous waters of dating: To woo the Nosebleed Woman, Reilly smashes his face until his nose, too, is bloody. Instantly, they have something in common to bond over. That might sound like a weak substitute for love. But it sure beats turning into a donkey.

*The Lobster* argues that the kind of pressure society places on us to find a soulmate can lead to reckless choices. But the movie gives the alternative – people who are happy being single – the same radical treatment. Outside the hotel, in the surrounding woods, roam Loners — unattached people who refuse to play along and defy society. Their leader, Léa Seydoux (*Blue is the Warmest Color*), is just as intolerant as the authority figures she despises. Pity the member of her tribe who dares to fall in love with someone else.

Told in the same cool, deadpan manner of Lanthimos' previous films, *The Lobster* is a droll, bizarre fable that demands to be taken seriously. The film isn't a comedy, but it's often quietly hilarious, at least until Rachel Weisz enters the story as Short Sighted Woman and catches David's attention. The relationship that ensues between them raises the picture's emotional stakes to devastating heights (or lows, depending on your perspective on romance).

The first half of *The Lobster* establishes the rules and logic of its alternate universe. The second half of the movie is about what happens to a man who is stuck inside of it, and his struggle achieves a surprising level of poignancy, culminating with a scene that is either an expression of love in its purest form or a distillation of amour fou. You thought relationships are complicated now? Compared to the protagonists of *The Lobster*, we've got it easy.

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## MOVIE INFO

**Rating:** ☆☆☆ 1/2

**Cast:** Colin Farrell, Rachel Weisz, Léa Seydoux, Ben Whishaw, John C. Reilly, Olivia Colman, Angeliki Papoulia.

**Director:** Yorgos Lanthimos.

**Screenwriters:** Yorgos Lanthimos, Efthymis Filippou.

An A24 Films release. Running time: 118 minutes. Vulgar language, sexual situations, brief violence, adult themes. Plays at 7 p.m. Tuesday March 8 at Tower Theater and 9:15 p.m. Friday March 11 at Regal South Beach as part of the Miami International Film Festival.