

Movie Draft: *If You Knew Suzie...*

by Joe Mulder

(*If You Knew Suzie...* is one of five made-up films generated during PoopReading.com's recent [Movie Draft](#).)

Meryl Streep tackles yet another real-life woman as the titular college professor in *If You Knew Suzie...*, out in theaters this Friday. Streep plays Suzie Allard of the University of Tennessee's School of Informatics, a consultant who helps scientists and academics communicate complicated (yet important) ideas to the public at large.

The real-life Allard is fictionalized in newcomer Mike Wagner's surreal yet engaging script as any scientist's one-way ticket to fame, fortune, grant money and an appearance on the monthly "Science Chat" segment of America's favorite daytime talk show, "Oprah" – er... "Oppez" (Mo'Nique).

It turns out that if Sylvester Morgan (Morgan Freeman) knew Suzie, he might be able to find the key to a new process of his that, as he dryly attempts to explain it, "temporarily arrests the metabolic processes of organic material on a cellular level." In layman's terms, he can "freeze" any living thing for approximately two minutes, with no ill effects. His only problem is the inability to control when this occurs in any predictable fashion.

Suzie is there to help, and through her Sylvester meets Curie Applewhite (Maggie Gyllenhaal), a brilliant young M.I.T. grad student whose research just may hold the solution to Sylvester's problems. A complication arises, however; Curie is the daughter Sylvester never knew he had. And isn't sure he wants.

(And while Gyllenhaal is a bit – shall we say – pale to play Morgan Freeman's daughter, if we survived eight seasons of "The Cosby Show" we can survive this)

Suzie Allard eventually convinces a reluctant Sylvester appear on "Oppez" where, much to his chagrin, his scientific breakthrough is ignored as his family drama becomes the story.

Mo'Nique is offered the opportunity to do a hilarious but affectionate send-up of Oprah Winfrey, and the former stand up comic is more than up to the task. Maggie Gyllenhaal is her usual charming self, and Streep is, as always, a lot of fun. But perhaps most remarkably on display in *If You Knew Suzie...* – and for the first time in this film critic's memory – are the considerable comedic talents of Freeman, who hasn't been asked to be funny even in the sporadic appearances he's made in comedies over the years (*Nurse Betty*, *Bruce Almighty*). Freed from the dreary gravitas of his typical Oscar-bait fare, Freeman buries his natural grace (no mean feat, one imagines) behind an amusing nervousness that he plays for laughs to great effect.

The pacing and tone in *If You Knew Suzie...* are all over the map, but intentionally so, as the film keeps you guessing the whole way through. The viewer is never sure, from one scene to the next, whether he'll end up laughing, cringing, or scratching his head and muttering "huh?" It's a rare film these days that gives you more than you saw coming, and in this respect *If You Knew Suzie...* more than delivers. Far from being standard fare, the movie becomes a rumination on the very nature of science, family, philosophy, religion, popular culture, and modern existence itself. Apart from the wonderful cast, the star of the picture is probably Mike Wagner's script; it's as though he tossed Charlie Kaufman, Søren Kierkegaard, and "Dilbert" creator Scott Adams into a blender and hit "liquify." The result is as delicious as it is thought-provoking.

If You Knew Suzie... is rated NC-17, due in large part to the realistic and horrifying onscreen violence of the "blender" scene.
