

“Cold Souls”, director Sophie Barthes movie came from a dream!

Contributed by Stan Robinson
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In “Cold Souls”, Paul Giamatti stars as himself, an actor in rehearsals for a Russian play and suffering from anxiety. An article in the New Yorker about a high-tech company promising to alleviate suffering by extracting souls for a time to be restored later catches his eye. Giamatti signs up for their service, with the thought that once the play is over, he would get his soul back. Complications develop when Giamatti's stored soul is missing, the target of an ambitious and talentless Russian soap-opera actress who wants his soul to become a big star!

Writer/director Sophie Barthes told me the idea for “Cold Souls” came to her in a dream with Woody Allen as the central character, holding a box, which contained a soul! Her first draft was written with Woody Allen in mind, and then the reality of not having access to Woody Allen set in. Seeing Paul's performances in many films, the script was fine tuned with Paul in mind...

Stan: What was Paul's reaction when the central character would be him, an actor who would be playing Paul Giamatti?

Sophie: (laughing) He's very modest and said, “Its not going to be interesting if its about me”, when I gave him the draft of the script, he suggested that a character with a separate set of nuances could certainly be named Paul Giamatti. That's how I reworked the script.

Stan: That must have been a real chore for you, in the course of shooting a scene, what if Paul was being captured over and above the “character Paul”!

Sophie: (again a laugh!) That happened quite often, the character of “Uncle Vanya” in the play that “Character Paul” was trying to capture, frequently had the reaction that “real Paul” might have while trying to find the base of a character in real life and his reactions are priceless!

Stan: That must have been a real challenge because you as director probably didn't want to step into to Paul's private world as a person, yet, the film is about an actor named Paul Giamatti, who can't find the character for the play he's rehearsing, and decides that maybe he should put his soul in storage to better become the character in the play!

Sophie: We didn't do a lot of rehearsing, Paul and I talked about the aspects of “character Paul”, blocked a lot of the movement around the set, and worked out what “character Paul's” reactions should be relating to the aspects of souls, storage, and what would be the mind set of a person who might not get his soul back!

Stan: That aspect appealed to me, “Cold Souls” didn't get moralistic, and took on a “cloak & dagger” light heartedness when “character Paul” sets out to Russia to get his soul back!

Sophie: I wanted to give just enough for the viewer to relate their feelings of the vastness and the complexity of the soul, and through the character, feel his determination at the thought he might lose it, and the all out effort he makes to get it back!

Stan: Sophie Barthes, congratulations on a marvelous film that's entertaining, insightful, and showcases the talent of Paul Giamatti!

“Cold Souls”, starring Paul Giamatti, Dina Korzun, David Strathairn and Emily Watson.
 Written and Directed by Sophie Barthes; Rated PG-13 for nudity and brief strong language; Samuel Goldwyn Films release; Runtime: 101 minutes.