

# DON'T WORRY, SHE'S HAPPY

*After dark times onscreen and off, MICHELLE WILLIAMS comes waltzing back in a Canadian film*  
BY KATE RAE

**WE ALL KNOW THE BACKSTORY:** A HANDSOME STAR, an accidental overdose, a beautiful woman in mourning, a sweet blond baby. It was the lurid stuff of tabloid editors' dreams, and, four years later, Michelle Williams is still affected by what they've put her through. It comes out in tiny ways (a description of her favourite Toronto restaurant, Swan, includes the adjective "safe") and in large, angry ones, such as when she speaks of her six-year-old daughter Matilda Ledger appearing in the celebrity weeklies. "I think that any mother would cancel her subscription if she thought about the actual cost of those pictures," she says. "These magazines would go out of business."

Now the familiar tale has a new chapter—and it's a love story. Earlier this year, Williams began dating Jason Segel. She was soon seen with him on casual strolls and at industry events alike, smiling brightly on the *How I Met Your Mother* actor's arm. After everything she's been through, it feels good to think she's happy again.

This obsession with new love equalling salvation, solution, the cure for sad, is tackled in Williams' new film *Take This Waltz*, a Canadian indie directed by Sarah Polley, opening June 29. In it, Williams plays Margot, a young woman married to a guy who is goofy and kind and hilarious (played beautifully here by Seth Rogen)—the type who you feel smug about choosing when your friends come over to cry because the asshole they >

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PHOTOGRAPHY: ALEXEI HAY; EDITOR: RYAN PORTER



THE MY WEEK WITH MARILYN PRESS CONFERENCE IN TOKYO



ON SET WITH SETH ROGEN IN TAKE THIS WALTZ



WILLIAMS AND NEW BOYFRIEND JASON SEGEL



RUNWAY READY: H&M BESPOKE AT THE BAFTAS AND IN LOUIS VUITTON AT THE OSCARS



LAUGHING WITH BFF BUSY PHILIPPS

slept with on the weekend never called them back. Five years into the marriage, their relationship has settled into a repetitive, dreary box step, tripping over each other's toes any time they try to reignite the physical side of their relationship.

It's fine, she thinks, it's enough—until a sexy neighbour (played by Hamilton-born actor Luke Kirby) shows an unflinching interest in Margot, shining a light on what her marriage is missing. It's a tale of infidelity, marriage, monogamy—and what we settle for as women.

"You deserve more than just somebody who's nice to you," Williams says. "I think that so often these days, niceness seems like it should be enough because it seems like such a rare quality, but when you get inside of it, you think, *Hmm... I can be pretty nice to myself. What about these other things?* Life is too short and too crappy to not try to get more of what you want."

The film traces Margot's transition from a baby-talking girl ("So creepy, right?" says Williams) to a blatantly sexual woman—and it doesn't shy away from the pain of the journey. "I thought about [*Take This Waltz*] as a coming-of-age story," she says. "Not in the pubescent way, but a girl on the verge of becoming a woman, of that transition that you make in your late 20s or early 30s. She's yet to experience a great kind of sadness. And I think that that's the thing that kind of plants her into adulthood."

You could call Williams the wildly successful, unofficial poster child for playing tragic women. There was her Oscar-nominated performance as Cindy, the exhausted, frustrated wife in *Blue Valentine*. This year she was nominated again for playing the confused, miserable icon in *My Week with Marilyn*. And now there's Margot, a young woman realizing that the old "marry someone who loves you more than you love them" adage might not be the way to go, after all.

When asked if she plans on making a sunny, fluffy rom-com anytime soon, Williams laughs—that's pretty

much what she thought *Take This Waltz* would be. "I said to a friend very excitedly, 'I'm taking a lighter turn! I'm making this funny movie with Sarah Silverman and Seth Rogen!'" The friend borrowed the script; Williams later found her reading it in tears. "Michelle," she asked. "When do I get to the funny part?"

It looks like the clouds are parting on her next project: She recently wrapped the upcoming *Oz: The Great and Powerful*, in which she plays Glinda the Good Witch. "She was exactly what I was hoping for," she says. "The exact antidote for the work I've been doing the past few years." And now, there is a blessed break, a summer in which she has no plans, one in which she hopes to experience a little bit of the magic she found when shooting *Take This Waltz* in Toronto two years ago. "We lived in a wonderful neighbourhood," says Williams. "And my daughter, we both just had a really beautiful summer. We did the cottage country thing. I don't know of anything like that in America." (During these lazy summer days, she abides by one simple rule: "You should never wear jewellery in the summer. You should always be ready to jump into a lake at any time.")

The more we talk, the more I realize that there's a simple reason why her people have instructed us to not ask about her personal life: The truth is, it's none of our business. "I need to keep my life very separate," she says, unapologetically. "I live and love and make decisions from a very comfortable and removed place. That's how it works for me."

She means, of course, that she doesn't want to talk about her daughter, or her love life. I try, a bit clumsily, to explain the feeling that people have knowing that she is coming out of a bad time—hoping that she has, maybe, found happiness. People just kind of want to know that you're okay, I say. "That... that makes me teary eyed," she says, exhaling. "That sentiment I appreciate so much." □