


REVIEW: Noah Baumbach's stylish 'White Noise' is a delightful adaptation



TOKYO: Noah Baumbach's heart-warming and stylish "White Noise," which played at the Tokyo International Film Festival after it premiered in Venice, was adapted from the 1985 novel by Don DeLillo and is a delightful work.

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Set to hit Netflix on Dec. 30, it is an entertaining take on the kind of disillusionment and anxiety Western philosophy has led to, including delicious commentary on hyper-consumerism and facing one's mortality.

The film follows university professor Jack Gladney, played by the supremely talented Adam Driver, as his family's life is upended when a nearby chemical leak causes "The Airborne Toxic Event," releasing a noxious black cloud over the region.

The middle-aged professor in midwestern America has a sweet, accommodating wife, Babette (Greta Gerwig). Both have had failed marriages with the current one being their fourth, and they live with their children — the ever-analytical Heinrich (Sam Nivola), a sensitive daughter named Steffie (May Nivola), sharp 11-year-old Denise (Raffey Cassidy) and a beaming cherub named Wilder make up the curios pack.

DeLillo's humorous and loud novel was sought after by moviemakers for decades. However, Baumbach pipped many to the post by turning in a lovely adaptation of the chaotic novel.

The work resonates with the era of COVID-19 as depression, fear, fake news and television conspiracies take hold in a film that features a host of beautifully fleshed out supporting characters played by the likes of Jodie Turner-Smith, André L. Benjamin, New York theatre director Sam Gold and Don Cheadle, who gives a fantastic intellectual caricature of a college professor.

A charming work — and Baumbach's third for Netflix — it does begin to feel a tad stretched as it moves along. The conspiracy theories and early anxiety about death, as well as a tangent focusing on Babette's addiction to an experimentative drug, all seem to pull "White Noise" in too many directions and the lack of focus is troubling. But Driver's wonderful performance is a great lift as he essays a man plagued by one issue after another.
