

Entertainment Weekly

Fields of Gold

An independent gem that plays like a romantic immigrant song.

By Owen Gleiberman

Sweet Land

Elizabeth Reaser, Tim Guinee
PG, 110 min. (Libero)

If Terrence Malick could ever banish the wispy art clouds from his brain and give in to the storyteller inside, perhaps he might make a movie as stirring as *Sweet Land*. I want to be absolutely clear about what an independent triumph this is. The writer-director, Ali Selim, has taken a low budget, two characters who barely speak broken English (and therefore spend a lot of time saying nothing), and a pace that's rigorously true to the rhythms of rural life in 1920, and he has forged a visually indelible movie that's a grand dream of the American past—a tale that links up with the images so many of us have of our relatives and ancestors: the nation's seed sowers.



Inge (Elizabeth Reaser), who grew up in Norway but speaks only German, arrives on the dappled plains of Minnesota toting a Victrola but without her papers, so when she connects with Olaf (Tim Guinee), the dour, strapping Norwegian farmer it has been arranged for her to marry, the two aren't allowed to go through with the ceremony. Instead, they co-exist in an awkward limbo, which turns out to be God's romantic gift to them. Selim unveils an organic community: the farmers and capitalist land scavengers, the beauty of making a pie, the brute hardship of harvesting a corn crop the size of several baseball fields. *Sweet*

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Land is a movie of incredible tenderness, in which Reaser and Guinee, using a language of looks, make you happy to think about what love once might have been.

GRADE: A

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