

GUARDIAN

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**Capsule Review: Cheryl Eddy
(FILM PICK)**

Tone: Positive

The end of the year is always choked with Oscar bait and family fare; *Sweet Land*, being neither, is in danger of getting stomped on by dreamgirls and dragons.

At first glance, this gentle film about first-generation immigrant farmers in 1920s Minnesota resembles something you'd see on the Hallmark Channel, but there's more heart than sap at work here.

Wide-eyed Inge (Elizabeth Reaser) arrives in America tot-

ing a Victrola and speaking not 10 words of English (though she quickly learns "I could eat a horse!"). Her intended, Olaf (Tim Guinee), is painfully shy and cares only about working his land.

When it's revealed that Inge doesn't have the proper identification papers — compounded by the fact that she's of German descent, which horrifies the xenophobic community — the local minister (John Heard) refuses to marry the pair.

The gettin'-to-know-ya that follows is pretty much the entire plot, which is framed by possibly unnecessary bumper scenes

with Inge facing life alone as an elderly woman and her grandson dealing with her eventual death.

Reasons to seek out Ali Selim's low-key film: it weaves a love story that actually feels genuine, and it's beautifully shot and acted (supporting players include Ned Beatty and producer Alan Cumming).

Reaser's Independent Spirit Award-nominated performance is reason enough to give *Sweet Land* your consideration.

