

Take Shelter

reviewed by [John Petrakis](#) in the [November 29, 2011](#) issue

Take Shelter deals with the end of the world in a creepier and even more metaphoric manner than von Trier's *Melancholia*. The story revolves around Curtis (Michael Shannon), whose placid working-class life with his loving wife (Jessica Chastain) and deaf daughter in rural Ohio is suddenly interrupted by a series of disturbing images, most of them suggesting an approaching storm. These images, which no one else but Curtis seems to see, soon begin to invade his dreams, where they are accompanied by violent scenes.

Though Curtis fears that his obsessive visions and dreams are a sign of impending mental illness, which runs in his family, he feels he can't take a chance. So he decides to spend money he doesn't have to build a huge underground shelter in his backyard to protect his family from the impending apocalypse.

Take Shelter is a masterful work. Its beauty lies in the subtle way it sucks the audience in, opening up doors of possibility that we weren't aware of ten minutes earlier. The story gets complicated as family members, co-workers and doctors get thrown into the mix.

Through it all, Curtis stands tall, like a prophet of the Old Testament. We sense that his shelter is like an ark, built airtight to survive the flood and save those he loves. Whether it's paranoia or divine intervention, Curtis keeps hammering away.