

People Like Us

reviewed by [Steve A. Vineberg](#) in the [August 22, 2012](#) issue

Though this movie wants to be about and for adults, it's hamstrung by the soap-opera mentality of its writers, Roberto Orci and Jody Lambert, and its director, Alex Kurtzman. It's about Sam, a young salesman (Chris Pine) who has estranged himself from his emotionally unavailable father, an LA music producer. When his father dies, he reluctantly flies out to see his mother (Michelle Pfeiffer), arriving too late for the funeral. There he finds himself the unwilling emissary for his dad's last request: to deliver an envelope full of cash to Frankie (Elizabeth Banks), the sister Sam never knew he had.

Kurtzman does a fine job with all the actors, including Olivia Wilde as Sam's girl friend and Michael Hall D'Addario as Frankie's angry young son, who has trouble living in his own skin. But the writers keep resisting their own dramatic arc, which seems to be about Sam's recognition that he's alarmingly like his father. Instead they cop out and soften the figure of the father. [Take This Waltz](#) fumbles but strives to be honest; *People Like Us* is essentially fraudulent.