

“ALL ABOUT EVIL” (Film/Road Show Review)

Written by Samuel Zimmerman
Friday, 06 August 2010 11:18



These days, unfortunately, the words “theatrical experience” tend to call up the feeling you get when threatening the lives of whichever pack of 14-year-olds snuck in and won’t stop texting/answering their phones/making incredibly obvious observations through whichever not-worth-\$12 movie you’re seeing. It’s becoming increasingly hard to get an entire audience on the same page, and I, for one, really miss the communal aspect of laughing, gasping or collectively going crazy at whatever’s displayed up on the screen.

It looks like a few films this year have been and will be able to bring a little of that back. INCEPTION, for example, had everyone stunned into silence and crying out upon its last scene, and it seems they should be handing out 40 oz’s along with tickets to PIRANHA 3D. But those are both big films with easy accessibility. ALL ABOUT EVIL, on the other hand, has its own grassroots midnight road show touring across the country, and if you’re patient enough to wait for it to hit your city, it will be totally worth the wait.



ALL ABOUT EVIL is the feature-film debut of Joshua Grannell, who’s probably better known for his alter ego, the larger-than-life midnight-movie drag-queen hostess Peaches Christ. Set in Grannell’s home of San Francisco, the film follows Deborah Tennis (Natasha Lyonne), a timid, introverted librarian who must take over the responsibilities and financial concerns of her late father’s movie theater. In order to draw crowds, she turns to making her own horror shorts to play before repertory and midnight classics—the only catch being her filmed murders are all too real. As her ego inflates and pretensions rise, Deborah starts referring to herself as De-bor-ah and assembles a crew of crazies—including DEADGIRL’s Noah Segan as the effeminate and violently insane Adrian, and Nikita and Jade Ramsey as murderous twins Veda and Vera—to help with production and her ultimate master plan. De-bor-ah’s biggest fan, Steven (Thomas Dekker), finds her out and sets out to stop her while everyone suspects him of the mounting disappearances.

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While you might be able to squeeze out some sort of message about bloodthirsty audiences, ALL ABOUT EVIL is, at heart, downright silly. It's a bloodsoaked dark comedy with outrageous characters and actors who are clearly relishing the chance to play them up. And that's what makes the film work: Everyone on screen is clearly having the time of their lives. Lyonne is hilarious, especially as she switches on the self-importance (and starts naming her shorts after classic literature, “A Tale of Two Severed Titties” being particularly unforgettable). Although his screen time is sadly limited, Segan's skuzzy hipster henchman—whose face consistently looks like he's simultaneously posing for a Facebook photo and suffering from scurvy—is a scene-stealer. It's the Ramsey twins who truly stand out, though: These beautiful and murderous girls do a lot with facial expressions and screen presence, despite having very little dialogue.

The colorful villains go a long way toward masking some of ALL ABOUT EVIL's faults, notably the fact that it's very much a surface-level movie (but so are most midnight exploitation romps—and besides, “A Tale of Two Severed Titties” is pure genius) and it's quite easy to forget about the protagonists throughout. But this also works in ALL ABOUT EVIL's favor. Even if those roles aren't particularly memorable, Grannell understands that not everyone in the film can be at “11,” and considering that even Peaches “herself” has a cameo, there had to be room for people who find the goings-on just as ridiculous as we do.

And speaking of ridiculous, the film is currently rolling across the nation in weekend midnight shows, many showcasing “The Peaches Christ Experience in 4-D”—which, if you can, is the absolute best way to see the film. The New York City stop, held at the Landmark Sunshine theater, was particularly lively, thanks to the added attraction of Lyonne in attendance and a very high-energy crowd. There was an intro by local director Alan Rowe Kelly, two musical numbers (complete with dancing monsters, trolls and drag versions of Vera and Veda), a very well-edited and -humored Lyonne clip reel and a live recreation of one of ALL ABOUT EVIL's scenes.

I'm curious to see Grannell's next endeavor, as it's more than evident that he knows how to do comedy right and work with actors. The true test will be to see how ALL ABOUT EVIL plays without the “Peaches Christ Experience,” or even just at home. I suspect, though, that if you grab a few beers and a few friends, it should work just fine.

You can find all the upcoming dates for ALL ABOUT EVIL's tour [here](#) . It really is the perfect way to get into the spirit of it all.

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