

FILM REVIEW: The Substance (Coralie Fargeat), 2024

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

â??Have you ever dreamt of a better version of yourself? You. Only better in every way. Seriously. Youâ??ve got to try this new product. Itâ??s called The Substance.â?•



The Substance Writer/Director, Coralie Fargeat gave the Cinema Society a master class on film construction in a Q & A moderated by Santa Barbara International Film Festivalâ??s Executive

Director Roger Durling, at the Riviera Theatre, November 22, 2024, in Santa Barbara, California. (Photo by Larry Gleeson/HollywoodGlee)

Sometimes itâ??s better to be lucky than goodâ?¦I went to the Riviera Theatre to watch The Substance. It turned out to be a SBIFF Cinema Society ($$) screening. By the time I entered the screening. The few remaining seats were upfront.Viewing *The Substance* from the front row would be akin to viewing a Cinerama from the front row. I had extreme reactions from a feeling I was about to vomit to a deep feeling of ecstatic joy from the visual stimulations â?? utterly unparallelled in my experience. The Substance vacillates between drama, psychological horror, dark comedy, monster horror, and body horror.Admittedly, I had not experienced much cinema in the form of body horror until recently. I had the distinct pleasure of seeing David Cronenbergâ??s *The Shrouds* at the recent AFI FEST 2o24 at the TC Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, Calif.

Writer/Director Coralie Fargeat has created a visual masterpiece with an undulating soundtrack in *The Substance* starring Demi Moore, Margaret Qualley, and Dennis Quaid. Moore portrays an aged actress, Elisabeth, relegated to leading televised Jane Fonda-like aerobics classes to a national audience.Elisabeth is involved in a smash up car crash on her birthday. Miraculously, she survives the crash with shaken sensibilities and no apparent physical complications. After the initial exam, a young physician feels the spinal cord and utters, â??youâ??d be a fine candidate.â?•

This is the moment. Elisabeth ponders the experience and arrives back to her high-rise condominium with floor to ceiling glass view of the cityscape, In her direct line of sight is a massive billboard of herself in a Columbian Blue aerobicsâ?? instructor leotard. Elisabeth makes the call for The Substance, a procedure that promises to make Elisabeth young again. What transpires could be seen as cliche were it not for the dynamic visual storytelling. Iâ??ve seen a lot of films, and I have never had such a visceral response to a film.

The performances were highly nuanced and beyond the realm of normalcy. Quaid is a sight-to-behold in numerous extreme, wide-angle closeups focusing on everything from his feet to his hair on the top of his head as well as smacking chops as he ravages shrimp and dip. The French filmmakers have an extraordinary fetish with photographing food as itâ??s being devoured, in my filmic experiences. As for Margaret Qualley, Fargeat creates a phenomenal physicality with Qualleyâ??s impressive screen presence.

However, the star goes to Moore and her character, Elisabeth (pun intended). Moore is not only a mature, veteran actress with time and again proven chops, she is a tour-de-force in *The Substance*. A visual nod was given in *The Substance* with female gaze to Mooreâ??s Vanity Fair cover featuring a bared, very pregnant Moore. one of numerous nuances Fargeat injects.

The Substance is an extraordinary film with an exceptional mise-en-scen and soundtrack. Fargeatâ??s attention to detail in a highly constructed mise-en-scen allowed the narrative to unfold in exquisite cinematic language. With a runtime of 140 minutes, viewers with a faint of heart, the temptation to vacate may enter the imagination. Trust me, the end is well worth staying for. Absolutely brilliant.



â??Have you ever dreamt of a better version of yourself? You. Only better in every way. Seriously. Youâ??ve got to try this new product. Itâ??s called The Substance. It changed my life. It generates another you. A new, younger, more beautiful, more perfect, you. And thereâ??s only one rule: You share time. One week for you. One week for the new you. Seven days each. A perfect balance. Easy. Right? If you respect the balanceâ?¦ what could possibly go wrong?â?• â??Festival Cannes

Category

1. #SBIFF
2. Cinema Society

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