



Film Review: Phantom Thread (Anderson, 2017): USA

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

Paul Thomas Anderson's (*There Will Be Blood*, *Punch Drunk Love*, *The Master*) latest addition to an already strong body of work lifts his art and craft to a higher level with the film, [*Phantom Thread*](#). Starring standout British actor (though he resides in New York) and three-time, Leading Actor Academy Award Winner, Daniel Day-Lewis, as a fastidious and renowned, 1950s British dressmaker, Reynolds Woodcock, *Phantom Thread* is essentially a traditional romantic piece delivering a sweet twist.



Daniel Day-Lewis and Lesley Manville as Reynolds Woodcock and his sister, Cyril, in Paul Thomas Anderson's *Phantom Thread*.

In addition to Day-Lewis, up-and-coming actress Vicky Krieps (*Pitter Patter Goes My Heart*) holds her own and then some as Day-Lewis's onscreen counterpart, Alma, a waitress who first becomes Woodcock's mistress and eventually his wife. Throughout the film Alma is portrayed as Woodcock's undoubted muse and unrelinquished lover. In addition to Krieps and Day-Lewis,

Phantom Thread features the talented and award winning British stage and screen actress, Lesley Manville (*Another Year*, *Topsy-Turvy*) as Reynolds's icy sister, Cyril. Cyril is the business manager of the dressmaking House of Woodcock. All three deliver mesmerizing acting performances as a sorted macabre triumvirate. Day-Lewis, considered by many to be the greatest living actor and known for his role-immersive approach to acting, made an announcement this would be his last film due to being overly straight emotionally with sadness from his work in *Phantom Thread*.



Phantom Thread Director, Paul Thomas Anderson.

Anderson, an American filmmaker, wrote, directed and, is also listed as Director Of Photography, (uncredited) on IMDb. Anderson delivers an exquisite *Phantom Thread* mise-en-scene aided immensely by Mark Tildesley's lovely production design brings to fruition the 1950's London interior. Johnny Greenwood delivers a composite musical score augmenting the delicate moments the film offers up while affectively accentuating the darker moments. Along with Day-Lewis and Manville, both Greenwood and Tildesley hail from Great Britain.



Daniel Day-Lewis as Reynolds Woodcock in Paul Thomas Anderson's *Phantom Thread*.

However, the real treat of the film is to watch Day-Lewis channel Woodcock's couturier passion and artistry. Woodcock has developed a habit, steeped in female superstition, of stitching secret messages

into his creations. Taught by his mother and with an astute attention to detail and uncompromising approach to design, Woodcock creates original masterpieces reflecting his commitment and energy. One especially charged scenes has Woodcock, in pursuit, creating a dress for Alma as part of the romantic courtship process. Before becoming Mrs. Woodcock, Alma would first become a fashion model and a integral part of Woodcockâ??s stable of seamstresses under the watchful eye of Woodcock and his sister, Cyril.



Daniel Day-Lewis, left, and Vicky Krieps in Paul Thomas Andersonâ??s *Phantom Thread*

While *Phantom Thread* lacks a traditional Hollywood narrative structure, it stands proudly on its own as an art cinema film. Andersonâ??s stylistic choices include a non-linear narrative structure employing the use of flashback. One technique I found particularly interesting is his crafty use of the journalistic interview. The ambiguous ending left not a trace of doubt to the filmâ??s art cinema characteristics and trademark values. As for the directorâ??s intent, I speculate some self-reflexivity with the directorâ??s first two initials, P.T., being the first letters in the filmâ??s title, *Phantom Thread*. Andersonâ??s long-time (since 2001), relationship partner is actress and comedian, Maya Rudolph.

While *Phantom Thread* may be difficult for some to follow due to its non-linear structure, it delivers an exquisite reflection on the art of romantic relationship through a 1950â??s London dressmaker vehicle. The filmâ??s run time is a little heavy at 130 minutes. Yet, it is not tiring. Rather, it is majestic. One of the yearâ??s best films. Highly recommended.

Category

1. Art Cinema
2. Feature Film

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