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FILM REVIEW: The Love Witch (Biller, 2016): USA

Description

Viewed by Larry Gleeson.

The Love Witch is the second feature film from Anna Biller and it recently received distribution from Oscilloscope Laboratories. Oscilloscope Laboratories is scheduled to release *The Love Witch* in 35mm in Los Angeles at the Landmark Nuart on November 11th and in New York on November 18th, with additional screenings in select theaters across the country.

Billerâ??s first feature was *Viva*(2007), a dramedy musical about two Los Angeles suburbanites who experiment with drugs, sex and bohemia in the 1970â??s. Both films are shot in 35mm. Biller wrote, directed and produced *The Love Witch* and also made many of the props and paintings and is credited with Costuming and Production Design. Biller also devoted time and efforts to the filmâ??s musical score and composition and has quickly become known for using classic and outdated film genres to communicate the feminine role within contemporary culture. Interestingly, with *The Love Witch* Biller creates a visual style that pays tribute to the Technicolor thrillers of the 1960â??s while exploring aspects of female fantasy along with the repercussions of pathological narcissism.

In the filmâ??s opening, blood-red, gothic text provides introductory credits. Soon we see the filmâ??s protagonist Elaine, a stunningly, good-looking young witch, played by the svelte Samantha Robinson, driving in a mint-condition, red mustang convertible from the mid-to-late 1960â??s. An inner voice-over narration informs the viewer Elaine is leaving the city (San Francisco) driving into the redwoods where no one will know her. A flashback to the scene of her former husband Jerryâ??s death and more voice-over indicate Elaine suffered a nervous breakdown after he â??left herâ?• and sheâ??s under suspicion.

As Elaine is driving the Mustang convertible in the first scene Biller appears to pay homage to Hitchcockâ??s *Psycho* with some nice camera work from cinematographer M. David Mullen with a police cruiser appearing in the rear view mirror coupled with a closeup of an eyeball. Other closeups are provided in this sequence of a Tarot deck and a heart card with swords through it as well as an opened pack of cigarettes. It becomes quite clear Elaine is hell-bent on having a man to love her.

Without much adieu, Elaine moves into a small-town (presumably in or near Eureka, California) and holes up in a three-story, royal purple Victorian home. Her friend Barbara, another witch, played by Jennifer Ingrum, has made available an apartment space within. The apartment dÃ©cor seemed rather peculiar to the interior decorator, Trish, played by Laura Waddell, who welcomed Elaine and showed her the place. Trish commented she had decorated the apartment with the peculiar color scheme from a soft tarot deck while Barbara and â??her studentsâ?• provided the occult paintings and other similarly

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Biller makes an interesting choice with her filmmaking in the next scene as she makes a leap, or jump cut, to a lavish Victorian Tea Room for Ladies Only after Elaine said sheâ??d only need a moment to freshen up. The costuming and visual colors are alluring and highly feminine complete with a golden-haired harpist maiden and large pastel-colored hats. Here Elaine reveals she has fairy princess fantasies and that all women are just little girls underneath with dreams of a prince carrying them off on a white horse. Trish agrees she has those fantasies too â?? commenting about how ridiculous it all is. After a slight pause Elaine confides she doesnâ??t think sheâ??s found her Prince Charming yet. However, she believes sheâ??s discovered the formula as sheâ??s been studying parapsychology and now knows everything there is to know about men.

Her â??formulaâ?• are spells and potions she conjures up in her apartment. She then proceeds to pick up her unsuspecting male victims, seduce them and leaves them forlorn and hapless. Finally, she at last meets her Prince Charming. However, her overriding and desperate need to be loved drives her to the edge of insanity and to murder.

The Love Witch is a beautifully lush film with its lavish, fetish costuming and meticulous set designs. It also has a 1960â??s look and feel despite its contemporary setting and it makes extensive use of high-key lighting as it delves into female culturally defined roles with entrancing scene work. These filmmaking techniques and production design attributes allow Biller to encode feminist ideas within the frames of cinematic aesthetics and visual pleasure. And even though Biller was making a film for women, I can tell you after seeing this film, itâ??s a film made for men, too, with what could arguably

have the longest running female tampon joke. *The Love Witch* is wholeheartedly recommended and dare I sayâ?¦. â??a film to die for.â?• Itâ??s intriguing and, in my opinion, itâ??s fun!

Again, the film will be screening in Los Angeles at the Landmark Nuart on November 11th and in New York on November 18th, with additional screenings in select theaters across the country. Hope to see you there.

(Press materials provided courtesy of Marina Bailey PR)

Category

1. Feature Film
2. Uncategorized

Tags

1. Anna Biller
2. Cinema
3. female fantasy
4. Film
5. Filmmaking
6. Oscilloscope
7. pathological narcissism
8. Technicolor
9. The Love Witch
10. Viva (2007)

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