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# FILM REVIEW: Nocturnal Animals (Ford, 2016): USA

## Description

Viewed by Larry Gleeson at Venice Film Festival.

Fashion Designer and Film Director Tom premiered his new film, *Nocturnal Animals*, at the Sala Grande Theater during the 73rd Venice International Film Festival. *Nocturnal Animals* received the Silver Lion â?? Grand Jury Prize (generally considered runner-up to the Golden Lion â?? Best Film). This was Fordâ??s second feature film. His first film was the critically acclaimed*, A Single Man* (2009) starring Colin Firth. Firth receiving an Oscar nomination for Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role for his efforts.

*Nocturnal Animals*, is a tale of redemption, revenge, love and cruelty. Ford opens the film with a strong musical score to reveal rotund, morbidly obese girls dancing topless upon pedestals seemingly pretending to be debutantes. Adding to the fanfare special effect confetti drops down and through the frame. All-American girls showcasing their goods and talents. Bordering on the macabre, the tone for the film has been set.

Hollywood, A-lister Amy Adams plays a real-life West Texas debutante, Susan Morrow, who lives an unfulfilling life of daunting privilege with her handsome husband, Hutton Morrow, played by Armie Hammer. As Hutton prepares for yet another last-minute weekend high-finance business meeting in New York relationship fissures widen. A pensive Susan reflects on the state of her union with Hutton after a â??not-so-discreetâ?? phone conversation from Huttonâ??s elevator arriving at a penthouse suite amid feminine gaiety as she opens a plain, white, mail shipping box. Susan opens the box to a black and white manuscript titled, â??Nocturnal Animals,â?• by Edward Sheffield, Susanâ??s former husband and first true love.

In dramatic fashion, Ford begins a journey into the past yet grounded in the present as the manuscript opens up a world fictional, yet etched within Susanâ??s consciousness. Using parallel storylines, present and fictional coupled with flashbacks to when Edward and Susan first met and the ensuing courtship and short-lived marriage. Laura Linney, plays Susanâ??s West Texas Republican mother, and delivers some of the filmâ??s more memorable lines during a martini lunch where she unleashes her verbal diatribe lambasting Susan for even considering a marriage to â??weakâ?? Edward. Notwithstanding, however, the real storytelling takes place within the pages of the manuscript. Self-reflective and dramatic the narrative is full of conflict and escalating tensions as a husband and wife, Tony and Laura Hastings, played respectively by Jake Gyllenhaal and Isla Fisher, travel at night across rural West Texas with their teenage daughter, India, played by Ellie Bamber. Without even as much as a lit billboard, out of a pitch dark blackness a vehicle approaches the familyâ??s suburban mid-sized car at a high-rate of speed. The car is driven erratically and its occupants are behaving wildly as they pass. Not too much to worry about until they decide to force the Hastings car off the road. Mayhem ensues as the hellions carjack the Hastings vehicle with the women inside leaving Tony on the side of the road in the dark by his lonesome. Soon a vehicle returns to pick up Tony. Heâ??s informed he gang leader wants to make amends and that Laura and India want Tony brought to where they are being held hostage. Fearing the worst Tony manages to escape and eventually makes his way to a law enforcement office to make an abduction/missing persons report to lawman Bobby Andes, played by Michael Shannon. Susan is shocked and awed at the power of Edwardâ??s writing and the visceral strength of Edwardâ??s character, Tony. By the end of the manuscript, Susanâ??s life perspective has shifted as she and Edward make plans to meet.

Unquestionably, Ford delivers an emotional and psychological thriller with *Nocturnal Animals.* Superb acting, exquisite production values and strong storytelling are the filmâ??s hallmarks. Shane Valentino (Straight Outta Compton) handled the filmâ??s production design. Seamus McGarvey (*Godzilla, Atonement, The Avengers)* provided the cinematography. Costuming was assembled by Arianne Phillips (*Kingsman: The Secret Service, Walk The Line, 3:10 To Yuma*). Abel Korzeniowski (*A Single Man, We*) orchestrated the music. Along with directing Ford takes a screenplay writing credit along with Austin Wright, the author of â??Tony and Susan,â?• for writing the novel the film is based on. Nevertheless, the Casting Director, Francine Maisler (*The Revenant, Birdman, The Big Short, 12 Years a Slave*) and performances by the actors are above and beyond. This is a Donâ??t Miss film waiting for Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences nominations. The Oscars.

**Category**

1. Venice International Film Festival

**Tags**

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