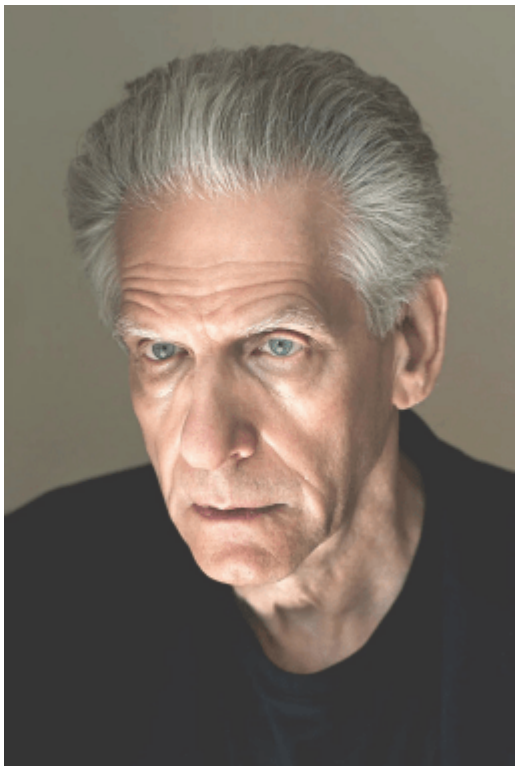
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FILM REVIEW: The Shrouds (David Cronenberg): 2024

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson



David Cronenberg

Canadian Auteur Director David Cronenbergâ??s latest fare, *The Shrouds*, debuted in competition at Cannes, made its LA Premiere during the American Film Instituteâ??s 2024 AFI FEST in Hollywood, Calif., Thursday, October 24, 2024, at the TCL Chinese Theatres. AFI FEST Programmer Malkin Kahn thanked the AFI FEST sponsors, community partners, the audience, festival volunteers, and â??Elmaâ?• before introducing the film. Kahn eloquently delivered a few intimate details of the film such as Cronenbergâ??s impetus was John Donneâ??s poem, â??A Valediction: of Weeping.â?•

According to the Poetry Foundation) â??â?¦Donneâ??s predilection for intricate rhetorical figures, paradoxes, surprising swerves in tone, associative leaps, and ingenious conceits can make them feel artificial, or made of artifice.â?• Cronenbergâ??s *The Shrouds,* follows a similar arc vacillating between the real and the surreal, swerving in tone with associative leaps and his use of ingenious conceits, that not only makes it feel artificial (futuristic) but deeply visceral.

Cronenberg opens the film with an ethereal prologue of an image of some sort of protoplasm floating in the ether. From a brilliantly executed match cut leads the viewer into the real world of Karsh (Vincent Cassel), the filmâ??s protagonist, and his mouth. Karsh is in the dental chair. His dentist has diagnosed Karsh with tooth decay caused by grief. The empathic dentist fixes Karsh up on a blind date with an attractive woman who closely resembles his deceased wife. His date is mortified when Karsh meets his date at a restaurant in the cemetery next to the Grave Tech burial plots. Karsh feels the need to take his date outside for a private viewing of his Grave Tech creation. These early events set the tone of the film and the audience reaction almost overwhelmingly energetic.



Vincent Cassel and Diane Kruger

The filmâ??s plot revolves around Karsh â?? a likely stand-in for Cronenberg himself. Karsh is a prominent businessman, inconsolable since the death of his loving wife (Diane Kruger). Karshâ??s invention of Grave Tech, a revolutionary and controversial technology enables the living to monitor their dear departed on a live-stream feed via a radioactive shroud that could have been designed by YSL. One-night, multiple graves at the Grave Tech burial grounds, including that of Karshâ??s wife (Diane Kruger), are desecrated.

The grave crime sets in motion the theoretical details present In â??*The becoming-body of David Cronenbergâ??s characters,â?• published by* Editor da PUCRS, Rosangela Fachel de Medeiros, describes â??the extreme and visceral wayâ?¦David Cronenberg, a Canadian filmmaker, presents and investigates, in his films, the human body and the sexuality, and what social, cultural and artistic issues involved in this representation as evidence of the potential transformation of the body resulting from biotech advents and interaction with other bodies through violence or sex.â?•



Vincent Cassel and Sandrine Holt

Naturally, any thriller needs conspiracies, and *The Shrouds* has several involving the Russians, the Chinese, Karshâ??s techie brother-in-law (played by Guy Pearce), the environmental movement based out of Iceland, his wifeâ??s physician who also was his wifeâ??s ex-beau, and the role of an angel Hungarian investor and his incredibly seductive wife (portrayed by Sandrine Holt. However, one conspiracy involving Maury and his wife leads to a desperate and wanton coupling between Karsh and Mauryâ??s wife who is also Karshâ??s dead wifeâ??s sister (also portrayed by Kruger). This is where the plot really heats up, literally and figuratively, and begins reconciling the filmâ??s various themes of grief, religion, technology, espionage, capitalism, and environmentalism.



Vincent Cassel and Diane Kruger

With an enthralling runtime of one hour and fifty-six minutes, *The Shrouds* is a wild ride steeped in absurdist, wet-dream-like surrealism. The film boasts a formidable and talented cast with Vincent Cassel, Diane Kruger, Guy Pearce and Sandrine Holt, reinforcing Cronenbergâ??s cinematic vision. Howard Shoreâ??s musical score brings the film home.

Fans of Cronenbergâ??s work will know how fortunate they all are to have the 81-year-old filmmaker making a second film after his â??retirementâ?• announcement at Cannes in 2014. Saint Laurent, the production arm of Yves Saint Laurent, financed and co-produced this riveting flick with SBS Productions, and Prospero Pictures. Other notable Cronenberg films include, *The Fly* (1986), *Crash* (1996), *A History of Violence* (2005), *Eastern Promises* (2007), *Maps to the Stars* (2014), and *Crimes of the Future* (2022).

Highly recommended viewing. *The Shrouds* is slated for a Spring 2025 theatrical release â?? no pun intended.



HollywoodGlee celebrating the start of the 2019 AFI FEST presented by Audi.
(Photo credit: Larry Gleeson)

Category

1. #AFI
2. #AFIFEST
3. American Film Institute
4. TCL Chinese Theatre

Tags

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