

The AFI FEST Interview: PREVENGE Director Alice Lowe

Description

British comedy actress Alice Lowe makes her feature directorial debut with this pitch-black comedic tale of a pregnant woman whose fetus has a lust for killing. Seven months pregnant, Ruth receives murderous instructions from her misanthropic unborn baby, who has a vendetta against society for leaving her fatherless. Coached by the fetus, Ruth lures in unsuspecting victims by using her pregnancy as a cloak of innocence. Who would suspect a mother-to-be of homicide? Commanding a supporting cast of fantastic British actors, Lowe, a triple threat here in the roles of director, writer and actor, shines as Ruth. Lowe even lent some real life inspiration to the part, as she herself was pregnant during the filmâ??s shoot. PREVENGE is a macabre comedy and entertaining revenge that could have only come from the hormone-influenced mind of a pregnant woman.

AFI talked to Lowe about the film, screening as part of AFI FEST 2016â??s Midnight section.



Alice Lowe

AFI: You wrote, directed and acted in the film while you were pregnant. That must have been quite an experience.

Alice Lowe: I actually was incredibly lucky that I had a very healthy, happy pregnancy. I think I may have exorcised any fears I had through making the film. I had huge amounts of energy, which I think was hormonal. I only got very weary by the time we had finished filming, right at the end of the pregnancy. During the shoot, I felt very calm and relaxed. I just felt ecstatic that I was getting to have my cake and eat it â?? have a baby and direct a film. Every day was a joy. I think any filmmaker itching to make a film for many years feels that way when they actually get to shoot. Itâ??s a relief and cathartic. A bit like giving birth. All this stuff bursting to come out of you finally gets release!

In terms of the work, it felt very familiar to me. Low-budget film is my *mÃ©tier* and has been for many years. I felt very at home. Sometimes I forgot I was pregnant and it would be the other actors or crew who would remind me. I think it was weirder for them to be doing stunts or nudity or kissing scenes with a pregnant director/actor than it was for me.



AFI: Were there any major surprises throughout shooting as a first-time feature director?

AL: Post-production was the biggest learning curve for me. Because thatâ??s the side I see least of as an actress. By this time, I had a tiny baby in tow, too. What I really learned was the process you go through in carving out, dismantling and rebuilding the film. Itâ??s really like you are getting to know the film and what it is. In some ways, the film has its own unique personality and you are just discovering it. Itâ??s an exciting process. A bit like being someone who carves wood or cuts gems. You find which way the grain goes and what the best outcome of that grain will be; it tells you which way to go.

Sometimes, the footage is rough and wild and youâ??re trying to tame it. So youâ??re finding these lovely surprises and gems within the footage, and surprising ways it affects your emotion as the film plays out. I guess the thing that most surprised me was the audience liking the film. You have a weird idea for a film that is dark and perverse and personal and strange. And more people than you think actually get it. And laugh. And other reactions! I suppose thatâ??s the joy of being a filmmaker, that

something that was in your head has managed to be communicated to other people.

AFI: How did the premise of the screenplay come to you?

AL: I thought pregnancy was going to prevent me from working. I was actually really worried about it. But then I thought, â??This is a perfect way of combatting that.â?•

Iâ??d been thinking about revenge structures and themes for a while. I was never going to make a story about a pregnant woman who has a minor emotional dilemma about what color to paint the nursery. My bugbear as an actress is characters that are women first, and characters later. I was really sick of reading characters that are cut-and-paste mother characters. Theyâ??re always so bloody kind and self-sacrificial. What about their personalities and goals? Have they just disappeared when theyâ??ve become mothers? Not on my watch, anyway.



AFI: Pregnancy and evil children often figure into horror films â?? but the tone isnâ??t usually comedic. Were you inspired by any films while making this one?

AL: Iâ??m a big fan of horror that deals with human transgressional boundaries. Films like THE SHINING, DONâ??T LOOK NOW, CARRIE and ROSEMARYâ??S BABY all deal with very human drama, and thatâ??s where the horror comes from. The supernatural is an invisible threat, but the human threat is real and tangible â?? parents trying to kill their children, bullying, husbands betraying their wives. And many of these films deal with liminal rites of passage â?? becoming a teenager, a parent.

So yes, I definitely wanted to make a film about becoming a mother, but perhaps from more of an insiderâ??s view, a female viewpoint, too. For me, the comedy goes without saying, as I canâ??t help it. I think life is kind of a mixture of hilarity and horror anyway. It was important to have warmth and humor for you to get into Ruthâ??s interior. She is a real human with flaws who is in this absurd predicament. Otherwise sheâ??s just a victim, or a heartless perpetrator. I think the humor helps you to feel for her. Perhaps even feel like her. I havenâ??t exactly made KNOCKED UP. The humor is pretty pitch black. Iâ??d love to have just answered with, â??yes, I was inspired by LOOK WHOâ??S

TALKING TOO,â?• and just have left it at that. That would have put a cat amongst the pigeons.

Free tickets for PREVENGE will be available on AFI.com beginning November 1.

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