

American Psycho-2000: Beware what you wish for – you might just get it!

This is a finely constructed allegory for all that is dark and horrible about the excesses of modernity, as epitomized by a yuppie stockbroker, Patrick Bateman (Christian Bale) as he descends into his insanity.

You see, Patrick doesn't exist in reality: he only exists, in the minds of others, as a cardboard cutout – much like his exquisite business card that doesn't quite cut it when compared to his friends' – who occupies a vacuous space in his vacuous office where he goes through the vacuous motions of doing vacuous business in a vacuous world....

And, all the while, Patrick's frustrations, doubts, self-loathing and contempt for the world all mix together in his mind to produce the only outlet he can generate: supreme anger at a system that must be cleansed, and violently.

So, he goes on a secret killing spree – removing office competitors, prostitutes, drunks, deadbeats, ex-lovers and whoever else takes his fancy. Precisely clinical in his office at work, at the bar with his friends, or at dinner with his fiancée or lover, Patrick executes – the very operative word – all those dregs of society with the same dispassionate disdain that he holds for the world in general.

Bale is simply superb in this role, one that must have been very difficult to portray; little wonder that he was nominated for a good number of awards (he won a Best Actor award). Kudos (and awards!) also goes to the scriptwriters, Mary Harron and Guinevere Turner, for a clever and witty narrative. I've not read the book, but now I think I should, despite all the bad press from long ago.

Yes, this is a horror story; but the horror is not in the violence that, for the most part and when compared to other films, is muted. The real horror is that which occurs in Patrick's psyche, as he tries to sort out the fictions of the real world from the reality of his fictional and insane world. Hence, as a viewer, it's often difficult to sort out those things also ... which is perhaps the major sub-text of this story when applied to the world in which we all live, whatever our worlds are. Sure, the story is over-the-top, but it's a satire as well as an allegorical tour-de-force; so, treat it as such.

It's not for every body, that's for sure, and certainly not for adolescents. As adults, however, we should all welcome a narrative such as this, to allow our own mind to dwell upon the issues raised, which are many as well as varied. For example, how often have I said to somebody, in jest: "Don't do that, or I'll kill you"? This story examines that type of behavioral idea - with a vengeance.

The production is slick, as it should be on Wall Street, glitzy restaurants and sumptuous surrounds; the supporting cast is equal to Bale's performance, but there's no doubt he dominates, as he should in this role; and it was great to listen to some good oldies from Phil Collins and others.

Highly recommended for adults who aren't afraid to look within this narrative ... and perhaps within themselves. Or in a mirror....

13th December, 2007

Rating: 8

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