

“THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO” (Film Review)

Written by John Nicol

Tuesday, 20 December 2011 17:27



For the past 10 years or so, Hollywood has openly embraced the succulent cash grab that is the remake, and for better or for worse, it is here to stay. But was another film version of Stieg Larsson’s serial-murder mystery THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO entirely necessary? The original Swedish movie was a huge hit overseas and made box-office waves with North American audiences as well. So why go see an English-language edition? In summation: *David Fincher*

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Fincher has wonderfully adapted Larsson’s novel into a dark and brooding 158-minute epic that resonates stylistically somewhere between his SE7EN and ZODIAC, leaning more heavily toward the latter. Fincher and original Swedish director Niels Arden Oplev’s takes on DRAGON TATTOO work individually for distinct reasons, and to say which is superior would be like choosing between ALIEN and ALIENS; they’re both great films which are radically different yet similar, stemming from the same source.



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This time around, scandalized reporter Mikael Blomkvist is played wonderfully by Daniel Craig (though what's with the British accent in Sweden?) and Rooney Mara flawlessly pulls off the now famously troubled and tortured hacker/investigator Lisbeth Salander. The film for the most part remains faithful to the source material, while setting itself apart from its Swedish counterpart. Fincher's version (scripted by Steven Zaillian) does have a steadier pulse without compromising the complicated density of the book's plot. We unfortunately lose the original's stark European flavor in favor of a slicker Hollywood production, but we're nonetheless in capable hands, and Fincher doesn't disappoint.

Jeff Cronenweth's cinematography is fluid and grand while always maintaining an aura of dread. The cast is stellar and bang-on: Christopher Plummer as Henrik Vanger, Robin Wright as Erika Berger and Stellan Skarsgård as Martin Vanger. Even WARLOCK's Julian Sands makes a return to cinema as the young Henrik. Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross return from THE SOCIAL NETWORK to again create an incredible score that easily gets under the skin, adding another level of rich atmosphere.

Given the hard-R bent of the material, Fincher orchestrates the violence and sexual assault scenes expertly; they're there to serve the plot, harsh but never over-the-top gratuitous. That's not to say the story doesn't have its share of uncomfortable moments; Lisbeth's revenge sequence is a thing of disturbing beauty. There are, however, a few minor criticisms that must be mentioned. Craig's fluctuating accent becomes jarring in places. The opening credit sequence looks great but tonally misses the mark; although Karen O and Trent Reznor's cover of Led Zeppelin's "Immigrant Song" will make your hair stand on end, the visuals play like a glossy Nine Inch Nails video and just feel out of place in setting up this film. And those who haven't read Larsson's book or seen the previous movie may find themselves lost in the whirlwind of the convoluted plot, which can be hard to follow in places.

In the end, though, these are just minor beefs and should in no way be deterrents. THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO is great, dark holiday fun.

