

PHANTOM THREAD

UK (2017) 130 minutes

Director: Paul Thomas Anderson

Written By: Paul Thomas Anderson

Cast: Daniel Day-Lewis (Reynolds Woodcock), Vicky Krieps (Alma), Lesley Manville (Cyril)



Screening 3 April 2019 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

Set in the glamour of 1950s post-war London, renowned dressmaker Reynolds Woodcock and his sister Cyril are at the centre of British fashion, dressing royalty, movie stars, heiresses, socialites, debutantes and dames with the distinct style of The House of Woodcock. Women come and go through Woodcock's life, providing the confirmed bachelor with inspiration and companionship, until he comes across a young, strong-willed woman, Alma, who soon becomes his muse and lover. Once controlled and planned, he finds his carefully tailored life disrupted by love.

Reviews



Reynolds is presented as a feverish artisan of fashion, sketching and sewing his way to a vision of the feminine ideal. He courts Alma by using her as a human mannequin, and it's therefore hard not to get intimations of a movie like *"Vertigo,"* or maybe a super-kinky *"Pygmalion."* Will the action here also turn out to be the story of a man who falls for his personal design of a woman?

Reynolds and his sister Cyril are close in a way that suggests something warm, loyal, and a little unseemly. She's like Mrs. Danvers, the housekeeper in Hitchcock's *"Rebecca,"* creepy and a touch macabre, always hovering. . .

The film is both seductive and absorbing, but it's also emotionally remote. It is framed as a love story, but it never swoons. Day-Lewis seems to be relishing the chance to play another flamboyant emotional fascist, and the movie asks the audience to chortle along.

Owen Gleiberman, Variety

Paul Thomas Anderson's script is impossible to classify. One moment, we think we are watching a fashion movie. The next, the film turns into a love story, a twisted and fantastical one with a very morbid core which takes its tempo from the swirling, orchestral Jonny Greenwood score.

With its glimmering close-ups of Krieps and Day-Lewis, strange plot twists and constant use of music, the film at times resembles those equally bizarrely plotted Hollywood melodramas from the 1940s in which Bette Davis and Joan Crawford would play the long-suffering heroines, or one of those Hitchcock films in which we can't work out whether the main characters are in love or want to murder one another.

The pleasure here lies in the unpredictability of Paul Thomas Anderson's approach, his ability and that of his actors to surprise us with every new stitch of the movie.

Geoffrey Macnab, Independent

Film Facts

- Many of the staff of the Woodcock fashion house are played by real seamstresses and persons connected with the real-life fashion world.
- The film's title refers to the hidden messages, written with thread, that Reynolds stitches into the lining of the dresses he makes.
- After completing this film, Daniel Day-Lewis announced his retirement from acting.

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