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MODERN TIMES



TIFF13 Review: Borgman (2013)

Posted by Brandy Dean | September 7, 2013 | 0 Comment | 2658 views

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The home invasion sub-genre has caught flame recently -think *The Purge*, *You're Next*, *The Agression Scale* - which I assume has something to do with the latent fear of terrorists. In all fairness, I'm an American so I think all trending movie sub-genres have something to do with the latent fear of terrorists, especially zombie movies. So it was with some trepidation that I saw *Borgman* from Dutch director Alex van Warmerdam, believing that I would miss subtle cultural clues to help me identify how this home invasion thriller was really about the latent fear of terrorists.

I needn't have worried. Turns out *Borgman* is only rather loosely related to "home invasion" dramas; or basically it's a "home invasion" drama because it was easy shorthand for a film synopsis. Our story begins with a band of of ostensibly homeless guys being chased out these elaborate underground hidey-holes by a priest, an angry dog, and a dude with a sharpened pole. Then we see the leader of the pack, Cemal Borgman, soliciting upscales homes for a chance at a hot bath. At one of those homes, the patriarch goes medieval on Borgman's ass but the wife takes pity and invites him in. I think that's the rub - she *invited* him in.

And this is when I became worried that *Borgman* was really about some Dutch fear of immigrants and I wasn't totally getting it. (Hint: it's not). Borgman is really an examination - a very creepy and obsidian humored one - of the tensions in modern society, that is broad enough to fold in terrorists, immigrants, the poor, the rich, and anybody who isn't exactly like yourself, which is, frankly everyone. As Borgman sets out on a path of destruction, seducing the wife, the children, and ultimately the man who originally beat the snot out of him, with the help of a weird cast of colleagues and some ultimately unexplained surgery, it's clear that he is the modern embodiment of the primal trickster imp figure. He's charming and even funny, but damn is he going to burn you to the ground. And he's going to do it for no good reason, for a lot of very good reasons, but mostly for his own droll sense of mischief.

And *Borgman* is often hilarious, in the darkest possible ways. Bodies don't just pile up, they end up planted in the lake with their heads potted like plant roots and their legs waving merrily in current. His

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co-conspirators Ludwig (played by Warmerdam himself) and Pascal come off as some devilish version of Laurel and Hardy, right down to the sight gag of sleeping in a mattress showroom. While much is left unexplained – what’s with the surgery? does Borgman really control dreams? why? – the weirdo dance routine staged by Borgman and Company concludes with the message “I Am – We Are” and that’s a good a summation as any.

Ultimately **Borgman** is a stylish and uber-creepy old school fable about the mysterious ways in which evil can work it’s dark magic. It’s as terrifying as anything David Lynch has produced, as blackly funny as anything the Coen brothers can hope for, and it is definitely a festival must see.

Screening Times for Borgman

Wednesday September 11 Scotiabank 1 9:00 PM

Thursday September 12 The Bloor Hot Docs Cinema 3:00 PM

A Gallery of Images from Borgman



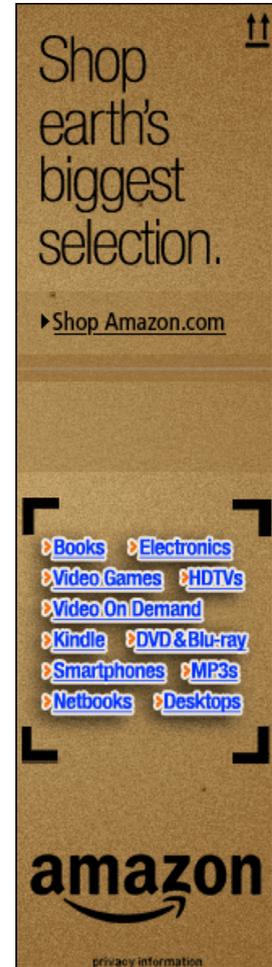
Watch the Borgman Trailer



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About Brandy Dean



Social media consultant, blogger for hire, and lover of classic movies and silent films.

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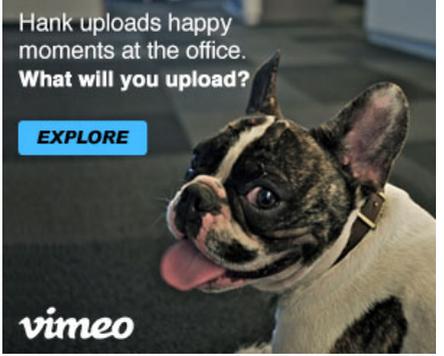
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