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TIFF13 Review: Don Jon

Posted by Jovana Jankovic August 28, 2013 0 Comment 3450 views

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The irrepressibly charming Joseph Gordon-Levitt makes his writing/directing debut in *Don Jon*, a dark and cynical romantic comedy of sorts in which he also stars as the eponymous character. The plot in a nutshell: muscled-up Italian Jersey boy goes clubbing to pick up girls, only to always find that having sex with them is never as satisfying as the porn he watches and masturbates to half a dozen times a day. It may sounds crass (and, in fact, it is), but the concept allows for the exploration of a ton of interesting topics that often go ignored in mainstream cinema: the near-ubiquitous hyper-sexualization of women and girls in images (whether commercial or otherwise), the lack of open discussion about gender and sexuality norms in society, and the presumptions, stereotypes, and expectation under which we all operate to some extent (guilty!), whether we know it or not.

Our protagonist undergoes the requisite struggles and questions until he finally experiences some semblance of clarity (the narrative is hardly a formally innovative one: we've got our intro, our climax, our denouement, and the moral lesson learned), but the film is piled high with wit, subtle observation, and humor. While, at first glance, the characters all may seem like stock stereotypes (Scarlett Johansson is excellent as Jon's primary love interest, a typical Jersey girl, french manicure and all), the film actually works *with* stereotypes to interrogate them. Gordon-Levitt may have actually made an interesting little feminist film; while the narrative does problematically juxtapose various types of sex and sexuality, creating some troubling binaries, it eventually arrives at a pretty brave conclusion. Recommended viewing!

Don Jon will play at the 2013 Toronto International Film Festival on Tuesday, September 10, 2013, at the Princess of Wales theatre at 6:30 pm, and Wednesday, September 11, 2013, at the Ryerson theatre at 3:00 pm.

A Gallery of Images from Don Jon

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FULL VERSION



Watch the Don Jon Trailer



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FESTIVAL COVERAGE JOSEPH GORDON-LEVITT TIFF13

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