



## Film Review

### *There's No Hell Like Home*

1st of July, 2021

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A neat, powerful horror story, establishing context from the off and where probable content deviation is set up in a matter of seconds. I also had an early chuckle, when I realised you were able to reward one of your sponsors with an on-screen credit, absolutely in context, linking to the family disaster, or tragedy, or...?

Whatever happened to mum and dad, it probably happened pre-Covid and their ashes didn't pot themselves. But Melissa takes us with her in her fear-anger-love attacks, where her own mental fragility is pressured by her physical sickness.

We don't know if 26yr-old Melissa is behaving and reacting like a spoiled teenager because of the sickness, or if it's that regression we often have going back to the family home, even decades later, but that still rebels against the hierarchy, but she's a teenager again.

Establishing the fact that she DOES have Covid, is probably overdone from the audience's p.o.v.: Melissa knows about Covid-19 symptoms, taste-loss or corruption etc; she could have gone straight to the honey.

At least, I think it was honey, which brings me to my major criticism.

As the Hoover & hot shower work, there's no problem with the electricity. Melissa has decided to live in the dark. But Melissa's eyes adjust to dim lighting; you are asking your audience to do the same and that doesn't work.

Here, I think, the lighting cameraperson and director have been seduced by the use of darkness so horribly prevalent in TV drama nowadays. You need to establish what we are supposed to see and what we are NOT supposed to see, but have to guess at. If these moments are arbitrary, then our imagination would be better served listening to a radio drama. Many years ago, I had a discussion with Dario Argento about his use of darkness in 'Tenebrae' and we established that if we, as an audience, could see the same things as John Steiner on set under lights, then we could follow the way he wanted to manipulate the drama; if we focused on an action or an object that was extraneous, Dario knew he might lose his audience. So he then relit the scene, so we, the audience, went where he led us. Lead or mislead your audience, or leave us wondering, but because you have decided, not that there's technical equivocation.

"Plein Soleil" (Purple Noon) 1960, René Clément's film of Patricia Highsmith's "The Talented Mr Ripley", 40yrs before Hollywood's effort, used blazing sunshine throughout, so even the 'darker' scenes could be well lit.

Where the sound was misheard or distorted by Melissa, that worked well. But there are a couple of cases where the sound doesn't match and move with the image.

Melissa 'grew on me' and I cared about her quite early on.

Not a lot to say about sets or costumes: with the lighting, you might have saved on that side of your budget.

As I said at the beginning, it's a neat, powerful horror story and I'm sure you'll have lots more success at festivals around the world.

I enjoyed your work. Congratulations.

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