

Movie Review: "Premonition"™

by David_Elliott

Alfred Hitchcock has been dead since 1980, but he didn't leave his lessons on how to make taut thrillers in an unmarked grave. Somebody, please, get a few of those lessons to the makers of "Premonition."

'PREMONITION' - Sandra Bullock and Julian McMahon star in the psychological thriller 'Premonition.' CNS Photo courtesy of Ron Batzdorff. Not exactly a thriller, never quite a chiller, hardly suspenseful, it is, at best, a Sandra Bullock vehicle made of vanishing vapors. As Linda, she goes through the whole movie wondering if husband Jim is dead, or will die, or if she's dreaming, or having a psychic vision, or just having her head bounce as the ball on the script's roulette wheel.

Jim, played as a stolid hunk of generic husband and dad by Julian McMahon, is constantly running off to business engagements. Which is, perhaps, a functionally viable definition of death.

One day he's dead, the next day he's in her bed (alive?). In time, half-mad with doubt, Linda is doing screenwriter Bill Kelly's work by diagramming the time frame of the - plot? A psychiatrist is played by veteran creep actor Peter Stormare, quite happy to get Linda drugged, and there's a mystery woman who turns up at Bill's funeral and is (of course) his mistress.

That funeral happens rather early, soon after, or maybe before, Linda is rudely escorted to a nut hatch by her dour family and friends. It's as if Blanche DuBois got hauled off in Act I of "A Streetcar Named Desire." But Linda can't even depend on the kindness of strangers, and her own mother (Kate Nelligan) is like a drifting haze of fatigued devotion (why has a great actress come down to this?).

Pause, on the future DVD, for stupified study of the dead bird scene (definitely not "The Birds"). The smashed crow or blackbird spills so much blood it could be a MediVac chopper with feathers. And then there is the casket scene, music surging with tidal force, but the staging so dismally coy we can't tell quite what happens or what Linda is shocked to see.

Part of this fishy teaser's problem (its many problems) is that it has the standard modern stylization you might call Decal Vision. There's almost no depth of field, as if a digital roller had pressed the sets, actors and even natural formations into a pancake of visual prompters. The big church where Linda seeks spiritual relief looks like a cut-out.

The priest tells her of a spiritual vacuum that needs filling, his insight clearly pointing to the big hole in the script and the TV vacuity of Mennan Yapo's direction. The old hocus-pocus turns to joke-us, and the final resolution is a vague parting of story mist, with a glow of family values.

The only thing carrying this doozy along is the personality of Sandra Bullock: sane, honest, stable, warmly sympathetic. That she has evolved beyond the long girlish phase of her career means she needs womanly options that are not patched together from mindless "concepts" like "Premonition."

RATINGS4 STARS - Excellent.3 STARS - Worthy.2 STARS - Mixed.1 STAR - Poor.0 - Forget It (a dog.) An MGM release. Director: Mennan Yapo. Writer: Bill Kelly. Cast: Sandra Bullock, Julian McMahon, Kate Nelligan, Nia Long, Peter Stormare. Running time: 1 hour, 45 minutes, Rated PG-13; 1 Star.

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