Robin Spry’s

Obsessed

hit-and-run driver kills a 12-year-old boy. The guilt here is so obvious that the one responsible will certainly be brought to trial and justice done right.

Hold it. Nothing is quite so simple in real life or in Robin Spry’s latest psychological thriller, Obsessed. Here, complex issues intersect with equally complex human emotions. Lines of right and wrong waver beneath our feet, and simple resolutions are simply not to be found.

Obsessed is not a formula thriller: there is no gratuitous gore to titillate or nauseate, no psycho-killer to fan and hate. Instead we have a very realistic (shockingly so) portrayal of a fatal accident that kills a child, and the equally realistic emotional wrangler that results for the people involved. In addition, it is a story that manages to introduce a level of suspense and tragedy as an element of entertainment, and at the same time remains a kind of morality play of the modern world.

Director Spry shows his love of the socially relevant once again, using it as a base to build his levels of meaning while maintaining an undercurrent of tension. He tugs at the audience’s emotions without ever jangling them into submission, for he keeps the focus on the human beings involved rather than on the issues.

Keirrie Keane plays Dinah Middleton, an ‘everyday mother’ who becomes obsessed (hence the title) with finding and punishing the hit-and-run killer of her only son, Alan. She tracks him to his home across the U.S. border. She hires as his safety an unscrupulous attorney, and she has really done finally penetrates all his cool facade. That a boy’s life snuffed out is more than just an act’s-length abstraction. Then, alone before the truth of his guilt, he is utterly and totally shattered.

What is especially chilling about Rubinek’s character is that Ovens Hughes could just as easily be your neighbour, or he could be your uncle or, given the right circumstances, he just might even be you.

Two other actors, Lynne Griffin and Allan Thicke, have smaller roles where they also do very well. Griffin delivers all the necessary nuances into his role as Hughes’ wife, Karen. It is a role slim on actual dialogue yet pivotal to the balance of the story, where she’s asked to step in the background yet still evolve strongly like the other major characters. Thicke has a more prominent role as Hughes’ uncle or, given the right circumstances, he just might even be you.

For all the strengths of this film, there remain faults that stand out like exposed plumbing in another form of piece of architecture. Some of the scenes and some of the dialogue seem a bit contrived, with occasionally sloppiness of cohesion and neglecting at its rhythm. Unfortunately, there remain a few lack of incredible coincidence over the best of Spry’s last feature, Keeping Truck. The script by Douglas Bowie shows moments of depth in story weaving and sharp dialogue, but is uneven and the pace is sometimes very bumpy indeed. Also uneven is the look of the film, which varies as much as if it were three or four different people.

Despite these faults, Obsessed remains a very strong story which, like all good film stories, doesn’t hold the mind of the filmmaker speaking, but rather holds up a mirror to it and allows it to speak for itself. André Guy Arsenaault

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