

Film Review: ‘Mama’ is Everything Classic Horror Should Be

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on January 18, 2013 - 10:10am

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CHICAGO – Occasionally, along comes a filmmaker who completely understands what makes a horror film work. “Mama,” the debut of co-writer and director Andy Muschietti, contains creepy children, psychological ramifications, clueless victims and deep mystery. This is both scary and a thriller.



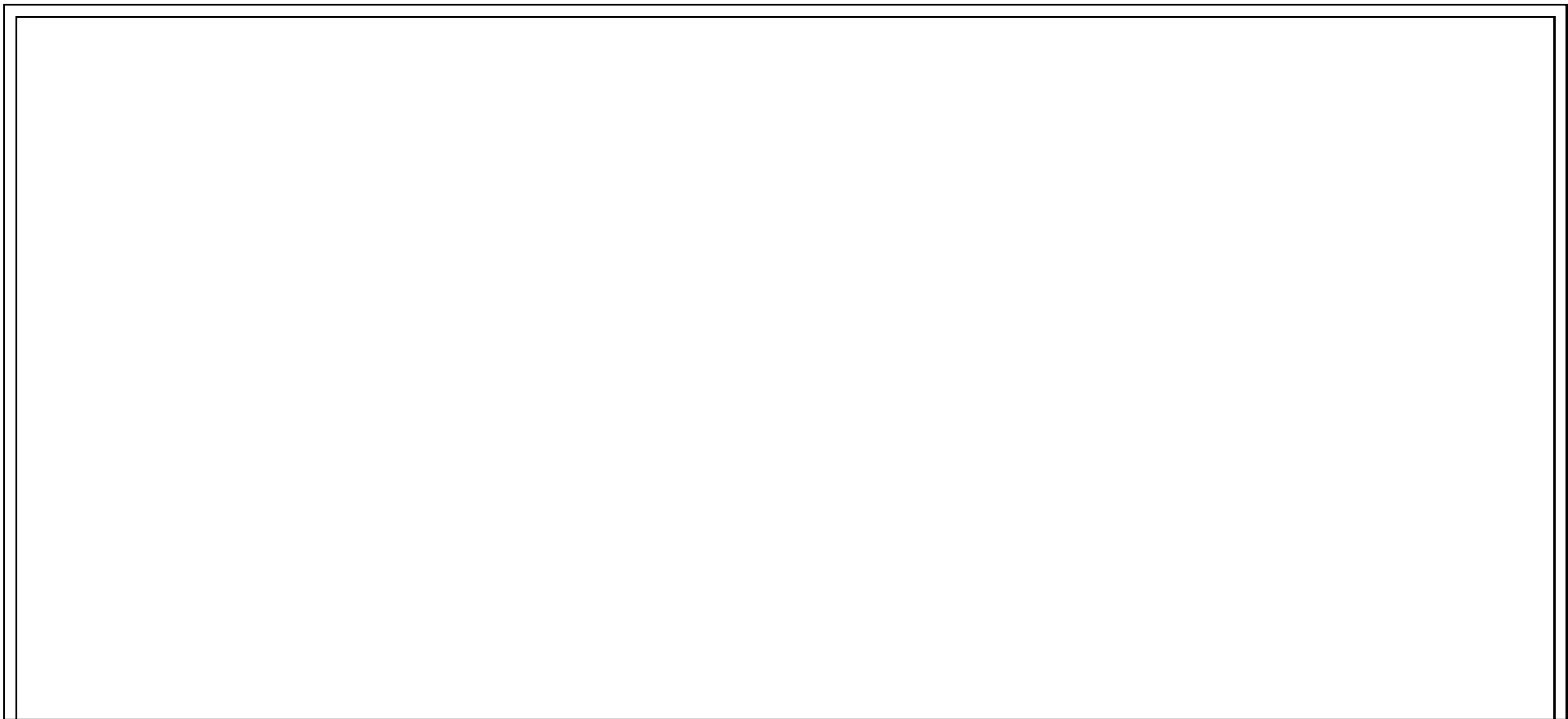
There are even the laughable elements of kitschy characters, which makes it also kind of fun. Jessica Chastain is as miscast as a rocker as she was a CIA operative, but she embraces the character and is completely invested as the victim of the horror. Is there anything more psychological than a mother and child conundrum? Not only does “Mama” exploit this, but it also takes it into new, weird territory. Besides Jessica C., the rest of the cast are unknowns, yet they all have those “certain looks” that are associated with memorable horror film roles. To sum it all up, this film will have an honored place in the annual Halloween horror fests – at home or in theaters.

The story begins in a suburban paradise, a McMansion has an expensive car in front of it with the door open. There are news reports in the air, of an impending economic meltdown and the backlash that it has created – including the man who owns that car and house, who is suspected of killing his business partners and ex-wife. He gathers his daughters Victoria and Lily (eventually portrayed by Megan Charpentier and Isabel Nélisse) into the car, and takes off with them to parts unknown. On the icy road to nowhere, the car flips over the railing and lands near a seemingly abandoned shotgun shack.

The father collects his two daughters, ages three and one, and intends to hide out there. A mysterious force is watching them, and causes a severe altering in the girl’s reality. They are found five years later, living like animals in the shack, and referring to an unseen force as their “Mama.” The uncle of the foundlings, Luke (Nikolaj Coster-Waldau) – and his rocker girlfriend Annabel (Jessica Chastain) – agree to take care of the kids, as long as Dr. Dreyfuss (Daniel Kash) can keep them close by for his research on their fate. Who is Mama and why she continues her presence is what will become apparent.

“Mama” opens everywhere on January 18th. Featuring Jessica Chastain, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, Daniel Kash, Megan Charpentier and Isabelle Nélisse. Written by Andy Muschietti, Neil Cross and Barbara Muschietti. Directed by Andy Muschietti. Rated “PG-13”

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Annabel (Jessica Chastain) Checks the Dark Corners in 'Mama'
Photo credit: Universal Pictures

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