

Film Review: Neil Jordan's 'Byzantium' Feels Drained of Passion

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 27, 2013 - 5:27pm

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CHICAGO – I've rarely said this about Neil Jordan movie – in fact, maybe never – but I was bored during his latest, the vampire drama "Byzantium," a movie with an intriguing cast and interesting story but little in the way of passion, emotion, dread, or the other intangibles needed to make a horror film like this effective. There are elements of "Byzantium" that threaten to work but then they're flattened into a boring narrative with characters that don't connect and a stylistic approach by Jordan that doesn't give the piece the personality it needs to be considered as more than an arthouse "Twilight." It's a vampire movie without a pulse.



Rating: **2.0/5.0**

Which is going to sound untrue when I tell you the plot. It's the kind of story that should vibrate with energy but some poor decisions on both sides of the camera take the exciting story of two women fighting an apparently misogynist culture of vampirism through the centuries. Eleanor (Saoirse Ronan) may seem like just an ordinary teen girl but she's anything but, proving herself a compassionate vampire as she only drains the elderly who are ready to die. She's the Jack Kevorkian of bloodsuckers.



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Eleanor's mother Clara (Gemma Arterton) is a little less forgiving of mankind. She's kept her daughter alive by moving her around the world and taking jobs as a stripper or prostitute to make ends meet, no pun intended. Clara is tough, willing to kill those who get in her way, including a mysterious figure named Werner (Thure Lindhardt), whom she decapitates before lighting the room on fire. Clara doesn't leave loose ends. Her daughter, on the other hand...

Problems arise after Clara and Eleanor move into an old home owned by Noel (Daniel Mays), turning it into a brothel. For someone who needs to keep a low profile to avoid the Volturi-esque powers that be that want her and her daughter dead, Clara does nothing to stay hidden. She starts turning out girls in this small seaside town and Eleanor meets a nice young boy named Frank (Caleb Landry Jones), who just happens to be familiar with the sting of imminent death. How Clara & Eleanor ran afoul of vampire laws will involve flashbacks to the abusive Ruthven (Jonny Lee Miller) and the supportive Darvell (Sam Riley), the latter of which is still looking for her.



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"Byzantium" stars Saoirse Ronan, Gemma Arterton, Sam Riley, Jonny Lee Miller, Caleb Landry Jones, and Daniel Mays. It was written by Moira Buffini and directed by Neil Jordan. It opens on June 28, 2013.



Byzantium

Photo credit: IFC Films

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