

Film Review: Surprising Fun in Revenge Tale of ‘The Handmaiden’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on November 1, 2016 - 7:10am

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CHICAGO – Although “The Handmaiden” is based in deceit, fetishes, thievery and subservience, director Park Chan-Wook (“Stoker”) keeps it light by the addition of some subversive humor, and weaves a mystery with a pitch that is like the “The Sting” meets “In the Realm of the Senses.”



Rating: **4.0/5.0**

Yes, there is eroticism in the film, but it is presented as a plot motivator, and is also used as a great punch line. Mostly the step-by-step story, told by emphasizing different elements of the same situation, seeks comeuppance for the evil that lurks within, even though all the players seem to have some level of larceny in their souls. That edge is the fun, as some characters end up stumbling in their own hubris, while others stay one step ahead of what could be their downfall. The dark mystery/comedy of Hitchcock, the cross cutting of Kurosawa and even the wackiness of Preston Sturges are all combined into a savory cinematic treat.

A gang of Korean thieves, led by the duplicitous Count Fujiwara (Jung-woo Ha), want to infiltrate the Japanese lair of Uncle Kouzuki (Jin-woong Jo), a wealthy book collector. There is a kept woman named Lady Hideko (Min-hee Kim) within the estate, and Fujiwara figures the best way inside is through her handmaiden. He recruits one of his thieves, Sook-Hee (Tae Ri Kim), to accept the position.

When Lady Hideko and Sook-Hee begin their relationship, they find much in common, including a sexual attraction. This is counter to the Count, who is there to try and woo the Lady of the house, while Sook-Hee provides all the inner-sanctum espionage. When the truth of Uncle Kouzuki starts to reveal itself, and the Count finds himself spinning his wheels, it is Lady Hideko and her handmaiden that will take the outcome into their own sure hands.

“The Handmaiden” continued its limited release in Chicago on October 28th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Min-hee Kim, Jung-woo Ha, Jin-woong Jo and Tae Ri Kim. Screenplay by Park Chan-Wook and Seo-Kyung Chung, from the novel by Sarah Walters. Directed by Park Chan-Wook. Rated “R”



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Sook-Hee (Tae Ri Kim, right) Tends to Lady Hideko (Min-hee Kim) in ‘The Handmaiden’
Photo credit: Amazon Studios



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