Film Review: Sofia Coppola Creates a Masterwork with ‘The Beguiled’

Submitted by PatrickMcD [1] on July 6, 2017 - 10:52am

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CHICAGO – The human-ness of being human never changes, fundamentally. The mating season arrives, and the effect makes for both great connections and bad decisions. Director Sofia Coppola emphasizes this in a reverent film production of the story called “The Beguiled.”



Rating: **5.0/5.0**

It began as a novel in 1971 by Thomas Cullinan (originally entitled “A Painted Devil”) and was adapted into a film version that same year by director Don Siegel, starring Clint Eastwood (the same team that brought us “Dirty Harry”). Sofia Coppola wrote the screenplay adaptation for her directorial version, focusing on how the relationships developed and changed in a Southern girls boarding school during the Civil War, when adjacent to the property a wounded Union soldier is found. Coppola generates an understanding of how women are, in a repressed society, when faced with their own longings and desires. This is framed by a tense situation – almost a thriller – as the step-by-step recovery by the soldier produces joyful interactions, misunderstandings, jealousy and unnecessary rivalries, all based on the needs of “birds do it, bees do it.” Hell, I’ve heard even educated fleas do it.

Miss Martha Farnsworth (Nicole Kidman) is the headmistress of a girl’s boarding school in Virginia during 1864, as the American Civil War comes right up to their front door. The slaves have escaped, and Farnsworth is left with only one teacher (Kirsten Dunst as Edwina), and five students. One of them, Amy (Oona Laurence), discovers a wounded Union soldier named Corporal John McBurney (Colin Farrell) in the woods nearby, and brings him back to the school.

Miss Farnsworth decides to let him recover from his wounds, and the Yankee warrior becomes an unofficial mascot of the school. The girl students buzz around him, in various stages of womanhood, especially bold Alicia (Elle Fanning). Martha and Edwina have more womanly attractions toward their handsome Irish border, and McBurney takes full advantage of it, because he is both in a heavenly situation and he doesn’t want to go back to the war. When decisions on who, what and where have to be made, the women will need all their strength and survival instincts.

“The Beguiled” opened everywhere on June 30th. Featuring Nicole Kidman, Colin Farrell, Kirsten Dunst, Elle Fanning, Oona Laurence, Angourie Rice, Addison Riecke and Emma Howard. Screenplay adapted and directed by Sofia Coppola. Rated “R”



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School is in Session: The Ladies of ‘The Beguiled’
Photo credit: Focus Features

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