

Film Review: Strong Performance Makes ‘Lady Macbeth’ a Cogent Character Study

Submitted by [JonHC](#) [1] on July 24, 2017 - 2:37am

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CHICAGO - Separating a performance from the rest of the film is usually an easy task. One may be stronger than the other, or vice versa, but either way, they can be judged individually and as a whole. “Lady Macbeth” proves to be that rare character study where a single performance (from breakout actress Florence Pugh) not only makes the film but essentially is the film.



Rating: **4.0/5.0**

Alice Birch adapts Nikolai Leskov’s novel of the same name but adds a new perspective to the story. Birch doesn’t shy away from showing the unsympathetic darkness inside of Katherine but instead counters it by showing scenes of happiness and giving reasons for her actions. The story is so compellingly told that most of the audience will side with Katherine and be willing to overlook all of her misdeeds up until the last one. Like the film’s namesake, Katherine’s ambition drives her to commit murderous acts in order to get her way. Unlike the Shakespearean character, Katherine’s goals start off as more noble and what most of us would now consider basic human rights. It makes you ask yourself: “How far would you go to get control of your life back?”

This period piece highlights themes that end up transforming our Lady Macbeth from the Shakespearean, status-hungry enabler into a progressive femme fatale freedom fighter. Katherine was part of a system at a time where women were regarded as property, regularly sold to whoever was willing to pay. This form of slavery is one of the cornerstones of the story, and the biggest thing that makes Katherine a character that deserves our sympathy at the beginning. Being controlled and oppressed by almost every man in her life, she reacts like any other caged animal, except her ferocity is well hidden behind her meek façade and her actions are much more calculated than feral.

“Lady Macbeth” opened everywhere on July 21st. Featuring Florence Pugh, Cosmo Jarvis, Paul Hilton, Naomi Ackie, Christopher Fairbank and Golda Rosheuvel. Screenplay by Alice Birch. Directed by William Oldroyd. Rated “R”



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There's more than meets the eye in 'Lady Macbeth'

Photo credit: BBC Films



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