

DVD Review: Belgian 'Left Bank' is Short on Suspense

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 29, 2009 - 11:30am

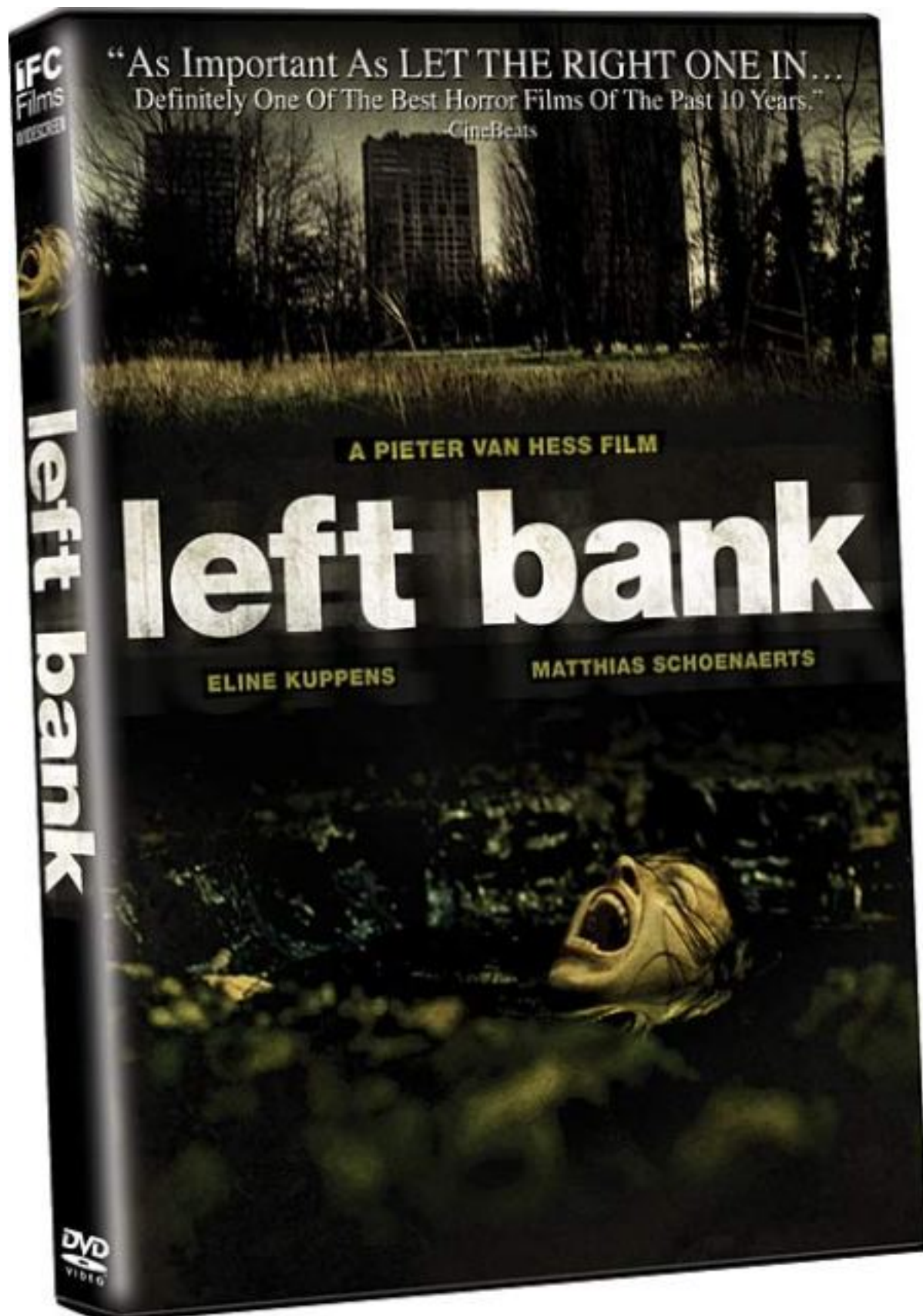
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CHICAGO – “Left Bank” centers on` a woman whose apartment appears to be above a black hole, or a pit or something dark and deep like that. The Belgian horror outing (which has gone straight to DVD in the United States after playing in Chicago at the [EU Film Fest](#) [7]) isn’t nearly as dumb as that synopsis makes it out to be, but in the end, that’s actually more of criticism than a compliment.



DVD Rating: **2.0/5.0**

The laughably bad movies in the horror genre and even the “Saw”-inspired examples of torture porn at least succeed in provoking a reaction out of people. Pieter Van Hees’s film is too tasteful to breed disgust and too thin and slow-building to nurture suspense, let alone terror. At best, watching “Left Bank” is like riding on a bus late at night next to a mumbling drunk. You feel a little uncomfortable from time to time, but there’s never a sickening sense that anyone’s safety is truly at risk.



Left Bank was released on DVD on October 27th, 2009.

Photo credit: IFC Films

The young lady with the pit problem is Marie (Eline Kuppens), a 22-year-old runner on the verge of qualifying for the European Championships. Out of stubbornness, Marie overexerts herself in a race and is ordered to take a rest. Since she can't bear to have her mother telling her what and what not to do, she decides to spend that time with her new boyfriend in the grubby-looking title town.

Soon after she settles in with Bobby (Matthias Schoenaerts), Marie's luck and health worsen. She can't sleep, she can't stop throwing up, and when she starts running again, she suffers a seriously icky knee injury, complete with ever-present blood and pus. Could these misfortunes be related to the woman who lived in Marie's unit before vanishing? And why was that woman so interested in what's hidden in the cellar?

There's little point in agonizing over those questions because Van Hees (working from a script co-written with Dimitri Karakatsanis) spends the first 80 percent of the movie putting Marie in situations that aren't especially threatening. As Marie herself mentions, her nausea might just be a sign of pregnancy, and though it's not entirely clear how she hurt her knee, she never acts as if the injury occurred under suspicious circumstances. In fact, she's so far from being creeped out by her new environment that she doesn't even try to leave until it's her day to be sacrificed to the pit, or the black hole or whatever the heck it is.

Instead of sealing the story with doom, the answers to the aforementioned questions point to how much else in the narrative is left unsettled. If Marie is being subjected to some form of devilish curse, are the powers of evil coming from her specific apartment, her specific building, or from the community at large? If she's to be part of a cult, was she chosen from the very beginning? And if so, how did anyone from Left Bank figure she'd be lured there? Are they responsible for the physical problems that jeopardized her career and led her to follow Bobby in the first place?

No doubt, some of these dangling mysteries might be solvable by replaying the film and hunting for the subtlest of clues. But once the main riddle is unraveled, bothering with the rest of them hardly seems worth the effort.

'Left Bank' is released by IFC Films and it stars Eline Kuppens and Matthias Schoenaerts. It was written by Pieter Van Hees & Dimitry Karakatsanis and directed by Van Hees. It was released on October 27th, 2009. It is not rated.

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