

"THE FIRST OMEN" IS A MESMERIZING THRILLER!

By David Miller

HOLLYWOOD—This movie really surprised me. I have NEVER been a fan of prequels because you kind of already know how they will end, especially in the horror genre. Unless there is some twist that is a game changer (there rarely is), you're watching a movie where you know what the end result will be before you even start it. Well, enter "The First Omen" which is a prequel to the 1976 classic starring Gregory Peck and Lee Remick as they battle the spawn of the Antichrist. Truth be told the original "The Omen" is a damn spooky horror flick.

This time around we learn a bit more about how Damien is conceived and who his mother is. There have been plenty of comparisons between "The First Omen" and the recent horror flick "Immaculate" starring Sydney Sweeney of "Euphoria" fame. I enjoyed "Immaculate," but I was enamored with "The First Omen."

The tension in the latter was just more captivating for me.

For starters the opening is quite wicked with a nod to the 1976 classic. There are a few scenes in this prequel that tip its hat to iconic moments in the original that as a viewer if you've seen that movie you know exactly what is transpiring. Similar to "Immaculate," "The First Omen" follows novitiate Margaret Daino (Nell Tiger Lee) who arrives in Italy from America to work at an orphanage for little girls. Margaret arrives at a time where political discourse is heightened with left-wing protests.

Lee is fantastic in the role and truly carries this movie from start to finish. She is poised, confident and brings a fascinating maturity to a character that is more layered than you expect. I mean I've never witnessed someone planning to become a nun

go out to a club and actually party, but perhaps there is more to the story there. That is where "The First Omen" works quite well. You have this narrative that you absolutely believe is leading you in one direction then 'boom' out of nowhere it redirects and your eyes are open to a mystery happening behind the scenes that you should have realized, but you're too enamored into what is unfolding to catch those subtle hints.

Are the thematic elements of the church, religion, pregnancy and a woman's right on whether to carry a child or not a focal point of discussion? Absolutely, and with all the legalese unfolding in this country with the abortion debate the movie totally makes males and females in particular discuss that issue of a woman's right to choose. I enjoyed that the movie is not ladled with blood, but when it does happen it delivers.

There is also this interesting bond between Margaret and Carlita (Nicole Sorace), a child at the orphanage who is deemed 'bad,' but all is not as it seems. There is so much more to the story and director Arkasha Stevenson builds that tension quite well.

My one gripe with the movie is the lighting. I get it is a horror film and things are to be dark, but not so dark whereas a viewer cannot tell what is unfolding. I get if that is the purpose to build tension for something big that is about to be revealed, but if major plot points are taking place and I can't see what is happening that is a problem for me. The camera work is not the most pristine in those moments.

Overall, "The First Omen" might be the best flick since the original and after six movies in the franchise; I can totally see a sequel in the works that I would be so eager to see what unfold next.

"MONKEY MAN" HIGH-OCTANE ACTION, LITTLE STORY

By David Miller

HOLLYWOOD—A lot of you might be thinking, where in the world did the title "Monkey Man" come from? Trust me after watching the high-octane action flick it will all make perfect sense. The movie is the directorial debut for actor Dev Patel and while NOT critically amazing, it is damn entertaining as a spectator. Think of "Monkey Man" as a clash between "Fight Club" and "John Wick" on steroids.

The movie is a revenge tale, that is the best way to sum it up. You have the journey of Kid (Patel), who is out to find and kill all the people involved in the murder of his mother Neela (Adithi Kalkunte) when he was a kid at the hands of Rana Singh (Sikandar Kher), a corrupt police chief who brutalizes Neela as Kid watches from a distance.

"Monkey Man" is not for the faint of heart

people. The blood is relentless and the violence is in your face and does NOT apologize, and I love the movie for that. Kid earns a living participating in fights in an underground world where he gets beat to a pulp, while wearing, you guessed it a 'Monkey Mask.' Patel is really great in the role and we get these chaotic flashbacks that gives the audience a slight glimmer of Kid's upbringing and the bond he shared with his mother.

The audience is also introduced to a horde of characters that will ultimately be targets that Kid battles through in his quest for vengeance, but we don't get much story on those individuals. I mean we have drug lords, prostitutes, political figures, spiritual leaders and corruption. At times "Monkey Man" felt like a tale on morals, integrity and in that

mix was an element of a vigilante doing his best to fix the corrupt system.

The only difference is he was not a superhero with powers like Batman; he was an ordinary man who developed a skill set to fight and uses those skills after being pointed in the right direction to his advantage. I did want to know a bit more about the Baba (Makarand Deshpande), who has all this control over people and gets them to do his bidding while keeping his hands clean in the process. As a villain, he didn't give me that "Oh, I should be scared of you feeling" that you want in a movie.

"Monkey Man" has all these other plotlines lingering throughout the main narrative, where you get small slices, but not as much as I prefer, but I suspect that is what Patel was going for. He wanted the audience to be

in this adrenaline-fueled fight fest from start to finish, and the choreographed fights are stellar. I loved watching them and I was glued to seeing the hand-to-hand combat. You have gun fights, car chases, explosions, stabbings and just a ton of action that you expect in a movie like this.

As for character development, it is virtually flat. The audience is purely going to care about Kid and only Kid; of course we want more backstory about his mother Neela and some of the other villains in the flick, but maybe a prequel might explain those loopholes.

"Monkey Man" is simply a movie that is aimed to entertain you for two hours and it does just that. Simple, mindless fun, you're not supposed to be thinking, just enjoy the ride.

ASHLEY ABBOTT BATTLES FOR CONTROL ON "YOUNG AND RESTLESS"

By Donald Thompson

HOLLYWOOD—This might be one of the most captivating tales that "The Young and the Restless" has crafted in a very long time and I am so excited to see actress Eileen Davidson get the opportunity to sink her teeth into it. Ashley is suffering from a Dissociative Identity Disorder with multiple personalities trying to take over. I can't recall seeing a narrative like this on a soap opera in quite some time. Ashley's situation is precarious because it feels like it is a direct result of her relationship with Tucker McCall.

Plain and simple, Tucker has pushed Ashley to her limit and her alters are fighting for control. We have 'Ash' and 'Ms. Abbott,' and the latter is the one to worry about. Her primary concern is to ensure Ashley is safe at all costs and that means ensuring Tucker and anyone who might be a threat to her is taken out. I did predict the possibility of a Tucker McCall murder mystery unfolding on the soap because of the amount of enemies he has created.

Do I still suspect that? No, but I do suspect the possibility of him getting caught in the

crosshairs of some danger because of Ashley's DID? Without a doubt, and that also holds true for Audra who is poking her nose where it doesn't belong.

The only saving grace about this is that all in Ashley's orbit, Jack, Traci, Billy, Tucker and even Audra realize there is seriously something wrong with Ashley, but will they get her the help she needs before she does something that is catastrophic? Time will tell. We should chat about another narrative that is getting more screen time, but it is NOT as riveting as it was a few months ago. I'm referring to Jordan, the woman who won't go away and appears to always be one step ahead of the Newman clan.

Nikki and Victor are planning a massive celebration of their love for the past 50 years and it seems Jordan is primed to strike once again and this is just boring. You would think this woman is some mastermind. I mean she was arrested and jailed and found a way to escape. She started a fire, she poisoned herself, she was captured and has still managed to escape yet again. Like what the hell!

Seriously what is it going to take to take this woman out? Perhaps a bullet, a car crash or something else, not sure, but it is time to put Jordan and her vendetta against the Newman family to bed because it is no longer working for me. I just don't care, if I'm being honest. You know what I do care about, this revenge tour that Lily is having. I've always seen Lily as just giving in to those who screw her over, well not anymore. Daniel and Heather sneaking around behind Lily's back caused a ruckus at Chancellor-Winters. Why?

Heather and Daniel are both out of a job and Lily is holding Daniel's gaming app over his head. I mean these two were young lovebirds I wanted to see get back together and to have them at all-out war with one another is about to get nasty. I think things might get legal and who comes out as a victor, I'm not sure, but I'm eager to see the chaos unfold. This is a side of Lily we rarely see and when she is hurt, she strikes. I wonder if Cane Lily's former hubby could be making a return to GC to mend that broken heart.

Summer is worried a bit too much about Claire. Get over it, the girl is your cousin, and she has developed a bond with Harrison, the kid that you haven't thought about in quite some time. Summer is acting like she's a saint, girl, take a minute and reflect on all the devious things you did as a young adult before you were forced to mature? Claire was raised by a monster and has finally got a bit of stability in her life and people around her that care about her wellbeing, Kyle being one of them.

Oh, it is so obvious that the writers are gearing up for a Claire and Kyle pairing and I'm all for it. Kyle needs a love interest and so does Claire. Also, what is happening with Victoria and Cole? I mean they shared a kiss, could Victoria's former flame become a new and permanent one? It is very possible and starting to look that way. For all else in GC, just not that interesting at the moment, so the writers should turn the focus on the tales that matter because May Sweeps is starting to gear up and I wonder what chaos is going to unfold.