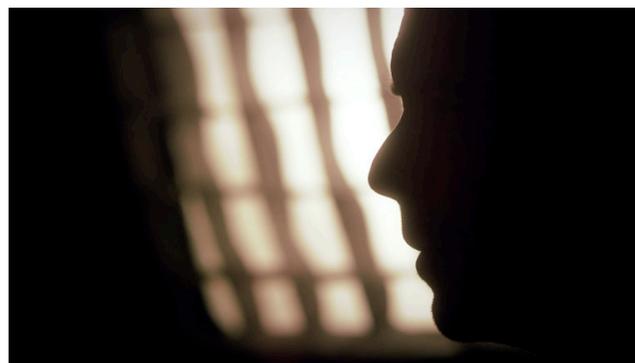
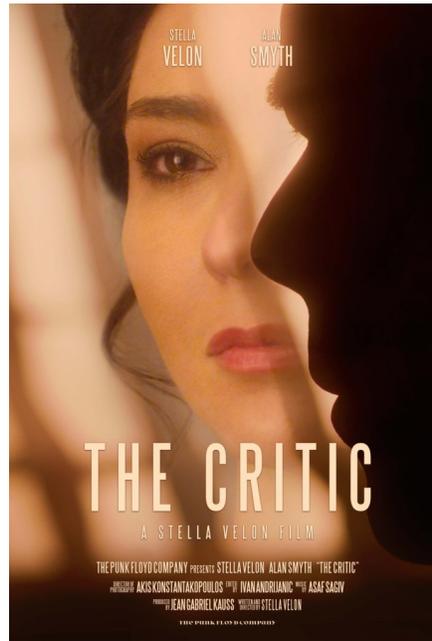


Short Film Review "The Critic"



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First, the Recap:

What is it to have sway, significance, and prestige? To encounter the power of influence and have the ability to imbue value into whatever it is that you put your talents and efforts into? Yet, despite this state of success, what if the applause dies away and the accolades fade into memory? What happens when you're abruptly, unexpectedly, thrust into the face of criticism? It is the twilight of a day, and for one recently dubbed "award-winning" actress ([Stella Velon](#)), there is now opportunity to speak about her newly earned success story with a local critic ([Alan Smyth](#)), agreeing to open up her home and conduct an interview with him, representing a chance for her to shine even more.

The session begins like any other, with congratulatory sentiments offered, a little general banter, and then the real questions arise about how it feels to win such an award being a newcomer amidst veterans of the trade, and so on. However, the interviewer soon begins to aim questions at her that would seem to, at first, be mildly "intrusive" in nature, which the actress handles well. But, soon, the questions become far more pointed, now acutely and, in some cases, painfully personal, the biting qualities of them causing a building discomfort and annoyance for the highly unnerved young thespian. As the interviewer's calm, yet definitively self-righteous, tone and line of queries relentlessly moves forward, is it his view of her that's actually in dispute—or her own?

Next, my Mind:

A quietly fierce, dramatically potent, and heartbreakingly palpable exercise in what could very well be one of the most impactful inward looks at the realities found within the celebrity mindset, writer/director/actress Stella Velon's 15-minute indie short film profoundly places the viewer right into the core of an

interview gone wrong. Steeped in emotionally-charged gravitas throughout, whether subtle or blatant, it shines that revealing light upon concepts ranging from the tactlessness of the press to one actress' own internal battle with ghosts from her past, all welling up in one session of increasingly stormy confrontation that illustrates so well the ultimate notion so many of us as moviegoing masses seem at times to refuse acknowledgement of—these people aren't perfect, and beyond the amazing talents they do bring to the table, they're still only human.

It's an interesting and provocative statement made through a wonderfully clever narrative that deftly navigates this actress' confident yet humble high at the award she's just won, enjoying the spotlight until the interviewer begins to put words into her mouth, misconstruing truths, manipulatively rewording what she's just answered, and causing such an unsettled state in her as she's suddenly faced with her own fallibilities and mistakes made, reaching a boiling point that brings about a less-than-amicable end to the proceedings and moves to one amazingly well-crafted finale that really puts an exclamation point to events in a believable and affecting way. The entire situation mainly leaves you wanting the interviewer to be literally punched in the face, as it does remind this critic of stories about the many times it does seem press oversteps its bounds in their treatment of celebrities for the sake of a story.

Yet, it also reflects just how much we truly don't know about what goes on behind the closed doors of these actors' lives, and when we look at the tragedies like Philip Seymour Hoffman, Robin Williams, et al, it's an all-too-real portrait that what we see on the surface as "the perfect life" they lead isn't always everything it appears to be. Plus, how DO these individuals actually see themselves, and what genuine struggles do they engage with each and every day when away from stage or screen? The cinematography here is perfection in its treatment of the thematic goals the film has, beautifully

“personal” for the viewer in its clarity and precision in capturing every nuance and moment of revelation the story presents, with the added effective touch of keeping the actress in the spotlight and the interviewer in shadow, an almost eerily ominous visual dichotomy given the way events progress, especially with its wicked twist of an ending.

Velon brings charm, an undeniably innocent allure, and a deeply grounded sense of vulnerability in her role as the actress, a fresh face on the scene who's coming off a recent awards win for a performance, most likely akin to a “Best Actress” Oscar, having done so as a debutante in the industry and outdoing many of her more seasoned and superbly talented peers. It's a win for the ages, and her initial reactions to the interviewer's questions reflect this until he begins casting stones, garnering, for him, a satisfyingly anxious and flustered state in her, even as she desperately attempts to deflect and redirect the nature of the interview. Watching as she reaches a total state of agitation until finally breaking and lashing back, it does bring to mind real-life instances where celebrities have walked out of interviews due to the substance of what was being asked and here it's as if we get to see a possible scenario that could unfold being portrayed, and over the course of the entire film, Velon just makes you experience every little iota of joy, then initial uneasiness, then full-out anger and panic the character goes through to such a stirring degree, a gorgeous performance without question.

Smyth most certainly does a fantastic job in creating a character you unequivocally love to hate in his enacting of the critic/interviewer, who at first seems like such a nice, normal, down-to-earth reporter simply wanting to take every advantage of getting to speak with this rising star until his goals seem to take a drastic and needlessly harsh turn. Soon choosing to make his subject face what he now appears to feel are her massive insecurities about an admittedly imperfect past and how it might end up affecting her ongoing career, potentially being just a “flash-in-the-pan” rather than having longevity

in the industry, his constant reworking of her answers to throw her off just keep building and building until he's finally on the receiving end of one embittered actress' opinion of him, which interestingly enough might just be the truths he himself never wanted to face. It's a powerful, albeit disturbingly angering attitude permeating the character, and Smyth very much engages you with his performance, even if you want to smack the character multiple times throughout the majority of the scenes.

One primary supporting appearance is made by [Todd Karner](#), and while I cannot say specifically what it is for the sake of any possible spoilers, it can be stated the importance of it is paramount to the story's ultimate kicker. In total, "The Critic" is a sublime piece of indie film magic, currently on what I can only believe should be a hugely successful festival run, that I honestly hope not only gains the awards it deserves, but perhaps acts as some small form of wake-up call to us as the public when it comes to our ideas about celebrity and what we think it means, as even with all the success and glamour that appears on the outside, we shouldn't ever discount what may actually be residing beneath it all.

As always, this is all for your consideration and comment. Until next time, thank you for reading!