

Film review: *Obsessed*: Harrowing psychological thriller

Written by Kam Williams

Derek Charles (Idris Elba) is on top of the world, having recently been promoted to Executive Vice President at Gage Bendix, a leading, Los Angeles investment house. Furthermore, the coveted asset manager, who couldn't be more in love with his beautiful wife, Sharon (Beyoncé'), and adorable young son, Kyle (Nathan and Nicolas Myers), has just purchased a sprawling, suburban McMansion for his picture-perfect family.

However, Derek has no idea that their American Dream is about to morph into a never-ending nightmare the fateful morning he crosses paths with Lisa Sheridan (Ali Larter), an attractive stranger who flirts with him on the elevator on his way to work. They exit together on his floor where, to his surprise, he soon discovers that she has already been assigned by her temp agency to fill-in for his secretary, Patrick (Matthew Humphreys), who's out with the flu.

Derek knows that this arrangement won't sit well with Sharon, since he's promised her he'd never hire another female assistant because their love had blossomed out of an office romance. Yet, against his better judgment, he not only lets Lisa stay for the rest of the day, but even allows her to remain with the firm indefinitely after Patrick returns from sick leave.

Meanwhile, Lisa's inappropriate behavior gradually escalates from crying on Derek's shoulder over martinis to cornering him for a kiss under the mistletoe at the company Christmas party to following him into the men's room to trying to seduce him in the parking garage and more. Inexplicably, Derek proves to be either too polite, too flattered or too dense (or maybe a combination of all of the above) to fire Lisa on the spot. Instead, he recklessly risks both his career and his marriage by failing to mention to his wife or his boss (Bruce McGill) that he's being stalked by a delusional employee who craves his body.

Superficially, the plotline of *Obsessed* reads like a thinly-veiled remake of *Fatal Attraction*, as it features so many similarities to that classic thriller that the original's scriptwriter, James

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Dearden, deserves to share a credit for the screenplay. Whether it's the suicidal sexpot, the kidnapping of Derek's son, his fed-up wife's being forced to take the law into her own hands, or the femme fatale having nine lives in the climactic finale, the story often looks like a line-by-line rip-off.

Nonetheless, that being said, the three principal cast members throw themselves into their respective roles with such gusto that they manage to generate a palpable tension which makes this B-version feel genuinely fresh and exciting. Elba rises to the challenge of playing his clueless character convincingly, while Beyonce' is just as good as the doubting spouse with serious trust issues. But it is Larter as home wrecking Lisa who steals the movie by serving up a scary screen monster so despicable you'll be cheering with relief by the time she finally gets her comeuppance.

A cautionary reminder that Hell still hath no fury like a woman scorned, especially when she's a crazy, two-faced psycho.

Very Good (3 stars)

Rated PG-13 for sexuality, violence, suggestive dialogue and mature themes.

Running time: 105 minutes

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Studio: Screen Gems

To see a trailer for Obsessed, visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v6d1Y1IDZYY>