



FILM: **PHANTOM THREAD**

FDG RATING: 3.4 ☺☺☺☺○

Film Discussion Group (FDG) Scale is 1-5 (5 is best)

Paul Thomas Anderson: *director*  
Daniel Day-Lewis: *actor, Reynolds Woodcock*  
Vicky Krieps: *actress, Alma*

DATE: February 18, 2018

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **PHANTOM THREAD**

Daniel Day-Lewis, who is always superb in any role, stars as renowned, obsessive, arrogant, British couture fashion designer/dressmaker Reynolds Woodcock, whose cliental includes royalty, movie stars, heiresses, and socialites. Set in the glamour of 1950's post-war London, debutantes and dames crave the distinct style of The House of Woodcock. The trailer shows Woodcock sewing cryptic messages into the seams and hems of his couture garments which framed the film as an intrigue-mystery. Instead, the film has a much weirder theme. Maybe the title should be 50 Shades of Thread rather than Phantom Thread since Reynold's relationship with his latest young, female model-muse has traits of dominatrix.

We sense a strangeness about his relationships with women from the start when we meet his sister Cyril (Lesley Manville) who not only manages the business side of the House of Woodcock, but also her brother's life making sure his days run as smoothly as possible to avoid any emotional disruptions which would delay design production. He is getting tired of his current fashion-model paramour, (he regularly replaces them) so his sister suggests a change of scenery. Reynolds travels to his sea side cottage where he flirts with the young émigré waitress, Alma, at the inn. He is the older, obviously wealthy, cultured, manipulatively charming gentleman and she is rather plain. We would expect a sheepish response from her when he invites her to sit at his table and then stares somewhat admiringly at her. Instead, she looks straight back at him and states, "If you want to have a staring match, I'll win." That's the first inkling that this is going to be an interesting pas de deux, not Reynold's typical acquiescent, adoring young female. Alma moves into his home and life as muse and lover, disrupting his carefully controlled, tailored life.

Most of us didn't expect the dark turn of events as Alma finds a way to completely control Reynolds and more unexpectedly is his willingness to be transported to that somewhat helpless state. As explained by one discussion participant, Reynold's normal high strung, compulsive, obsessive composure often exhausted him, so being in a weak, submissive condition was something his body and mind needed.

For some, the story moved too slowly, but we agreed the performances were outstanding by all three main characters. The scene when Alma, purposely, scrapes her toast at the breakfast table, and the sound is greatly amplified which is how Reynolds perceives this magnified irritating sound, we see the jousting of power between the two. It was a film of odd relationships, obsession, power, control versus submission. Even Reynold's dead mother exerts a formidable influence from the spirit world. A bit of a gothic fairytale where everyone sort of lives happily ever after, each fulfilling the other's somewhat eccentric emotional needs.

The cinematography was outstanding. The settings, scenes, and fashions beautifully captured the glamour of 1950s London haute couture. We saw the devout dedication of the seamstresses and the fanatic focus on detail by Reynolds.

Despite discussion comments that the story and relationship were too bizarre, we collectively were won over. One resident reviewer summed up Phantom Thread as a lurid story wrapped in a beautiful package, moving slowly toward its end. For us, the film ended with a score of 3.4 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best.)



See you at the movies!

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