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Out of Competition



THE
MOTH
DIARIES

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY
MARY HARRON

LILY COLE
SARAH GADON
SARAH BOLGER
SCOTT SPEEDMAN

**ALLIANCE FILMS and EDWARD R. PRESSMAN
PRESENT**

A MEDIAMAX/SAMSON FILMS COPRODUCTION
IN ASSOCIATION WITH STRADA FILMS AND LIONSGATE UK

THE MOTH DIARIES

**Written and Directed by
MARY HARRON**

Starring

LILY COLE SARAH GADON SARAH BOLGER SCOTT SPEEDMAN

**Produced by
KARINE MARTIN & DAVID COLLINS**

2011 · CANADA/EIRE · 85 MIN · 1.85 · COLOUR

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SYNOPSIS

Rebecca, a young girl haunted by her father's suicide, begins her junior year at an elite girls' boarding school, hoping for a fresh start. From the outset, her friendship with sunny, innocent Lucy is shattered by the arrival of Ernessa, a mysterious, darkly beautiful girl from Europe. As Ernessa consumes more and more of Lucy's attention, the latter's healthy young body grows pale, thin and weak - as if being drained of life itself.

Her friendship with Lucy slipping away, Rebecca develops a crush on her handsome English professor, Mr. Davies, who is teaching a course on supernatural fiction. Obsessed with Le Fanu's vampire story 'Carmilla', she is increasingly suspicious of Ernessa's odd behavior and Lucy's wasting illness, and when mysterious deaths shock the school, becomes convinced that Ernessa is a vampire. Rebecca finds herself isolated when the other girls dismiss her suspicions as mere jealousy and Mr. Davies betrays her trust. As Lucy's inexplicable illness turns deadly, Rebecca is left alone to battle with Ernessa for the life of her friend.

The supernatural elements in "THE MOTH DIARIES" are rooted in the real experience of a young girl faced with her emerging sexuality and caught in a web of obsessive friendship, jealousy and betrayal.

MARY HARRON

Director's Statement

For years I've wanted to make a different kind of horror film, one that could both scare an audience, and stand on its own as an emotional drama. When I read 'The Moth Diaries', I felt it was the perfect vehicle to do exactly that and producer Ed Pressman, with whom I first collaborated on 'American Psycho', agreed.

I have always loved the way a supernatural tale can evoke our deepest subterranean fears. The current crop of vampire movies has skewed towards the romantic or comic, but 'The Moth Diaries' is closer to the old gothic tales where eroticism and death are entwined.

It is also a story about teenage girls and their passionate friendships. These intense emotional attachments form when girls pour all their emotions into each other because, as the narrator Rebecca says in the novel, they are not ready for "the big world of sex and men". This is a world that has rarely been captured on film. 'Heavenly Creatures' and 'Picnic at Hanging Rock' come to mind, but recently, girl friendship is more likely to be portrayed in light teen comedies, leaving the deeper undercurrents unexplored.

'The Moth Diaries' is a re-working of Sheridan Le Fanu's 'Carmilla', the female vampire tale that preceded, and helped inspire, Bram Stoker's 'Dracula'. (It is because Rebecca is actually reading 'Carmilla' that she first begins to suspect Ernessa). In these early stories the nature of the vampire's need is left ambiguous, and that is what makes

these characters so enthralling: our own imaginations fill in the blanks.

The vampire's hunger is physical, but tinged with something erotic and emotional. That's what makes it such a perfect metaphor for bad relationships: people do feed off others, they do try and take over one another.

One of the things I loved about the book is that it took a supernatural story and made it a parable for all the things that girls go through in adolescence. With her body changing and swelling and her emotions running riot, a girl's adolescent transformation is, to her, like her own personal horror movie. The way the book took those aspects of anorexia and self-harming and suicidal thoughts and used the vampire myth to explore them was something I had never seen before.

When writing the script I thought about my favorite horror films from the past, the ones that stay with you long after the last scream has died away. Films like 'Rosemary's Baby', 'Carrie' and 'The Shining' all have a powerful personal story that holds up even without the supernatural element. This is what gives these films their enduring power, and that is the kind of story I wanted to tell. In the case of 'The Moth Diaries' it is not just the drama of the girls' friendship: it is also the story of Rebecca's coming of age as she struggles to free herself from the ghosts of her past.

CINEMATIC INFLUENCES

As well as my usual heroes like Kubrick, Polanski, Cronenberg and da Palma, I have also been inspired recently by Spanish directors like Alejandro Amenabar ('The Others') Guillermo del Toro ('Pan's Labyrinth') and Juan Antonio Bayona ('The Orphanage') who have reinvigorated the psychological horror film. Their films have much more emotional depth and subtlety than recent North American horror. They have enjoyed tremendous critical and commercial success around the world, yet Hollywood studios still shy away from producing anything that does not fall firmly within the rigid confines of 'genre horror'. My goal was to try and make an original English language film that could break out of that genre straitjacket and follow the path of a more complex, emotionally resonant, horror story.

VISUAL STYLE

The film uses a wide range of visual references, beginning with English romantic landscape painting of the 19th Century (paintings done at the same time the first vampire novels were written) in which the natural world seems intensely alive and almost supernatural. For the black and white flashbacks that tell the story of Ernesha's previous life I looked at the dreamy, ghostlike photographs of Julia Margaret Cameron; and for a more modern reference, the works of Justine Kerland and her photographs of packs of teenage girls wandering through wild landscapes.

The goal was to create a heightened reality. The special effects started with something actual – the moon, fire, blood –

then manipulated and enhanced it.

The emotional life of the film needed to be grounded in a world that feels tangible and real.

MARY HARRON Selected Filmography

Born January 12, 1953, Mary Harron is listed as one of Entertainment Weekly's "Top 50 Greatest Active Directors".

'The Moth Diaries' marks the reteaming of Harron with prolific producer Edward R. Pressman, their first collaboration having been the international hit 'American Psycho' starring Christian Bale.

Her upcoming projects include 'Wicked/Lovely', based on the best-selling Melissa Marr novels.

2005 **THE NOTORIOUS BETTIE PAGE**

2000 **AMERICAN PSYCHO**

1996 **I SHOT ANDY WARHOL**
*Sundance Film Festival,
nomination for Grand Jury Prize
Dramatic Award*

LILY COLE (as Ernessa)
Selected Filmography

- 2012 **SNOW WHITE
AND THE HUNTSMAN**
Rupert Sanders
- 2011 **CONFESSION OF A CHILD
OF THE CENTURY**
Sylvie Verheyde
- THERE BE DRAGONS**
Roland Joffé
- THE MOTH DIARIES**
Mary Harron
Venice FF – Out of Competition
Toronto International FF
- 2009 **THE IMAGINARIUM OF
DOCTOR PARNASSUS**
Terry Gilliam
Academy Award® nominations
for Best Art Direction and
Costume Design
- RAGE**
Sally Potter
Berlin International FF –
In Competition
- 2007 **ST. TRINIAN'S**
Oliver Parker & Barnaby Thompson

SARAH GADON (as Lucy)
Selected Filmography

- 2012 **COSMOPOLIS**
David Cronenberg
- DREAM HOUSE**
Jim Sheridan
- A DANGEROUS METHOD**
David Cronenberg
Venice FF – In Competition
- THE MOTH DIARIES**
Mary Harron
Venice FF – Out of Competition
Toronto International FF
- 2009 **LESLIE, MY NAME IS EVIL**
Reginald Arkema
- 2007 **CHARLIE BARTLETT**
Jon Poll

SARAH BOLGER (as Rebecca) **Selected Filmography**

- 2012 **AS COOL AS I AM**
Max Myer
- 2011 **THE MOTH DIARIES**
Mary Harron
Venice FF – Out of Competition
Toronto International FF
- 2008 **THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES**
Mark Waters
- 2006 **ALEX RIDER: STORMBREAKER**
Geoffrey Sax
- 2002 **IN AMERICA**
Jim Sheridan
Academy Award® nomination
for Best Screenplay
Golden Globes nomination
for Best Screenplay

TV

- 2010 **THE TUDORS (TV series)**
role: Mary Tudor
2010 IFTA Awards - Best Actress
in a Supporting Role in TV

SCOTT SPEEDMAN (as Mr. Davies) **Biography**

SCOTT SPEEDMAN most recently starred in 'Barney's Version' opposite Paul Giamatti and Dustin Hoffman for director Richard Lewis, 'Good Neighbours' opposite Jay Baruchel for director Jacob Tierney and 'Adoration' for

director Atom Egoyan. Prior to that he starred opposite Liv Tyler in Universal/Rogue's box-office smash 'The Strangers' and IFC Films' 'Anamorph', starring opposite Willem Dafoe, for director Henry Miller.

Upcoming, he stars in 'The Vow', opposite Rachel McAdams and Channing Tatum for director Michael Sucasny and 'Edwin Boyd' playing the title role of Canada's most infamous bank robber.

His other film credits include Allan Moyle's 'Weirdsville', Len Wiseman's 'Underworld' and 'Underworld: Evolution', starring opposite Kate Beckinsale; Ron Shelton's 'Dark Blue', opposite Kurt Russell; Isabel Coixet's 'My Life Without Me', opposite Sarah Polley, for which he won Best Actor at the Bordeaux International Film Festival; Tony Piccirillo's 'The 24th Day', opposite James Marsden; Bruce Paltrow's 'Duets', co-starring Gwyneth Paltrow and Maria Bello; Lee Tamahori's 'xXx: State of the Union'; and Gary Burns' 'Kitchen Party'.

His first film was the short feature 'Can I Get a Witness?', directed by Kris Lefcoe. The film was developed at the Canadian Film Centre in Toronto, founded by Norman Jewison, and was screened at the 1996 Toronto International Film Festival. Speedman then began studying at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York before landing the role of 'Ben Covington' in the popular WB Network drama 'Felicity', which had a successful four-season run. He made his stage debut during his summer 2000 hiatus from 'Felicity', performing the lead in the Edward Albee play 'The Zoo Story' at the Equity Theatre in Toronto.

CAST

LILY COLE *as Ernessa*
SARAH GADON *as Lucy*
SARAH BOLGER *as Rebecca*
JUDY PARFITT *as Mrs. Rood*
MELISSA FARMAN *as Dora*
LAURENCE HAMELIN *as Sofia*
GIA SANDHU *as Kiki*
VALERIE TIAN *as Charley*
SCOTT SPEEDMAN *as Mr. Davies*

CREW

Written and Directed by
MARY HARRON

DP
DECLAN QUINN

Editor
ANDREW MARCUS

Original Music
LESLEY BARBER

Production Designer
SYLVAIN GINGRAS

Sound Editor
PATRICK DRUMMOND
NIKKI MOSS

Costume Designer
NICOLETTA MASSONE

Special Effects
RYAL COSGROVE

Coproduction
MEDIAMAX
SAMSON FILMS

Produced by
KARINE MARTIN
DAVID COLLINS

Executive Producers
SANDRA CUNNINGHAM
EDWARD R. PRESSMAN
MARK SLONE
JEAN-FRANCOIS DORAY
LOUIS-SIMON MENARD
NORTON HERRICK
ZYGI KAMASA
JON KATZ

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