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The Night House

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The Night House

Abstract

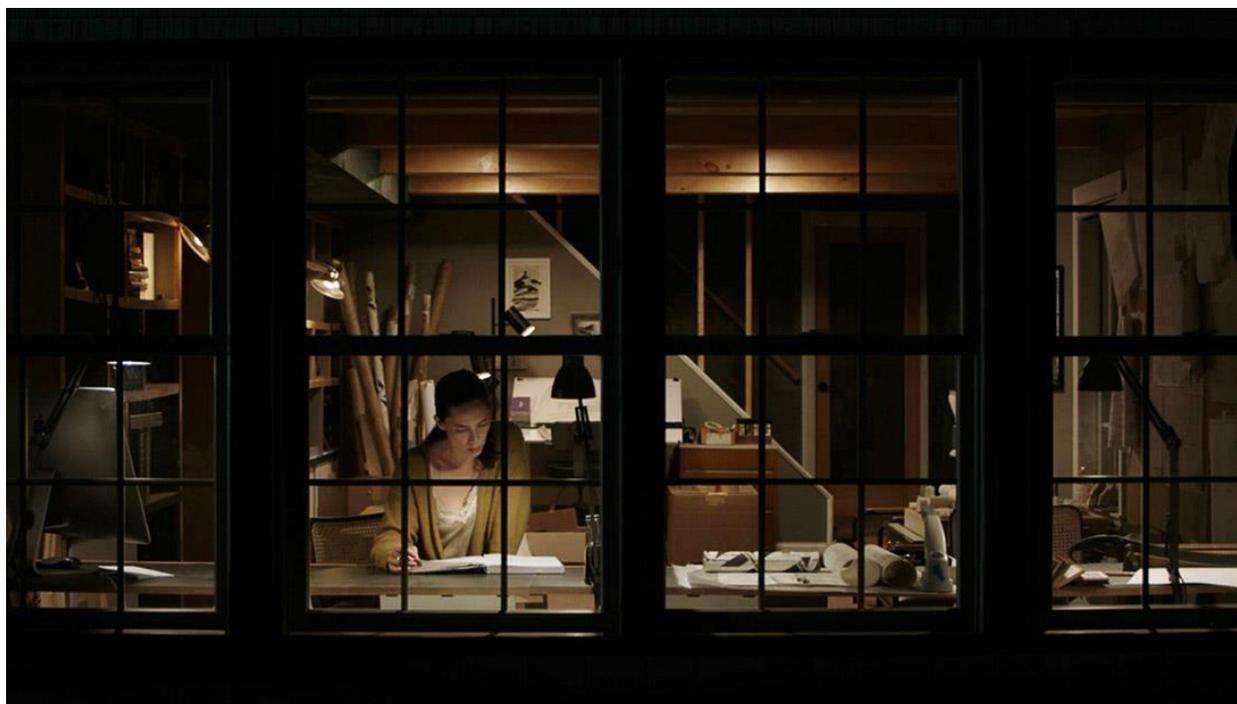
This is a film review of *The Night House* (2020), directed by David Bruckner.

Keywords

Horror, #Metoo

Author Notes

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The Night House (2019) dir. David Bruckner

The Night House plays with genre and common themes, surprising us with a horror narrative with many twists and turns. The strength of the film is its surprise ending which is discussed in this review. The director relies heavily on sound for jump scares, and not simply atmospheric sounds, but sound volume. This is extremely effective—however, it can be an assault on the audience. The actors are naturalistic and compelling, aiding in the believability of the narrative.

Beth, a young widow (Rebecca Hall), slowly discovers that her husband Owen (Evan Jonigkeit) was not quite who she thought his was. This revelation starts with his unexpected suicide. Soon, she believes he may be trying to communicate with her. Hall plays Beth in a compelling way; manic, depressive, drinking, as she tries to navigate her new life. Beth is at times aggressive and angry, and attempts to be empowered as she decides what to do in her new life. During the process of trying to regain control, she decides to sell her lake house, not only because

her husband built it but also because he committed suicide on the lake. At this point she finds a notebook which suggests he was very disturbed.

Initially the narrative takes the tack that her husband's ghost is visiting her nightly. However, it's much more complicated than that. Beth finds images on her husband's phone of women who look very similar to her. By following these leads she starts to determine that perhaps he was having affairs and engaged in bondage or sexual sadism. There are a lot of red herrings in the film, but none that are deliberate throwaways, and they all add to the plot and come together as the film concludes with the realization that Owen was protecting Beth from a demon (or perhaps the devil himself) by using the occult.

The film merges various themes and styles, creating a unique experience: initially, it starts out more as a thriller, but then moves into slasher horror and finishes in supernatural or occult horror. Hall's portrayal of Beth as she grapples with the things she learns is interesting, especially as she doesn't always react "the right way" to her husband's death. We also have an unreliable narrator of sorts in the character of Beth, as we only see Owen through her eyes and learn about him as she does.