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Run Sweetheart Run

Jodi McDavid

Cape Breton University, jodi@mcdauidbrodie.com

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Abstract

This is a film review of *Run Sweetheart Run* (2020) directed by Shana Feste.

Keywords

Horror, #Metoo

Author Notes

Jodi McDavid is an instructor in folklore and gender and women's studies at Cape Breton University.



Run Sweetheart Run (2019) dir. Shana Fest

Although in the horror genre, *Run Sweetheart Run* does pick up some of the similar threads that the documentary *On the Record* addresses. What has #MeToo looked like for the African American community? Are marginalized women considered more expendable?

Shana Fest is known as a director for more dramatic films, so this horror film, produced in part by BlumHouse, is a departure from her previous films and uses her own real-life experience of a “bad date” as inspiration. The film opens in what I can only describe as a very 1980s style, with a satirical self-referential vibe. Although this is not the tenor of the whole film, it is invoked at times, perhaps to show that you are in sort of a storybook interpretation of a potentially real-world event.

This seems like an attempt by the director to distance the viewer from the content in a protective way. At its heart, this film is a female empowerment narrative. I was appreciative of the

fact that the director worked to imply violence in parts, sometimes even breaking the fourth wall in a clever way. To the casual viewer this may not be noticeable, but, after a time you grow tired of seeing women raped and their bodies being maimed as a way to develop character and further narrative. Despite this being the seed narrative of the story, it is not gratuitous. The director regularly brings us in after the violence, which is an interesting and admirable choice.

Cherie, a young, newly separated African American mother living in LA, is set up on a blind date by her boss. Ethan, an affluent white man who supports himself with “family money,” seems perfect at first but as the night progresses, he exposes himself to be a monster. A literal monster. Two thirds of this film is entirely plausible, while one third is surprisingly related to the occult. Although never completely specific about what kind of monster he is (again, portions of this happen offscreen) we can see that he is likely demonic. His primary target is young black women, whom he hunts using his sense of smell. The film uses notions of conspiracy (it seems her boss, and the police, are aware of Ethan’s monstrous nature), and forms from religion and folklore (he has qualities of the devil, vampires, werewolves or perhaps more correctly a *drekavac*, a demon from Serbian folklore). As a film in general, *Run Sweetheart Run* breaks new ground, and as a horror film, it will entertain viewers and perhaps even teach them something about women’s experience.