

The true horror of Obsession derives from men's desire to control women

A crush turned into a bloody nightmare.

Aren't all rom-coms a couple steps away from being horror movies?

The supernatural psychological horror *Obsession* is a low budget phenomenon, which has sparked debates on social media platforms. Through the lens of young filmmaker and YouTuber Curry Barker, *Obsession* exposes Generation Z's scepticism towards the toxicity of the modern dating scene, emphasising contemporary romantic disillusionment.

Lonely music store employee Bear Bailey is in love with his childhood friend Nikki Freeman. In order to win her love he snaps a "One Wish Willow." Although his wish succeeds, it takes a violent and dark turn as Nikki consequentially becomes psychotically obsessed with him. The film reveals the unsettling nature of how society has romanticised the idea of men yearning and being romantically persistent. This has often been characterised by the "shy guy" trope. This is relevant as it is evident in beloved films such as *The Notebook* (2004.) Ryan Gosling's character Noah Calhoun relentlessly writes a letter to Allie everyday for a year, an obvious display of his unyielding persistence. The film takes this trope and exposes the true horror of yearning and persistent romance by stripping it down to an ugly relationship built on a man's fragile ego and his fear of romantic rejection. It exaggerates the reality of toxic relationships that are not built on love and connection, but instead are built on control. Bear possessively states "I wish Nikki Freeman would love me more than anyone in the entire world". Nikki as a consequence of his selfishness becomes a prisoner in her own body. The portrayal of double standards is interesting in the film. When Bear finally gets his wish and Nikki becomes obsessive, he becomes immediately terrified by her, once again highlighting the fragility of his ego.

Bear embodies the nice guy archetype. However, his character arc inverts the traditional shy and harmless guy stereotype. Bear isn't outwardly violent or cruel, meaning he doesn't adopt typical villainous traits. This in turn makes his character morally grey and ambiguous. The Internet phenomenon debate "Man versus bear" is ironic when placed in this film's context. "Man versus bear" brings forth the question that asks women if they would rather be trapped in the woods with a bear or man. The majority of answers being the bear speaks for itself. The main protagonist is a man named Bear, which ironically symbolises how neither option of man or bear is safe in this instance. In the film Bear has an innocent exterior with an underlying predatory disposition.

Obsession operates as a full-throttle horror movie. It uses all elements such as gore, body horror, jump scares, and it has got a supernatural dimension. But, the real horror and the true fear lies in the uncanny familiarity of a woman whose autonomy has un-consensually been taken from her. Nikki's physical and psychological deterioration, stands as a metaphor of patriarchal control and of women who have lost their agency and self-ownership sexually, emotionally and physically. Inde Navarette's performance is deeply harrowing and the scenes where Nikki's true self seeps in are highly distressing. Such as the scene when she's sleeping and begs Bear to kill her. Another controversial aspect is the sexual scenes where

Nikki is not her true self and therefore does not have the ability to consent or be in control of her body. It's as if spectators are watching a legitimate fear that women have come true on a big screen. The unease is overwhelming as viewers have to passively watch the violation of her boundaries as she's treated as subhuman.

Ultimately, Obsession serves as a severe warning that you must "be careful what you wish for."