

ERASERHEAD (1976)

Cast - Henry Spencer (John Nance) - Mary (Charlotte Stewart) - Bill (Allen Joseph) - Mary's Mother (Jeanne Bates) - Beautiful Girl across the Hall (Judith Anna Roberts) - Lady in the Radiator (Laurel Near).

Directors - Producer/Director/Script (David Lynch) - Photography (Frederick Elmes/Herbert Cardwell).

Music - "Lady in the Radiator" by and performed by Peter Ivers.

There is no "must" about ERASERHEAD in which the Cinema of the Grotesque advances one maimed step forward into the Cinema of the Disgusting. It has achieved a cult status in the United States - what is called a midnight movie - and in British daylight it looks positively loathsome. Yet for all that, I can recommend it to those with strong stomachs and the kind of understanding that will hook on to all the references - from Stanley Kubrick. Its director, David Lynch, has a vision that persists in the mind; that it is such an ugly one is to our disadvantage. But he does make it work for all that.

Henry, (John Nance), living in a kind of industrial wasteland, finds that he has become the father of a monstrous "baby", a rabbit-skinned monstrosity that demands all his time and attention. In dreams it devours him; in what passes for reality it eventually assumes gigantic proportions and takes him over. A lever-pulling "God" above all the action throws another switch. Lynch's insistence on the physical indicates that the "baby" forms the appetites that take us over, while the "God" presupposes a deterministic universe. Filmed in black and white it has a superb soundtrack - all hissing and clanking - which presses one down still further. It has all the suffocating quality of somebody else's nightmare. The remarkable fact is that Lynch has sufficient talent to make it ours. If we want it, that is.

- TOM HUTCHINSON:SUNDAY TELEGRAPH 1/4/79 -

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