

## **Review by Richard Propes**

The Independent Critic

Ripping a page out of Rod Serling's cinematic playbook, Co-writer and director Greg Derochie has assembled *Solitary*, a psychological horror flick that works not because it throws blood and guts at the screen but because it doesn't.

After all, what really scares you?

Sure, it's scary to see limbs chopped off and beautiful, nubile young blonds shrieking themselves silly as they run off into their forest of doom. But, does THAT fear really last? Is that the fear that really leaves you thinking, feeling and contemplating the experience days later?

With *Solitary*, Derochie has a film that with the look and feel of early Hitchcock meets Rod Serling, an uncomfortable blending together of psychological horror, suspense, monsters within and the very real world that contains them all.

Sara (Amber Jaeger) is an agoraphobic woman locked inside her home by a paralyzing inner terror whose husband, Mark (Kieron Elliott), has disappeared into the night. Clueless as to his whereabouts, Sara's already fragile mental state becomes ever more fractured, and she becomes convinced that her psychiatrist, Dr. Reznik (Andrew Qamar) is conspiring with her husband to drive her insane with a massive insurance policy hanging in the balance.

Derochie, a Hollywood visual effects vet who has worked on such films as *Alice in Wonderland* and the *Spider-Man* films, co-scripted the film via the internet with Charles Scalfani. When four production offers didn't quite measure up to what he'd hoped, Derochie opted to make the film himself, a microcinema effort in which the film's cast and crew agreed to work for a percentage of the film's profits.

*Solitary* was filmed, quite literally, in Derochie's home utilizing Red Digital Cinema's Red One camera, the latest and greatest cost-effective camera for indie digital filmmakers. The final result is remarkably impressive.

It doesn't hurt that Derochie recruited the marvelous Amber Jaeger in the lead role of Sara, a woman who is attractive and personable enough to make us understand why Mark completely fell for her while being vulnerable enough to make us believe her increasing instability. Jaeger's Sara is utterly heartbreaking as her sanity seemingly disintegrates and she reaches out to her sister, Gina (Kristine Sullivan), with whom she is estranged.

In addition to painting a vivid portrait of Sara's inner demons, Jaeger beautifully captures the paralyzing nature of agoraphobia, an intangible illness that can wreak havoc on virtually every aspect of one's life. To his credit, Derochie unfolds Sara's psyche' slowly and keeps everyone guessing as to exactly what's going on and how it's

all going to end up. Likewise, it's never perfectly clear who's a good guy, who's a bad guy and where the line between reality and fantasy begins and ends.

Despite his history in visual effects, Derochie obviously knew that with his budgetary limits creating an effects-laden film wouldn't work and so *Solitary* is clearly a character-driven, story dependent psychological thriller in which the film's few visual effects are used to complement the story. D.P. Tarina Reed's camera work is a perfect companion for this multi-layered film, seemingly simple images layered in shadows, occasional smokiness and intertwining color and black-and-white photography. Given the film's budgetary constraints, the production values are surprisingly solid, though this critic found the film's closing scene a bit too mystical given the psychological power of the rest of the film.

*Solitary* has been picked up for a DVD release by Osiris Entertainment with release scheduled for March 29, 2011. For more information on *Solitary*, visit the film's website ([www.solitarymovie.com](http://www.solitarymovie.com))

*Solitary* won the coveted New Visions Award at Cinequest, and has also been an official selection at Dances With Films, Sedona Film Festival, Big Bear Lake Film Festival, San Luis Obispo Film Festival, Prescott Film Festival and Shriekfest!