

'Gothika' lacks an effective script

David DiCerto/CNS

NEW YORK — Late in Mathieu Kassovitz's stylish psychological thriller "Gothika," its frayed heroine declares that "logic is overrated." Given the narrative incoherence of much of the movie, it is an opinion obviously shared by the filmmaker.

Kassovitz navigates the murky nether regions of the human mind, crafting a gloomy tale of murder and sexual depravity with a supernatural twist. While he proves adroit at creating suspense, it becomes apparent that the eerie moodiness is a diversionary tactic to distract attention from the poverty of the script.

Halle Berry plays Dr. Miranda Grey, a criminal psychologist working in the psychiatric ward of a dreary women's prison where her husband (Charles Dutton) is chief administrator. She dismisses the satanic rants of one of her patients (Penelope Cruz) as the ravings of a troubled mind, only to later discovering the dark truths they conceal.

She then finds herself an inmate in the asylum and the prime suspect in her husband's gruesome murder.



Warner Brothers/CNS

Robert Downey Jr. and Halle Berry star in the supernatural thriller "Gothika."

Robert Downey Jr. plays a fellow jailhouse shrink who helps her try to salvage her sanity.

Berry effectively conveys Miranda's spiraling disorientation as she struggles to keep her mind from plunging into madness.

On a more morally troubling note,

while the film portrays Miranda as a strong, intelligent professional, it's subtle sexual imagery objectifies rather than empowers women.

Most cinematically interesting is the prison itself, with crypt-like cell-blocks and sepulchral corridors metaphorically mirroring the labyrinthine tangles of Miranda's twisted psyche. But creepy atmospheric can only carry the film so far.

Due to some gory violence, flashes of shadowy nudity, as well as an instance of rough language and occasional crude language and profanity, the USCCB Office for Film & Broadcasting classification is L — limited adult audience, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

DiCerto is on the staff of the Office for Film & Broadcasting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.



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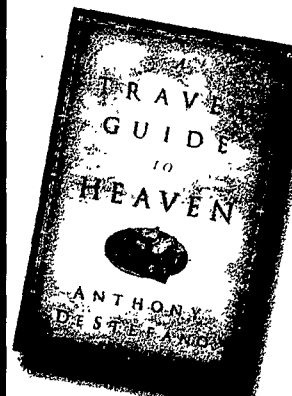
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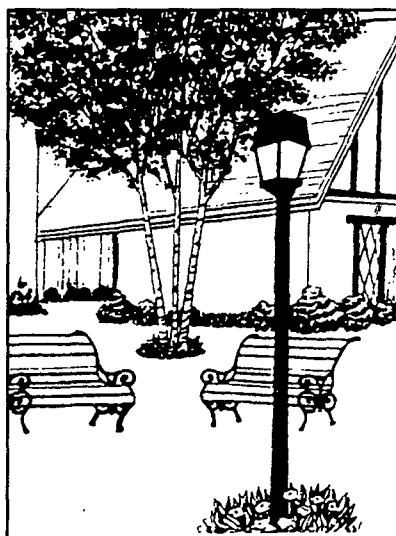
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