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The Addiction

Abel Ferrara

USA, 1994

82 minutes ■ Black and White/35mm

Production Company: **Fast Films**

Executive Producer: **Russell Simmons,**

Preston Holmes

Producer: **Denis Hann, Fernando Sulichin**

Screenplay: **Nicholas St. John**

Cinematographer: **Ken Kelsch**

Editor: **Mayin Lo**

Production Designer: **Charles Lagola**

Sound: **Robert Taz Larrea**

Music: **Joe Delia**

Principal Cast: **Lili Taylor, Christopher Walken, Annabella Sciorra, Edie Falco, Paul Calderon, Kathryn Erbe, Michael Imperioli, Fredro Starr, Jamel "Redrum" Simmons**

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Abel Ferrara has made a vampire movie – and who better to do it? After all, his penchant for violence, religious iconography, and shadowy streets seems tailor-made for the genre, as does his fascination with self-destructive characters. *The Addiction*, however, isn't your typical Ferrara film with fangs; it's quieter, more introspective. By toying with the Stoker-and-Rice standard for the vampire myth, he has injected fresh thinking into the bloodsucker movie. *The Addiction* is beautiful to look at, well-acted, and brings new relevance to the genre. This is a thinking person's vampire movie.

Kathleen Conklin (Lili Taylor) is a doctoral candidate in philosophy at NYU. On her way home one night, she is attacked by a woman (Annabella Sciorra) who leaves two holes in her neck. Kathleen doesn't know what's happened to her – she gets sick and can't eat – but soon gives in and goes hunting for a victim. She draws blood from a vagrant and injects it into her own veins, but as her addiction grows, her methods become more brutal. Eventually she meets Peina (Christopher Walken), a Nietzsche-quoting nosferatu who, through force of will, is able to control his bloodlust. With his help, she passes her doctorate – but when she invites both her vampire and human friends to the same party afterward, carnage follows.

By tying some of history's worst massacres – including My Lai and the Holocaust – to vampirism, Ferrara suggests the two are

part of humanity's need for violence. The links between vampirism and drug addiction are also clear and graphic. But the film, shot in gritty black and white, is more than an academic exercise. In classic Ferrara style, the camera glides through the dark, dank streets of New York's seamier side, where it's easy to believe the undead may lie in wait.

■ **Piers Handling**

Abel Ferrara was born in the South Bronx, New York, in 1951. He made his first films in Super 8 when he was in high school, working with his frequent screenwriter, Nicholas St. John. In addition to feature films, he has also directed for television, including two episodes of "Miami Vice". Films include: *Driller Killer* (79), *Ms 45* (81), *Fear City* (85), *China Girl* (87), *Cat Chaser* (89), *King of New York* (90), *Bad Lieutenant* (92), *Body Snatchers* (93), *Snake Eyes* (93) and *The Addiction* (94).

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