

Document Citation

Title	Habit
Author(s)	Joe Leydon
Source	<i>Variety</i>
Date	1996 Apr 29
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Habit, Fessenden, Larry, 1996

L.A. INDIE FEST

HABIT

A Glass Eye Pix presentation. Produced by Dayton Taylor.

Directed, written, edited by Larry Fessenden. Camera (color), Frank DeMarco; music, Geoffrey Kidde; art direction, John Arlotto; costumes, Loren Bevans; sound, Bill Chelsey; associate producer, Susan A. Stover; assistant director, Dayton Taylor. Reviewed at Berlin Film Festival (market) Feb. 18, 1996 (also at L.A. Independent Film Festival). Running time: **93 MIN.**

Sam	Larry Fessenden
Anna	Meredith Snaider
Nick	Aaron Beall
Rae	Patricia Coleman
Liza	Heather Woodbury
Lenny	Jesse Hartman

It may be late in the day for yet another hip vampire drama set in New York's East Village, but "Habit" manages to impress with plausible scripting, first-rate performances and an unsettling mood of mounting dread. Small-budget indie should be welcome on global fest circuit, though its commercial prospects appear limited.

Larry Fessenden performs as a multi-hyphenate, doing quadruple duties as writer, director, editor and leading man. He is effectively cast as Sam, an alcoholic restaurant manager who's drinking even more than usual after the death of his father and a break-up with his girlfriend. Early on, it's established that Sam is experiencing frequent blackouts and occasional delusions, so that he doesn't trust his own perceptions when he starts to suspect that his new lover, a mysterious beauty named Ann (Meredith Snaider), may be a vampire.

Sam has good reason to be suspicious: The first time they are physically intimate, Ann takes a playful nip of his lip — and suckles some blood. As their relationship continues, he notices that she never eats, and refuses to enter his apartment when she smells garlicky food. And then there's the business of her controlling wild wolf dogs in Central Park.

Fessenden eschews the campiness of "Nadja" and the pretentiousness of "The Addiction," preferring a style best described as only slightly heightened realism. "Habit" is wickedly amusing as it focuses on the perverse eroticism that is intrinsic to the vampire myth — Sam obviously is enjoying the best sex he's ever had — but the pic wisely refrains from pushing the humor too far.

Unfortunately, "Habit" tries to have it both ways in a finale that fails to resolve the mysteries and lacks sufficient emotional punch. There aren't nearly enough full-bore shocks here to attract fans of more conventional horror pics. And there are a few too many long-winded scenes of flat-footed exposition and transition. Even so, Fessenden does manage some suitably creepy sequences, along with a couple of erotically charged frissons.

As Ann, Snaider gives a self-assured performance that is aptly enigmatic and provocatively sensuous. Standouts in the supporting cast include Heather Woodbury as Sam's jealous ex-girlfriend and Aaron Beall as Sam's cynical, but concerned, best friend.

On a tech level, "Habit" makes the most of an obviously limited budget. Frank DeMarco's evocative cinematography is particularly noteworthy.

—Joe Leydon