

Bitter and Twisted



M Recommended for mature audiences
Coarse language

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A multi-narrative drama of longing and loss, starting with the death of a young man and flashing forward three years to assess the toll it took on all those around him.



Bitter and Twisted
Photo: Filmink

Emotionally honest, inventively written and brilliantly performed by a stellar cast, *Bitter & Twisted* is a low budget local triumph.



Released:

Running time: 85 mins
Country: Australia
Language: English
Director: Christopher Weekes
Cast: Noni Hazlehurst, Steve Rodgers, Leeanna Walsman
Year Released: 2008
Distributor:

Review: Bitter & Twisted

by Erin Free, Filmink, 18/09/2008
 ★★★★★

The subject of grief has proven to be particularly fertile ground for filmmakers, with its dark possibilities providing the springboard for projects as diverse as the TV series *Six Feet Under*, the acclaimed feature films *In The Bedroom* and *The Son's Room*, and many, many more. Death and the pain that it can bring can hover like a big, black cloud, and with the cutting drama *Bitter & Twisted*, debut writer/director Christopher Weekes practically luxuriates in the shadows that it casts.

Three years ago, teenaged Liam Lombard died. His family has never recovered. His father, Jordan (Steve Rodgers), has overreacted to the point that he is now morbidly obese, and everything - work, home life - is suffering because of it. Jordan's lack of interest in his wife, Penelope (Noni Hazlehurst), leads her to hit the bars in search of a little affection. Second son Ben (Christopher Weekes) is living in his brother's shadow, and trying to catch his essence by romancing Liam's ex-girlfriend, Indigo (Leanna Walsman). Indigo, alternatively, is involved in a destructive relationship with a married man (Gary Sweet) who is trying to give her the shake. Meanwhile, Ben is being pursued by his amorous best friend (Matthew Newton). It's a tangled web, and everyone is stuck.

Imaginatively and inventively shot on a low budget by cinematographer Sam Collins, and with a fresh, probing script courtesy of Weekes, *Bitter & Twisted* heads fearlessly into deep, dark territory while never losing grip of its mordant sense of humour. This is, above all else however, a performance piece, and the entire cast is superb. Hazlehurst truly shines in her best role for years, and Steve Rodgers (though perhaps a little too young for the role) is consistently moving. Weekes, Newton and Walsman are all impressive, and Gary Sweet again proves himself to be one of this country's most underrated performers. With its brutally honest and emotionally affecting portrayal of a family in crisis very slowly beginning to heal itself, *Bitter & Twisted* is a winning combination of glowing hope and battering despair. When those moods meet, the results aren't always pretty, but they're never less than absolutely absorbing.



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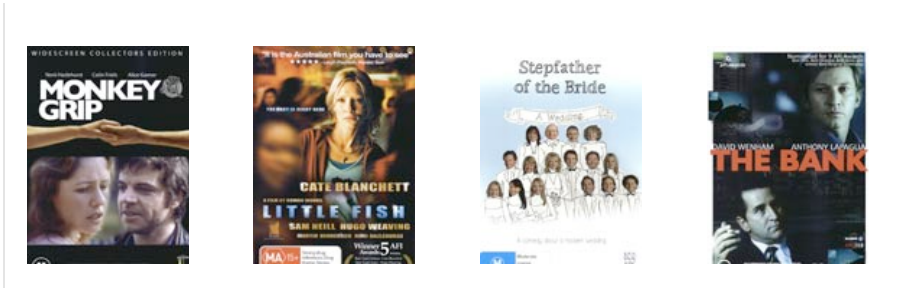
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