



BORDERLINES FILM FESTIVAL

THE LIGHTHOUSE (15)

Director: Robert Eggers

Starring: Willem Dafoe, Robert Pattinson, Valeriia Karaman

US/Canada/Brazil, 2010, 1 hour 49 minutes

The Lighthouse is a hallucinatory horror drama from visionary director Robert Eggers (*The Witch*, 2015) set on a remote New England island in the 1890s, starring Willem Dafoe (Academy Award-nominated for *At Eternity's Gate*, 2019) and Robert Pattinson (*High Life*, 2018) as two troubled sickies.

In the late 19th century off the coast of Maine, an insular former lumberjack (Pattinson) is cast-off to assist an elder light keeper (Dafoe) who appears mesmerized by the lantern he's tasked with maintaining. Soon enough the two are engaged in a power struggle while a massive storm persists around them. Terrible truths float up from the depths of the past, flooding the fractious seafarers with intoxicating transfixions.

Like a psychosexual Freudian two-hander, these sea dogs are dominated by their immediate and immersive issues of control—often hilariously so. “*Nothing good can happen when two men are left alone in a giant phallus*,” Eggers remarked, and indeed *The Lighthouse* is a totem to toxic masculinity, and something of a counterpoint to the “dark feminine” of *The Witch*. Eggers is already in pre-production on his upcoming film *The Northman*, a saga of Icelandic Vikings that will cap off his informal trilogy of punishing and enigmatic tales of loss.

Sublime black-and-white Academy Award-nominated cinematography by Jarin Blaschke (*The Witch*, 2015) framed by an aspect ratio of 1.19:1 conjures up a sense of the confinement inherent in such primal isolation, plus a captivatingly diegetic score from Mark Korven (also *The Witch*) that ramps up the atmosphere, *The Lighthouse* is an astoundingly crafted chapter from a film-maker wildly in charge of their visions.

“*[T]here are troubling, teasing themes throughout – about myth-making, masculinity, and the many ways the supernatural reflects the repressed*” **Little White Lies**

“*[A] ferocious battle of wills, a tour de force of cold, clammy suspense and a protracted descent into cabin-fever madness*” **Los Angeles Times**

“*The Lighthouse is a triumphant second feature for Eggers, another brick in a loopy retelling of American history*” **Vox**

Notes compiled by Duncan Wardlaw