

QLH-S02E06M: Rosemary's Baby

Sun, 3/20 9:42AM 23:46

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

rosemary, film, movie, horror, women, feel, people, child, pregnant, classic, baby, satan, pregnancy, roman polanski, psychological horror, true, story, directed, played, fact

SPEAKERS

Jessi Chartier, Jen Myers

J Jessi Chartier 00:04
Welcome to Quiet Little Horrors. Here we talk about the films that creep under your skin and take up residence in the dark.

J Jen Myers 00:17
Before we get started, as a reminder, when we talk about movies, we need to talk about everything in the movie. So there will be spoilers involved. If you haven't seen the movie or want to refresh your memory before you listen, you can stop now and do that before coming back.

J Jessi Chartier 00:33
Let's talk about Rosemary's Baby. A young couple pregnant with their first child are disturbed by their odd neighbors who seem to be after their unborn child. Jen, this is a classic,

J Jen Myers 00:48
Yes, it definitely is. It's definitely one that I only saw recently, because it was a gap in my knowledge, and I knew I needed to fill it. So I was like, Okay, I have to actually watch Rosemary's Baby. Fortunately, it's a really good classic. So it's not like you if anybody else is in the same boat and hasn't seen it after all these years. Like you should go watch it because it's good. But yeah, what's your history with it?

J Jessi Chartier 01:16
This was one week you had to watch. If you were in film school, it was just something that you kind of had to go through. And it's, it is good. I don't want to dismiss it. But it is a classic, which

I have love hate relationships with classic because it's really hard for me to approach any movie that someone says, oh, this is amazing. And not be biased against it. Because I've already built up something in my head. I'm a natural, contrarian. So like, if someone tells me it's going to be great, I'm going to find reasons why it isn't like, it's just it's an awful thing in my brain tends to do. But with all of that said, I do like Rosemary's Baby, it is a very good film. And I'm also glad we're keeping it as a mini because I think it is talked about a lot. So I think that we should talk a little bit. I mean, I'm curious to hear your perspective, since you've only recently seen it,

J Jen Myers 02:09

I feel like I came into it with much more of a context of I don't know, I think I came into it less with the the burden of it being a classic, but more context around the fact that like, I've watched a lot of psychological horror movies, especially psychological horror movies that were made after Rosemary's Baby, because this is kind of like one of the first. And so it's interesting to kind of go back to the beginning with that and view it through the lens of, you know, there's a lot of stuff in there that maybe is, is not the most original. And then I've seen riffs on it before, but it still has a lot of kind of, yeah, visceral horror and feeling to it. And it's still very successful as a film even though Yeah, it was early, and maybe one of the first kind of, I don't know, I hate to say it's the first psychological film, that's a psychological horror film. That's not true. But I feel like it is definitely regarded as one of the first to really stick out that territory and really make it work. So I was kind of coming into it knowing the tradition that came after it very well. And in that sense, it was kind of like, okay, yeah, I know what's going on here. And I'm getting the subtext, I'm getting all of these little things around the edges that maybe, you know, I wouldn't have if I had seen it when I was a lot younger and didn't know as much about the kind of genre that it was working in or that inspired.

J Jessi Chartier 03:34

I think one of the things that I've recently come to realize, with Rosemary's Baby, the play on a lot of the body autonomy, especially now in like, post me to movement, or post, but you know, in the me to movement, and just being you know, I do not have any children, but I am at an age where my friends have had children already. And the conversations that often go on behind closed doors are things like, Why does everyone think that just because I'm eight months pregnant, they can touch my belly, like things like that. And I think that there was that's I've now started to see a lot of that as the invasiveness of space with pregnancy where everyone now suddenly feels like they have the opinion and the the freedom to be able to tell you what to do with your body and the child that you're carrying. And I think that that's this is a movie that does address that. And I don't think that we've done I don't think previous films that kind of dabble in the psychological horror. Really do that they I'm sure they're out there. Like I want to state that for a fact. I'm sure they're out there. But Rosemary's Baby was one of the first ones to put it right in the limelight of mainstream media where a lot of people could see it and talk sadly,

J Jen Myers 04:56

and yeah, for my money. I feel like what you just ascribe this this issue of women's bodily autonomy, especially regarding like pregnancy and childbirth that to me is the central horror

autonomy, especially regarding like pregnancy and childbirth, that, to me is the central horror of this film. And that's also something I feel like I'm may not have felt as strongly if I didn't come to it. Yeah, as a grown woman who has had a child. And also I, you know, I have a little bit of the life experience where I had a kid under, you know, not necessarily prosperous circumstances. And so I can also tell you that not only decided society like to tell pregnant woman what to do all the time, even if that pregnant woman is like, from the most privileged background. But if you're if the pregnant woman is not from a privileged background, then then the, the rules and the judgment come even harder. And now we love to tell non privileged, pregnant woman what to do in every case, every decision, every move they make has to be dictated by somebody else. Otherwise, you know, it's, so it gets puts on them that they're not being responsible. And so you know, there's so much around this, and I definitely had baggage when it comes to that. And when I watched *Rosemary's Baby*, I was like, Yeah, this is a movie about the horror of women not having bodily autonomy. I feel like that's really what it comes down to. And you know, obviously, there's other things going on there is, you know, I feel like we don't even have to even say jokingly, spoiler alert for this one, but there is literally Satan in this movie. Like, it's not just, oh, wait, how can we be maybe the devil is behind this? No, like it straight up says like, Satan is the actual horror in this movie, or it is the the surface horror, it is the literal stated horror. But as far as I'm concerned, I think the real horror underneath is yeah, how women don't have control over their bodies and the decisions they make about that.

J

Jessi Chartier 06:53

Yeah, it was the unsettling nature of this movie reminds me a lot of the unsettling nature of *Carnival of Souls*, where, you know, the storyline is about something very direct. You know, *Rosemary's Baby*, who is the Devil, your child or the devil, the father of your child, or Ooh, are you being haunted by ghouls? But the, the piece that gets me is the treatment of women? And how is even in *Rosemary's Baby*? Like so *Carnival of Souls*, it was very, like, okay, guys haunting her. And there are these men who are trying to all the men are trying to control her, in some way, shape, or form here, it's the guys is under an a matriarch net, who lives next door, a kind, older neighbor, who is female herself, and wants what's best for her neighbor, who's now pregnant. And I think that that highlights something that many horror films don't always do, which is that, you know, it's not always men or evil, that is infringing on a woman's life, or, you know, just challenging these women, sometimes other women, and they're not always going to come across as these old hags. You know, they are not going to be that, what did you call it before the cycle video? Is that what the? Yeah, yeah. It's not always that sometimes they come up, it's, it's, it's just invasive, you know,

J

Jen Myers 08:34

well, and to touch on kind of the societal aspects of the story and stories like that, like, this all takes place among a group of very affluent white people, as well. And so yeah, there's definitely this this element in here. And it's Ruth Gordon, right, who is the, the matriarch you're referring to, and this is a, you know, such a fun performer that she's fun to watch in this movie. But you're right, the character that she is playing is, is a woman who was upholding this abusive system, because it benefits her and it benefits people like her. And that's, you know, it's very easy to draw a direct line from that to others circumstances where even marginalized people who have more privileged than others will maintain a system that benefits them, and

puts down people that are even like them, because, you know, it benefits them personally. And that's kind of what's going on with that. Although having said that, I do feel like we have to mention that Rosemary's husband guy is awful, and really, really, really bad.

J Jessi Chartier 09:41

Talk more about that. Let's, let's talk a little bit about

J Jen Myers 09:43

so and Rosemary's. He, her husband guy, played by John Cassavetes, who is so good at playing smug jerks. I have a great deal of fondness for him, but man was he good at that, that particular thing? And he is just he's almost comically awful. He's a struggling actor at first. But and Rosemary doesn't have a job of her own, which is totally fine and definitely normal for that, that time period. But you know, so he is focused on his career and getting opportunities for his career. When opportunities come around, he, you know, is very well, I mean, I'm trying to think of, there's so many things that are bad about I'm trying to remember I mean, the, the big thing is, of course, that he will he does, he does straight up rape her, doesn't he? It's a she doesn't want to have sex one night, and then she what she Oh, she's drugged, she wakes up in the morning. And he kind of brushes it off. Well, you know, it seemed okay, or whatever you seem to.

J Jessi Chartier 10:54

I think that okay, so then maybe we do need to talk about the movie a little bit more, because the idea was that she was drugged so that Satan could rape her. Not her husband's true.

J Jen Myers 11:07

Yeah, that's a really good thing. So yeah, let's be clear. Yes. It just sounds so weird. She's actually raped by Satan. This is true.

J Jessi Chartier 11:18

But the husband allows it.

J Jen Myers 11:19

He's the one that actually helped allows it, and he lets her believe that he did, yes. Because that's how he covers over the fact that it was actually Satan by saying, Oh, I did it, which I think that's the reason that I kind of described it the way I did, because that's how he presents it to her as the better situation, which I guess it is better, I guess, you know, but it's just kind of a thing where it's kind of like, oh, in that case, it's okay. Right. It's totally okay, that your husband reads you. Right. You know, it's that sort of thing, you know, that that really stuck out to me.

Also, like it's kind of this, like I mentioned earlier, yes. even know that Satan is a literal factor in the story. Honestly, I feel like it's the least interesting part of the story to me, but I feel like all the interesting parts is, is what's happening among the people. And it's far more interesting to me that this is a man that thinks that that's a totally plausible and completely okay, story to tell. And his wife says a lot. There's also just so many scenes along the way of he, he does not pay attention to Rosemary's wants, desires needs, and, and things like that. And, and also, let me be clear, clear to or at least ask for clarification. So I always thought to that. Part of the whole deal with the double was that he gets his acting success, right? Isn't that kind of his motivation? Right? Yeah. So like, you know, he, he's doing the whole thing, so his career can take off. So which has a lot to do for your acting career.

J

Jessi Chartier 12:53

That is that is quite, you know, and maybe that has some connotations, subtext there, too, right? The system of Hollywood, right? Yeah, you got to get over your firstborn child, or, you know, whatever, however you want to read into it. But yeah, I this movie was very, I mean, Mia Farrow, is great in it. i She's, the fact even just like her stature. And as she gets more and more pregnant, it's like, it's clear. I just, I like how they kind of played with the fact that she is such a petite woman. And it's almost like this pregnancy is just ballooning her and taking her over her whole system, not just her physicality. But I mean, there is just so much youth I like what I was watching, I felt so bad for because I'm like, God, this woman just can't get a nap. Like all of her. Everyone's always bugging her about her pregnancy. It's like leave the poor woman alone. But the ending is, is for me. Odd. I know, it makes sense that she just accepts, like, I don't know, it just feels weird that she has for so long, been railing against things. And then at the very end, when she sees the demon spawn of her room, that she immediately switches that and that's what besides, but she immediately just surrenders and accepts and loves this child. And I, I recognize that maybe I have a different perspective, because I don't have children. I've never been pregnant. So I don't know what that looks or feels like. But it just seemed very, like just such a fast light switch to happen of switching that I still don't know what to make of it. I still, I don't know, I haven't figured out how I feel about it.

J

Jen Myers 14:42

Then why that makes a lot of sense. I think that it is a little bit of I don't know if ambiguous is quite the right word. But there are there are many different ways I think people could go with the ending of the film. And I don't necessarily think it has to be one way or the other for me. I feel like it was a little bit of a well, I mean, what are her other options? I guess she could just leave. But it also would be really difficult to give birth to a baby who looks like a baby. Like he doesn't have like horns and hooves, you know, at least not yet. So it would be I don't know, I think that there's a certain kind of on a human level, like, um, you know, are you just gonna leave that little baby that you gave birth to or you know, like, even worse, like harm it like, that would be a very difficult thing to do in the moment of that. And so you almost think that maybe we'll like maybe this is a decision for now. And maybe something will change. Or I always thought about it, too, that maybe there is something in her that is like, I'm going to stay and try to protect him from them. Or, like, you know, I don't know, not like, turn him. I don't know how you could turn the double duck to the good side. But you know, there might be something in a mother with a brand new child that feels like, I can defeat this. And I can maybe, you know, change it. And there's there's nothing in the movie, I think that suggested that particularly for

to be clear, at least I'm not sure. But that's something that occurred to me that if I feel like that would be a natural thing for a new mother to do in such an odd set of circumstances or difficult circumstances, I think it's a viable decision to be like, You know what, I'm going to try to change this, I'm going to try to do something about it. Whether she can, whether that was something that's actually going through her mind, or she could actually do that is a whole nother thing, you know, but yeah, no, I think that there's something really interesting in the fact that it could be all these different things. It's it is it is what it is I, you know, there's and this may lead into something else I think we need to talk about, but trying to talk about the intent of what how was intended to be. I don't know how to go there. Because I don't know, honestly, what any of this film was actually intended to be given the man who directed it. Should I go ahead and just go into that,

J Jessi Chartier 17:11
yeah, go into that. I

J Jen Myers 17:13
can, I will never, ever, ever understand how one of the most enduring psychological horror films about women's bodily autonomy was directed by Roman Polanski like, what did he think he was doing? I don't get it. I just don't, I cannot figure this out in my mind how he made this film that so effectively gets across the horror, of not having autonomy over your own body as a woman. And there's no evidence of him understanding that in his actual life, I don't get it.

J Jessi Chartier 17:48
Well, I think that there's also I mean, keep in mind, too, that this was based on a novel, right? It's also true that the story was not by him. So Ira Levin was the one who wrote the book. And we were talking a little bit about this before that. It's almost identical, right? You were saying that, that Stephen King was saying, if you've seen the book or read the book, you don't need to see the movie. If you've seen the movie. You don't need to read the book. That's what Stephen

J Jen Myers 18:12
King says. So it must be true. Yeah. I mean, I've only I've only seen the movie. So

J Jessi Chartier 18:17
sorry, Mr. King, but there you go.

J Jen Myers 18:20
Yeah, well, that's the thing though, too. And this gets into kind of if we were going to talk about related things, or recommendations, I think it always goes in also goes into Roman Polanski's

earlier film *Repulsion*, which is a film about a woman who, literally kind of, you know, almost goes insane, because she's scared of the outside world and men doing things to her. So clearly, this is like, I mean, that's, that's a gross oversimplification for people who have seen *Repulsion*. But I feel like you know, that that's essentially what's happening in that film. And it's just wild to me that he was drawn to these themes, apparently, and actually made really successful movies about them. I think there's a little a lot of women who really feel like both *Repulsion* and *Rosemary's Baby* are stories that resonate with them and their lived experience in the world. So it just I don't I at least I feel that way. I think I've, you know, I've heard other women, especially women who are into horror, you know, have to kind of reconcile the fact that *Rosemary's Baby* is a film that so accurately describes what it's like when the whole world is against you that you know, having your own autonomy. But, yeah, it doesn't seem to jive with the I don't know how, if that correlates with the intent of the film, I'm not sure if that was the actual intent of the film. Or it was something else and we're all reading it differently. I don't know.

J

Jessi Chartier 19:50

Yeah, I don't know either. It is I do find it. I think well. So hard to separate. I'm still struggling to figure out how to separate, maybe not even, or how to hold people like that within the me to movement accountable while also still watching their art and trying to understand it. You know, that's definitely something I struggle with. I don't know how to do I don't have an answer yet. I'm definitely not one of those people who is like, here's my clear line. I just I just don't know yet. I'm still trying to figure it out. But I do think that it is, it's the fact that *Rosemary's Baby* was such a great film directed by a man does showcase the ability of the artist, right, like, it is an it is a well crafted piece of art, full stop. And I think that the story is really well told the characters are really well acted, the fear, and the uncertainty and the suspense is all really, really, really well done. I still struggle with the fact that it's a classic, because it's like, yeah, it's good. But it doesn't really didn't blow me away. The ending didn't shock me. But that was also same a true of *Carnival of Souls*, like the ending was kind of okay. But that's not where the horror was for me during the film. You know?

J

Jen Myers 21:21

Yeah, I think that's, that's a good point, too. It is interesting to talk about this as it is a definite classic. And it's something I feel like most people, you know, even if you don't literally know where the story is going, or the end of the story, I think you like kind of like how you describe maybe has, you have a sense of where the story is going. Because you know so much about this kind of tradition of these type of films at this point. Whereas we, you know, if you were in the audience in 1968, you might not know those types of things or get it so it's so it's one of those cases where we're talking about kind of one of these foundational films of a certain type of cinematic tradition that we know a lot more now. So I think it kind of makes sense that we would be in some aspects underwhelmed when we actually go back and watch, you know, watch one of the originals. But we wouldn't, you know, it's one of those things, too, we might not be able to have seen the other things that we enjoy it or taught us about their tradition without this one. Right. And it is a Yeah, like you said, it's a straight A good film. It really is. It's got good performances. As you know, like I mentioned, I actually really do have a lot of fondness for John Cassavetes, like I said earlier even though he plays awful characters like this

one, like he's very good and Mia Farrow really works for this character. It's got a great cast, it's got, you know, the right storyline in the script and everything just works in it. It's it's a good story and it works

 Jessi Chartier 22:48

I guess. I agree. It's just a good story and it works. And I think what I'm looking forward to Jen is this year we've got a good collection of classics and maybe not so well known stuff coming up. So if people want to continue following us and want to learn more about us, where can they go? You

 Jen Myers 23:03

can find us that all of the regular podcast services and you can find us at our website, which is quietlittlehorror.com. And we're also on Twitter at [quiethorror](https://twitter.com/quiethorror) and on Instagram at [quietlittlehorror](https://www.instagram.com/quietlittlehorror). And if you want to email us you can do so at [hello at quietlittlehorror.com](mailto:hello@quietlittlehorror.com).

 Jessi Chartier 23:22

Alright, well thanks for listening everybody. We will see you in the next episode. Bye bye