

### Film

# 'I See You' puzzle-driven thriller about murder, abduction

By Dennis Harvey

The fact that it's a very complicated matter even identifying the "I" and "you" in "I See You" is just a sample of the narrative tricks in this very tricky thriller. Working from an impressive first produced screenplay by actor Devon Graye, Adam Randall's film is an eerie suspense exercise that starts out looking like a supernatural tale — one of several viewer presumptions this cleverly engineered narrative eventually pulls the rug out from under. Saban Films opens it on 10 US screens, while Paramount is handling concurrent home-formats release. Long-term viability as a streaming offering is assured, while the distinctive plotting may well lure offshore remake bids.

Philipp Blaubach's probing, restless camera charges the very air with unseen menace from the start, as a 10-year-old boy bicycles home through a picturesque small-town, his progress down a forest trail violently curtailed by some invisible barrier or force. That sense of omnipresent malevolence continues even within the comfortable confines of the Harper home, where TV news reports soon note the aforementioned lad as the latest victim in a disturbing series of local child disappearances.

The atmosphere is already uncomfortable here for other reasons, however: Jackie Harper (Helen Hunt) is getting a very cold shoulder from both police-detective husband Greg (Jon Tenney) and teenage son Connor (Judah Lewis) for a transgression we realize after a while is infidelity. She's very, very sorry, but nobody is in a forgiving mood yet, with Connor particularly incensed. Thus, when a series of odd occurrences commence — an entire drawer of utensils vanishes, family pictures disappear from the wall, etc — the Harpers assume one another is responsible, or in particular that

surly Connor is "acting out."

### Investigate

Meanwhile Greg and his colleagues (including Gregory Alan Williams and Erika Alexander) investigate the apparent renewal of youth abductions — which is rendered all the more disturbing for the fact that the person assumed responsible for a string of identical prior kidnappings/murders has been in prison for some time now.

As our suspicions grow that something malignant is stalking the Harpers in their own home, things take a turn with a surprise visit from the old flame (Sam Trammell) Jackie strayed with, and whom she now desperately wishes would go away. His arrival seems to spike the inexplicable domestic phenomena, fast turning one crisis into a worse one. But at around the 45-minute mark, "I See You" abruptly rewinds, replaying previously-seen events from the perspective of new characters played by Owen Teague and Live Barer. We may think their introduction definitively turns this from one kind of story into another. But, in fact, scenarist Graye isn't finished upending our assumptions yet.

After his narrative strings are finally pulled together in a long, wordless final sequence, you may begin to reflect that the film's primary separate plot elements aren't really connected save by happenstance. But the perfect storm their collision creates is handled with such skillful assurance by Randall ("Level Up", "iBoy") that the proceedings never seem overly contrived or hyperbolic, as they easily might have. It's a story with much disturbing content that nonetheless largely avoids explicit violence. Expectations are subverted on other levels as well — for instance, in the way that top-billed Hunt starts out as our primary viewpoint, yet her character

gradually grows less and less central to what's really going on.

Strong performances down the line provide psychological credibility to an astute overall package that manages to eke considerable sinister atmosphere from any number of perfectly pleasant locations in the greater Cleveland, Ohio area. A particular plus is William Arcane's unsettling score.

### Also:

**LOS ANGELES:** The Doors and Trafalgar Releasing are teaming on the worldwide Feb 12 release of "The Doors: Break on Thru — A Celebration of Ray Manzarek".

The film has been dated on the birthday of **Manzarek**, co-founder and keyboardist of The Doors. He passed away in 2013.

The concert/documentary was filmed at the Fonda Theatre in Los Angeles and brought surviving members from The Doors, guitarist **Robby Krieger** and drummer **John Densmore**, on stage for the first time in 15 years to celebrate Manzarek's birthday. The film also includes performances from Foo Fighters' **Taylor Hawkins** and **Rami Jaffe**, Stone Temple Pilots' **Robert DeLeo**, Paul McCartney's **Brian Ray**, X's **Exene** and **John Doe**, Jane's Addiction's **Stephen Perkins** and Gov't Mule's **Warren Haynes**.

"It was such an honor to play with these world-class musicians in a tribute to our magical keyboard player," Densmore said.

London-based Trafalgar has previously released "Coldplay: A Head Full of Dreams", "The Music Center presents Joni 75: A Birthday Celebration", "Khalid: Free Spirit" and "One More Time with Feeling". The Doors were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1993. (RTRS)

### Variety



This image released by Lionsgate shows Charlize Theron (left), and Liv Hewson in a scene from 'Bombshell'. On Dec 9, Theron was nominated for a Golden Globe for best actress in a motion picture drama for her role in the film. (AP)

### Film

Suspenseful and deeply satisfying movie

## 'Bombshell' a lively docudrama

By Owen Gleiberman

I suspect I won't be alone in saying that I went into "Bombshell" with a touch of skepticism. The movie is a lively and scabrous docudrama — not a snarkfest (though some of it is bitingly funny) but a meticulous, close-to-the-bone chronicle of how Megyn Kelly (played by Charlize Theron), one of the star anchors of Fox News, and Gretchen Carlson (Nicole Kidman), the host of "Fox & Friends", brought down the lecherous right-wing mogul-titan Roger Ailes by revealing the veritable system of sexual harassment that he used to run his network. In the two years since the reckoning brought on by the Harvey Weinstein scandal, we've been waiting for a drama that indelibly dramatizes the fear and loathing and stark human cost of sexual harassment. The wait is over: "Bombshell", directed by Jay Roach ("Game Change") from a script by Charles Randolph ("The Big Short"), is that movie. Yet watching it, I knew that I'd have to view, as heroines, two of the women who became celebrities at Fox News, a network built on the toxic DNA of corruption and lies. Would the film acknowledge their complicity in that? Or would it be a Hollywood whitewash?

Neither one of them is still at the network, but the movie, in fact, acknowledges their complicity. As it opens, the 2016 presidential campaign is in full swing, and Kelly, before the Republican debate hosted by Fox News, is preparing to lob a grenade at candidate Donald Trump in the form of a question about his egregious treatment of women. There's backstage drama as Kelly, on the day of the debate, gets so sick that she throws up repeatedly. Is it nerves, or was her coffee poisoned? It turns out to be the latter, which suggests that taking on the right-wing power structure is a dangerous thing to do.

At the debate, Kelly calls Trump out on his misogyny and generates headlines, and Trump's response creates even bigger headlines. It becomes

one of the first of Trump's sick-joke Twitter memes. "Will he get away with this? No way! OMG, he's not just getting away with it, it's boosting his popularity!" The film invites us to see the moxie it took for Kelly to face Trump down, and to deal with the consequences of his hideous remarks. But after the situation has settled a bit, she agrees to do a one-on-one interview with Trump, and when she's in a Fox editing suite watching the tape, her own husband, Doug (Mark Duplass), calls her on the carpet — for going too easy on Trump, letting him off the hook.

The scene stings, because it isn't just that Kelly threw Trump a softball; she aided and abetted the selling of his message. And about how at Fox News all those things came together.

### Contrast

At first, there's a stark contrast between Kelly's public image and the dark secret about harassment that she's carrying around. A former lawyer who's known for her big mouth, she has a fast wit and slicing intelligence. Theron, wearing prosthetics that alter her features with convincing subtlety, makes her tough and likable — a straight-shooter with the hardness of a diamond. Her decision to confront Trump on the issue of women arrives at a moment when Fox is ambivalent about Trump, because the network is still weighing his influence. Ailes (John Lithgow), a right-wing ideologue, is also a showbiz junkie with a genius for what it takes to heat up the cool medium of television; he gets Trump and loves him. But if Ailes is the boss, he's not the king — that's Rupert Murdoch (Malcolm McDowell), the corporate baron who, at that point, is still skeptical of Trump.

Kelly, however, is rocking the boat. She's poking holes in the candidate by embracing a feminist agenda, and in doing so she's tweaking the secret weapon of Fox News: that it's selling a kind of 'story' — a fusion of leering and vengeance.

Kelly understands this because she herself was

harassed by Ailes, the corpulent pasha who micro-manages the news feed, even as he treats the office itself as his brothel. The film introduces a third figure in the newsroom, an ambitious young Christian millennial named Kayla Pospisil (Margot Robbie) — she's a composite character — who's smart enough to go where the power is. She gets a job working on Bill O'Reilly's team and learns the ropes by falling into bed with Jess (Kate McKinnon), who's a closeted lesbian and (at Fox, even more scandalous) a closeted Hillary supporter. The two giggle about what a secret circus the office is.

But then Kayla sidles up to Ailes' assistant (Holland Taylor), who is also his procurer. Does Kayla know what she's getting into? The way the film portrays it, she does and she doesn't. She knows, instinctively, that her beauty opens doors, but she has little idea of what happens when the doors close.

It's easy enough to rip a story from the headlines, but not so easy to make it stick. "Bombshell" has a finely textured, savagely pinpoint, you-are-there verisimilitude that the films of Adam McKay ("Vice"), with their fusion of topicality and borderline satirical 'tude, don't. The office backbiting, the water-cooler ambition and treachery, the abusive secrets hovering in the air like smoke from burnt rubber — all of that gives "Bombshell" the excitement of gossip infused with psychodrama. It's suspenseful, and deeply satisfying, to see Ailes' web of power unravel, as Lithgow's performance becomes a tightrope dance of rage and fear. This, more than a year before the fall of Harvey, was the real start of the reckoning, from deep within the right-wing heart of darkness. But "Bombshell" also shows us the cost that it extracted. Theron, Kidman, and Robbie, each playing a character who feels hideously compromised by the harassment that enchain her, create a liberating triumvirate of courage under fire. Together, they drop a very big bomb, and the world is still reeling from the fallout. (RTRS)

**LOS ANGELES:** Nickelodeon has called on comedian and writer **Adam Conover** to host its new family game show "The Crystal Maze".

In the American rendition of the UK series, Conover will take on the role of Maze Master and guide on family teams through physical and mental challenges set within an elaborate labyrinth of four immersive themed time zones: Aztec, Eastern, Futuristic, and Industrial. "The Crystal Maze" will premiere Jan 24. Netflix has scheduled its upcoming fashion competition series "Next in Fashion" for a Jan 29 premiere. Hosted by **Tan France** ("Queer Eye") and **Alexa Chung**, the show plans to put 18 fashion designers to the test as they compete in various challenges for a chance to win \$250,000 and an opportunity to debut their collection with luxury fashion retailer Net-a-Porter. **Elizabeth Stewart** and **Eva Chen** will appear as recurring guest judges in the 10-episode first season. **Robin Ashbrook**, **Yasmin Shackleton** and **Adam Cooper** will executive produce.

Netflix docu-series "Cheer" will premiere Jan 8, according to the streaming service. From "Last Chance U" director, producer, and creator **Greg Whiteley**, "Cheer" will chronicle the lives of the competitive cheerleaders of Navarro College in **Corsicana, Texas** as the squad faces injuries, sacrifice, personal setbacks and triumphs, all leading up to one final competition at the National Championship. (RTRS)

**LOS ANGELES:** TBS has released the trailer for Season 2 of "Miracle Workers", entitled "Miracle Workers: Dark Ages". The returning ensemble (**Daniel Radcliffe**, **Geraldine Viswanathan**, **Karan Soni**, **Steve Buscemi**) faces a new set of challenges as they go back in time as a group of medieval villagers and try to stay positive in an age of extreme income inequality, poor healthcare and widespread ignorance. "Miracle Workers: Dark Ages" will premiere Jan 28.

AMC has renewed "Ride With Norman Reedus" for a fifth season compiled of six episodes. The news comes ahead of the show's Season 4 premiere in March. "The Walking Dead" star and motorcycle enthusiast **Norman Reedus** will hit the open road again with a riding companion to explore different

cultures and experience the best scenery, food, nature and local activities in the US and around the world. Production will begin in early 2020. (RTRS)

**LOS ANGELES:** Fathom Events has scheduled a Jan 5 showing of the "Doctor Who" Season 12 premiere



Radcliffe



Whittaker

episode, followed by an exclusive early unveiling of the new season's second episode.

The event will also include live Q&A with current Doctor **Jodie Whittaker** and companions **Tosin Cole** and **Mandip Gill**, live from the **Paley Center in New York**.

Fathom will hold the event at 600 movie theaters through Fathom's

Digital Broadcast Network. The company is a joint venture of the AMC, Cinemark and Regal chains.

Meanwhile, copyright expert **Karyn A. Temple** has been named senior executive vice president and global general counsel at the Motion Picture Association.

Chairman and CEO **Charles Rivkin** made the announcement.

Temple will join the association in January after serving more than eight years in the US Copyright Office,

most recently as the Register of Copyrights, where she fulfilled her statutory authority to administer US copyright law and advise members of the US Congress, federal courts and executive branch agencies on issues of copyright law and policy. (RTRS)