

'Nymphomaniac': setting a trend for the modern sex film?

As porn continues to dominate the web, sex seems to be everywhere. [Erin Rodgers](#) explores the portrayal of sex in films and discovers director, Lars von Trier's, risqué plans for new film, Nymphomaniac

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In this 'technological age', where pornography websites make up around 37% of the Internet, sex, in all its guises, is accessible to practically anybody with access online. It's surprising then, to consider the frenzy that the latest Disney disaster, Miley Cyrus, has roused in recent weeks by gyrating her way around a building site wearing little more than some questionable lipstick and a pair of Timberlands in one of her latest music videos. Despite the fact that in response to her behaviour she's been hailed "a meltdown waiting to happen", with well over 200 million YouTube hits on the official version of 'Wrecking Ball' alone, Miley's erotic exploits have demonstrated that as a viewing public, we do like a bit of sex.

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”

Risqué director Lars von Trier has certainly explored and experimented with this lust for love-making we appear to possess in his newest film, 'Nymphomaniac', due to premiere on Christmas Day in his home country of Denmark. With rumours of a tv spin-off to follow, the film is presented in a series of chapters, and will be released in two versions: the less explicit of which will be released in cinemas this winter, and a five hour uncut version for the more hardcore 'film' fans expected to premiere at Cannes Film Festival next year. Whilst it doesn't take a genius to guess at the basic storyline of the film, the novel film-making process arousing von Trier critics as the release date beckons takes a little more explaining. The film's producer, Louise Veth describes what actors Shia LaBoeuf and Uma Thurman - to name a couple of the film's star-studded cast - have been up to whilst on set:

"We shot the actors pretending to have sex and then had the body doubles who really did have sex and in post we will digital-impose the two. So above the waist it will be the star and below the waist it will be the doubles."

We may not get to see the stars themselves in action, but the set of promotional posters recently put online certainly gives us a pleasurable taster as to how up close and personal 'Nymphomaniac' gets with its daring cast.

Will this new technique of shooting sex scenes see the end of the illusion-creating positioning and camera angles that we're used to being replaced instead with von Trier's less demure preference for full frontal filming? Will the knowledge that we're watching non-simulated sex change the way that we watch these scenes, considering that the simulated encounters that we watch today are already so convincing? More so, do we actually want to watch 'real life' sex in our favourite movies? Do we not enjoy films for the fantastical situations they portray and the way in which the actors, act? Whatever your preference,

'Nymphomaniac' is set to be a hit.

In honour of von Trier's visual celebration of sexual obsession, we take a look at the obsessions of film viewers themselves across the decades, by looking at five cult films containing steamy scenes:

1. *9½ Weeks* (1986)

This 80s hit follows the strangely familiar story of a beautiful woman living in the city being seduced by a charming, yet mysterious, wealthy businessman who likes to dabble in S&M and just so happens to be called John Gray... Mickey Rourke and Kim Basinger take on the main roles of this 'so bad its good' film that, whilst initially proving a box office flop, over time cultivated a large fan base. Not a film to be enjoyed for its highly predictable story line, rather, the numerous sex scenes – involving blindfolds, ice cubes and chocolate sauce – that seem really quite charming compared to what Lars von Trier promises our eyes later this year. For those who prove to be '9 ½ Weeks' fans, fear not, as its popularity inspired a straight-to-film prequel and sequel.

2. *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988)

An historical drama film starring Glenn Close, John Malkovich, Michelle Pfeiffer and an entertainingly young Keanu Reeves and Uma Thurman, 'Dangerous Liaisons' follows the sexual games of eighteenth century French nobility. Whilst not particularly explicit, the unspoken sexual tension and oh so eloquent 'dirty talk' in director Stephen Frears' hit film won it a large fan following of those who enjoy the 'less is more' approach to capturing sexual relationships on film. Nominated for seven Academy Awards, this film is worth a watch for many reasons other than its sexual content. Furthermore, as an English student, it would be blasphemous not to recommend a read of Pierre Choderlos de Laclos' epistolary novel 'Les Liaisons Dangereuses,' which of course inspired the film.

3. *Basic Instinct* (1992)

Arguably the most popular of these five films, 'Basic Instinct' is widely known for containing 'that scene' – the leg uncrossing and recrossing scene in which the impossibly seductive Sharon Stone flashes all, in an attempt to embarrass the police officers interrogating her character on suspicion of her late lover's murder. Michael Douglas, adopting the role of the film's male protagonist, gives a great performance as police detective Nick Curran, who, we come to learn, has a dark past himself. Widely criticised for its heavy glamorisation of sex and violence, 'Basic Instinct' received many complaints from a variety of opposition when it was released, which inevitably encouraged its overwhelming success at the box office.

4. *Brokeback Mountain* (2005)

Widely referred to as "the gay-cowboy movie," 'Brokeback Mountain' sits in 12th place in the highest grossing romance films of all time. Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal play the roles of Ennis Del Mar and Jack Twist, the love story of whom is often paralleled to that of the 'star-crossed lovers' of Romeo and Juliet. Since the film's release, there has been much debate as to the sexual identities of Ennis and Jack – as the general media assumes that they have a homosexual relationship, other critics argue that both men are bisexual, whereas Gyllenhaal himself believes that both men are heterosexual, and develop an "intense love and bond." This bond is certainly conveyed in the film, whose sex scenes prove the most romantic out of the five.

5. *50 Shades of Grey* (2014)

A film currently shrouded in speculation and gossip, director Sam Taylor-Wood's adaptation of the best selling trilogy by E. L. James is sure to develop a cult following after the colossal success of the books. As James' writing must be enjoyed purely for the ridiculous amount of sex it contains, the upcoming film has fans questioning how successfully the books' steamy scenes will be translated on to the big screen. Saying this, perhaps the most heated debate amongst Christian Grey groupies is that as to which actor will eventually take on his character. As Charlie Hunnam abandons the role, the fantastically formed 'Magic Mike' ken doll, Matt Bomer, and son of Hollywood legend Clint Eastwood, Scott Eastwood, are the

latest rumoured for the role.

These five films may only provide the smallest insight into the mass of cult movies popular for their sexual content, but the variety of sexual relationships they portray certainly assures us that there's a film out there for everybody looking to get a little hot under the collar.



4 comments

Dan

4 Nov '13 at 4:16 pm

Abomination!

[Report](#)

RD

5 Nov '13 at 12:59 am

You miss the reason why it's going to set a trend. The film is about how sex is not about the act. The producer has announced that it will create a new genre, digressionism.

[Report](#)

York Duck

5 Nov '13 at 2:29 am

Quack quack quack quack? Quack. Quack quack quack.

[Report](#)

Jasmine

5 Nov '13 at 7:53 pm

What about Shame starring Michael Fassbender? Get yo' shit together, student newspaper writer.

[Report](#)

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