



A GIRL WALKS HOME ALONE AT NIGHT

USA 2014, 101 MIN

ANA LILY AMIRPOUR

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Vampire fans, Jarmusch fans and, most importantly of all, cat fans will find something to enjoy in this droll monochrome comedy of the Iranian undead, which comes with music from the Iranian band Kiosk, who have a definite Tom Waits-y groan. It comes from first-time feature director Ana Lily Amirpour, a British-born Iranian who grew up in the US and has imbibed the regulation amount of American movies, classic Americana and consumer culture, including but not restricted to ads for Coke and blue jeans. In the hipsterised vampire genre of Jim Jarmusch and Abel Ferrara, Amirpour has found her own funny, smart expression for teenage-bedroom loneliness, romantic isolation and a kind of perpetual emotional exile. This has nothing to do with *Twilight*, but it is personal, and I suspect almost autobiographical, in ways that aren't too far from Stephenie Meyer. This film is just occasionally a bit too cool for school – but mostly just cool enough, which is very cool.

A lonely, thoughtful young woman in the traditional black veil, played by Sheila Vand, roams the night-time streets of a district in Iran, or a US-Iranian community, called Bad City: it could be on the outskirts of Tehran or Detroit. There is a power plant and an array of nodding oil derricks, but the whole place is weirdly deserted, just as in Jarmusch: the most crowded place is a bizarre plague-pit-type trench full of dead, but undecomposed bodies, past which people walk unconcernedly.

It also has something of Robert Rodriguez's *Sin City*. Her veil is a type of clothing that makes her look, weirdly, as if she is floating. She encounters a brutal, heavily tattooed bully (Dominic Rains) who takes her back to his apartment, thinking she is a prostitute. But the woman, cool and entirely unintimidated, reveals her teeth – and the fact that she is the predator here.

The woman's path is to cross with Arash (Arash Marandi), a moody boy who affects a James Dean style and who has improbably made enough money from gardening jobs to afford a sensational 1950s automobile. His emotional life is invested in his cat, and he is estranged from his father Hossein (Marshall Manesh), a rather ailing and self-pitying figure, addicted to heroin and prostitutes, both of which are supplied by the bully mentioned above.

But fate reverses Arash's fortunes, both financial and romantic, and he finds himself in the woman's bedroom with posters that appear to be classic shots of Madonna and Michael Jackson – but, oddly, not quite. Arash wants to make her a present of earrings and she allows him to pierce her ears with a safety pin sterilised with a flame from his Zippo lighter – a romantic switching of the vampire-vampiree physical relations.

Peter Bradshaw, *The Guardian*

WRITING CREDITS: Ana Lily Amirpour **CINEMATOGRAPHY:** Lyle Vincent

CAST: *The Girl* Sheila Vand | *Arash* Arash Marandi | *Hossein 'The Junkie'* Marshall Manesh
Atti 'The Prostitute' Mozhan Marno | *Saeed 'The Pimp'* Dominic Rains

Our next screening | ***Finding Vivian Maier*** | Tuesday 17 November 2015. 8.00pm
Documentary about a New York nanny who led a secret life as a superb street photographer.