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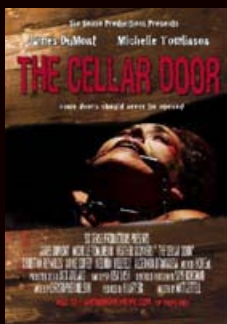
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"On August 29th, 1997, it's gonna feel pretty fucking real to you too. Anybody not wearing 2 million sunblock is gonna have a real bad day. Get it?-" Sarah Conner, *Terminator 2: Judgement Day*

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The Cellar Door (2007)

Submitted by Superheidi on 09/16/2007
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The Cellar Door

Written by: Christopher Nelson
 Directed by: Matt Zettel
 Produced by: Hilary Six
 Featuring: Michelle Tomlinson, James DuMont, Heather Sconyers
 2007 www.thecellardoormovie.com

Herman likes to keep girls locked in his cellar and torture them. Yes, this premise is getting old. Between *Captivity*, *Hostel II*, and 9 million other films coming out in the next year about people being trapped in basements by psychotic, sadistic serial killers, it hardly seems necessary to review, promote, talk about, or even mention another one. But *The Cellar Door* is different, and that's why I am so impressed by it. Yes, the plot is exactly what you would expect; but the acting and the

dialogue is nothing like what you're expecting. Because I know what you're expecting (I know what I was expecting, anyway); stupid, bad writing, unnecessary dialogue and gratuitous nudity, maybe even some crazy traps or torture devices straight out of the mind of a 14-year-old pervert. You won't get that. You will get a fairly straightforward story, two very complex and interesting lead characters, and superb acting on the part of Michelle Tomlinson and James DuMont.

Rudy (Michelle Tomlinson) and her roommate Christa (Heather Sconyers) are two twenty-something hotties who wear those tight little shirts and those sexy pants and run their fingers through their sexy hair - you know, the kind of girl you just want to kill. That's how Herman feels, anyway. Locked away in his basement is a strange cage he's built by hand, and disturbing "memoirs" of various women that he's captured and held there. When he sees Rudy, he finds he needs to add her to his collection desperately. Following her and Christa home, he sneaks into their house at night, and steals the sleeping beauty Rudy away to his castle of torture.

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Mr. February



Tom Atkins

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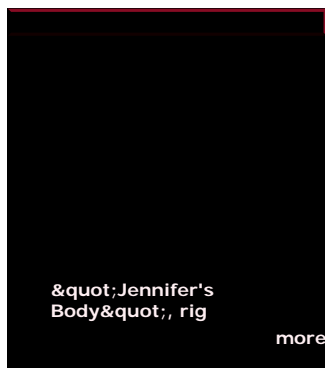
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- **Patricia Arquette ('Medium') at the Paley Center in NYC** (3 days)
- **Courtney Hunt at Film Independent** (9 days)
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- **'Punisher: Warzone' on DVD March 17th** (36 days)

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Michelle Tomlinson as "Rudy"

Rudy awakens to find herself trapped, like an animal, in Herman's basement. She's been drugged, and she doesn't know where she is. It's not long, however, before she's desperate to escape. Clawing at the walls both mentally and physically, Rudy is desperate to find the strength to survive whatever Herman has planned for her. Herman is desperate, too, but what he wants exactly is vague and grotesque, often shrouded by his own confusion. It's only a matter of time before Rudy will die, and she'll do anything to stay alive.



What makes this film so amazingly engaging is the combination of intelligent dialogue and talented actors to deliver them. Rarely seen even in a big-budget Hollywood picture, there is a definite chemistry of character between Tomlinson's Michelle and DuMont's Herman. Given only the small space of a cage to work in, Tomlinson creates a seriously intense woman in Rudy, encompassing a vast range of emotions and attitudes that are all incredibly touching.



NYCC (new)

Action Flick Chick
CONTEST: Last Action Chick Standing - Round One



The Cellar Door looks great and has some really beautiful special effects. There's no skimping or joking on this set: it's definitely a horror film of some substantial terror with the attention to detail and gorgeous set design. There are some incredibly well-shot hallucination scenes, and there is little or no heavy-handed in-your-face- shaky MTV cam; apparently, the cinematographer was as sick of that crap as we are.

Somehow, *Captivity*, a movie with a much higher budget and more famous actors (and with the same premise) stunk so morbidly compared to *The Cellar Door*. By avoiding gross-out cliches (like stupid torture devices so intricate no one could ever actually make them) and lame dialogue (you know, "My Mother was a stripper, so I hate all women"), the filmmakers took a tired idea and actually made it really interesting.



James DuMont's Herman has, er, killed a few people.

I liked this film a lot. It's engrossing and never disappointing. The pace is perfect and the characters are so damn good. Herman is exactly how a serial killer really would be; he has no hook for a hand or husky voice. He's a lonely, sexually deviant single white middle-aged male (like most serial killers), and that's all the information the filmmakers needed in order to put together this really impressive indie. Tomlinson herself is the driving force behind Rudy, a woman who is neither super-strong and knows kung-fu, nor the old-fashioned beauty in distress. Even what nudity there is is not gratuitous and is uncomfortable rather than erotic, which is exactly what the scene calls for. The John Fowles-y writing is all about character development, and it reaches a climax just as the action in the story does.




I don't know how some people do it. Sometimes, a filmmaker assembles the right group of people for the right project and everyone is on the same page. This seems to be one of those projects. *The Cellar Door* belongs on the shelf next to all the other good new horror movies like *SAW*, *Slither*, and *Open Water*. Its way above *Hostel* when it comes to drama, and its light years beyond *Captivity*, *Black Christmas*, and *The Hitcher* remake when it comes to filmmaking.

Average:



Your rating: None

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