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### Strange Girls

By Mike Everleth · October 4, 2008 · [Email This Post](#) · [Print This](#) · [Post a comment](#)

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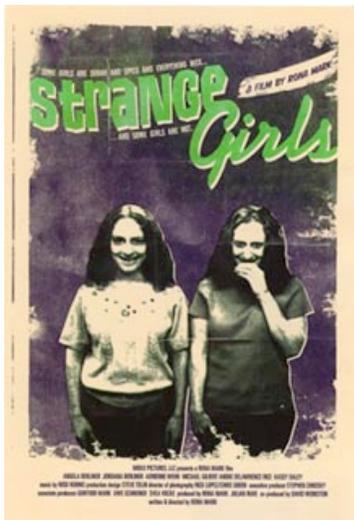
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Fans of the slasher genre know that any film that begins with “locked away in an asylum for 14 years” means that nothing good can come out of that setup.

Well, “good” as in the fate of most of the characters in the film. Not “good” as in the quality of the movie. Because *Strange Girls* is a very good film. It may even be a great one. But, it’s really not quite a slasher film either, even though it aligns itself with that genre.

The “girls” of the title are actually twin 20-year-old women, Virginia and Georgia Gruzcechy (played by real-life twins Angela and Jordana Berliner), the aforementioned “locked in an asylum” stars of the film who were put there after they completely stopped talking when they were 6. They also only stare at the ground when spoken to and walk side-by-side in perfect lockstep with each other. As they’ve gotten older, they did start communicating with people via written notes, mostly with their psychiatrist at the mental hospital.

Trouble is, he dies. So, on the eve of their release, they’re inherited by a new doctor, Marci Maguire (Kasey Daley). However, without revealing too much, the girls are eventually released into “normal” society. Although they keep mostly silent around others, they do speak to one another and we’re quick to learn the inner workings of their sick and twisted relationship.

Slasher films rarely focus on the killer as the main character, so that’s really why one can’t lump *Strange Girls* into that category. Also, Virginia and Georgia don’t go around killing people willy-nilly. They only off people who “get in their way.” In that regard, you can pretty much figure out who’s going to be the recipient of their homicidal wrath. It’s just a matter of time of waiting to see when they’re going to reach their breaking point.

*Strange Girls* actually has more in common with Peter Jackson’s *Heavenly Creatures* than, say, *Halloween*. Like Pauline and Juliet in Jackson’s film, Virginia and Georgia are working on an epic romance story and live more in the fantasy world in their heads than the real one outside in their working class Pittsburgh neighborhood. The fact that the girls are more Countess Bathory than Madame Bovary might be a reason why their 17th-century-styled romance novel is a total bust. Or it might be because they’ve never experienced love with a man in their insular little universe.

Enter Oyo (Andre Delawrence Rice Jr.), a handsome black boy living across the street that the girls set their sights on. They end up doing a pretty good job seducing him without ever uttering a word.

One of the things writer/director Rona Mark sets up early is that Virginia only wears green clothes and Georgia only wears purple (or is it vice versa?) as a way for the audience to distinguish who’s who since we can’t tell them apart by voice. However, as the film progresses, it’s clear who’s who as more about the true nature of their relationship is slowly revealed. While both of the girls are clearly psycho, one of them is truly the “evil twin” and the other is somewhat terrorized into submission. While we never learn why the girls decided to stop talking when they were young, you can figure out who came up with the idea.

Although Virginia and Georgia walk in lockstep whenever they’re out in public, they are really two very distinct characters and it’s love that will eventually tear them apart, i.e. when one of them falls in love with Oyo.

Mark strikes a very odd tone with the film that works to the material’s advantage. Events play out more like a drama than an actual horror movie, although the movie has too many horror conventions to not stick it in that genre. There’s also a subtle undercurrent of dark humor that comes out blasting during the murder scenes, yet the story evolves at a slow, measured pace. As the girls’ relationship with the world outside develops, we learn a little bit more about them as people. Psychotic people, yes, but people with both tragically human and inhuman concerns.

Filmed in Mark’s hometown of Pittsburgh, the director uses the city in the way a young John Waters shot the working class neighborhoods of Baltimore in films like *Pink Flamingos* and *Multiple Maniacs*. But, of course it was George Romero who put Pittsburgh on the horror movie map forty years ago with *Night of the Living Dead*, although that was actually filmed in the countryside several miles away. It’s nice to see a new, young female director like Marks redraw the lines of that map with *Strange Girls*.

For more info, please visit [the \*Strange Girls\* official site](#).

(This film was sent to Bad Lit as a screener from the 2008 [Spooky Movie Film Festival](#), Washington, D.C.’s horror film festival, which runs this year **Oct. 16-20**.)

Watch the trailer: