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## Entertainment :: Books

### Night Film

by Daniel Scheffler

EDGE Contributor

Tuesday Aug 20, 2013

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The second novel from Detroit-born Marisha Pessl, "**Night Film**" comes with a new kind of veracity. It's suspense and it's the modern thriller. Gone are the days of pen-scribbled (oh, forget pen maybe even pencil) notes and a scratch of the forehead. The literary thriller is now fat with websites and GPS locations, so much so that Dame Agatha Christie and slowpoke Sherlock Holmes look rather pathetic now.

What makes Pessl a first class contemporary writer, seen previously in her 2006 "Special Topics in Calamity Physics," is her agile capability of handling character. She crafts like an ancient Italian man with his rough hands.

So when a young, and beautiful, Ashley is discovered less alive than before in a warehouse in lower Manhattan it is up to investigative journalist McGrath to suss out the situation. He rules out suicide and so the adventure, bleak as it is, gets underway. McGrath has to wade through Ashley's complex life to understand the hunches he has about this death. One of the characters he meets is Ashley's father: Stanislas Cordova, a horror-film director who's pretty much a hermit. "He's a myth, a monster and a mortal man."

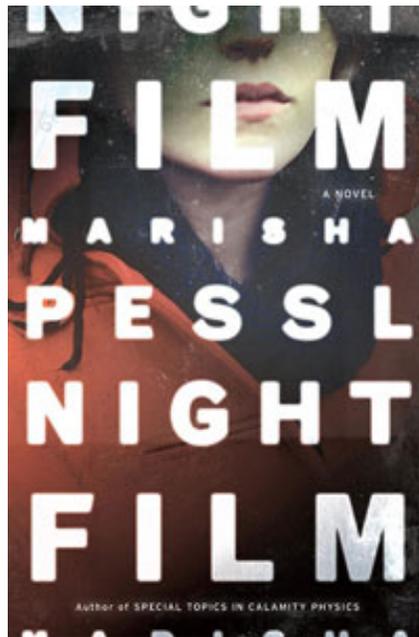
Pessl takes you down the dark road with a tiny box of matches, which means you cannot put the book down until the final conclusion. The characters get creepy and McGrath gets sucked in. Of course

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the time our hero finds a splinter of truth he has lost control of his own life, which has now spiraled out of control: Divorce is in the cards, followed by getting fired. But what is a hero to do? He simply has to fly too close to the sun in spite of his good rational mind warning him yet again.

Pessl delves into obsession, love and the mess in between so carefully that she constructs a scene-by-scene account of the lives coming undone in front of you. She, the crackerjack writer she is, has an ability to find the pleasure in doom, the pleasure in the darkness, and -- even more so -- the pleasure in the pursuit of chaos. It's a dance around a trap door that you enter, knowing it has darkness and human decay below it. It's impossible to resist, that we all know ever so well. And perhaps Pessl gives it to us straight down the throat to remind us of exactly that endearing (or is it ridiculous?) quality.

"Night Film"  
Marisha Pessl  
Random House  
\$16.80

by *Marisha Pessl*

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Daniel Scheffler is a writer who spends his time in New York, Cape Town and India. Follow him on Twitter @danielscheffler

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Aug 30

New pastel portraits by singer Bob Dylan were shown for the first time at the National Portrait Gallery in London on Saturday. The 12 new works in the "Bob Dylan Face Value" exhibition represent the latest portrait studies from the legendary sin...



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By EDGE | Aug 13

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By Fred Topel | Jul 19

One of the most disturbing racial incidents of the past few years happened in an Oakland subway station on New Year's Day 2009 when an African-American man was killed by police. Now the event is the basis of an award-winning drama.