

**Locarno, Cinema Kursaal****18.15****Friday, 2nd February 2018****THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN****2016****112 minutes**

Directed by Tate TAYLOR

Starring: Emily Blunt, Haley Bennet, Rebecca Ferguson and Justin Theroux

Based on the debut thriller by former London journalist Paula Hawkins. Divorcee Rachel Watson commutes every day to New York by train and through the window watches the old house where she used to live with her husband Tom.

Alfred Hitchcock may have said all there is to say about the imperfection of making assumptions about what you see through a window but, like most important lessons, this one can bear some repeating. To the limited scope of a window frame, "The Girl on the Train" offers a few additional obfuscations. First, Rachel looks out through the window of a moving train on her daily commute. Second, Rachel is your basic hot mess: depressed, unemployed, still in mourning for the death of her childless marriage, and prone to alcoholic blackouts that coincide with critical moments in the tale of a missing woman later found dead. Rachel might as well be wearing a sign that reads "Unreliable Narrator". Even though she's been fired for drunkenness, Rachel continues to take her usual train from Ashbury, a featureless "new town" at the outer edge of exurban London, to Euston Station and back each day, for the commute has become her anchor.

Rachel shares a flat with her friend Cathy. Tom lives with his new wife, Anna, and their new-born daughter, Evie. Their babysitter is Megan Hipwell, who lives with her husband Scott in the same neighbourhood. Rachel admires Megan and Scott since she believes they are the perfect couple. However, Megan is a promiscuous woman who has affairs with many men including her psychiatrist, Dr Kamal Abdic. When Rachel sees Megan kissing another man on the balcony of her house, she decides to have a conversation with Megan after drinking in a bar. But she has a blackout and wakes up in her apartment covered in bruises. Soon she learns that Megan is missing and Detective Riley, in charge of the investigation, visits Rachel to question her since the neighbours had seen an alcoholic woman wandering in the area. But Rachel does not recall what she did that night. She decides to investigate the case and makes dreadful discoveries about her life and Tom. Who might the killer be?

Critics' comments:

- A formidable thriller and more impressively an adaptation that actually improves on the blockbuster book it was based on. (from *Sfist*)

- Women finally wise up and take control at the very end of the story, and that is supposed to make up for all the voyeurism and passivity that goes before. I resent having to suffer through all that nonsense for such a brief payoff at the end. (from *Laramie Move Scope*)

- In the end, however, the whole movie rests upon the shoulders of Emily Blunt, and she holds it all together brilliantly, even as her character is falling apart. From the intimacy of *My Summer of Love*, through the sorcerer's apprentice of *The Devil Wears Prada* to the sci-fi action heroine of *Edge of Tomorrow* and the blindsided FBI agent in *Sicario*, Blunt has proved herself to be a mesmerising presence in a range of genres. In Rachel's fractured personality, we see echoes of Blunt's previous screen lives, refracted through a prism of self-destruction that somehow never alienates the audience. Retaining the British accent that makes her even more of an outsider in this scary New World, Blunt convinces completely as a drunken fish out of water. This train may not be bound for glory, but her disruptive company is worth the price of the ticket.

(from *The Observer*)