

Don't Look Now

UK : 1973 : dir. Nicolas Roeg : BL / Casey / Eldorado : 110 min
 prod: Peter Katz : scr: Allan Scott & Chris Byant : dir.ph.: Anthony Richmond
[boys / girls](#)
 Donald Sutherland; Julie Christie; Hilary Mason; Clelia Matania; Massimo Serato

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω 8 ∞ M ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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*The title "Death in Venice" was already taken, but it actually suits this film better than the Visconti / Bogarde one.
 Source: indeterminate*

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide
 2001 review:

"Arty, over-indulgent but gripping Daphne du Maurier occult thriller about parents of drowned child and their horror-laden visit to Venice; highlighted by memorably steamy love scene and violent climax. *** "

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"After the death of their small daughter, the Baxters meet in Venice two old sisters who claim mediumistic connection with the dead girl. The husband scorns the idea, but repeatedly sees a little red-coated figure in shadowy passages by the canals. Then he confronts it...

A macabre short story has become a pretentious and puzzling piece of high cinema art full of vague suggestions and unexplored avenues. Whatever its overall deficiencies, it is too brilliant in surface detail to be dismissed.

Depressingly but fascinatingly set in wintry Venice, it has to be seen to be appreciated. ***
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“The fanciest, most carefully assembled enigma yet seen on the screen.” – **New Yorker**

“A powerful and dazzling visual texture”
– Penelope Houston

TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995 review:

“You’ll either love or hate this supernatural Daphne du Maurier tale made even more inscrutable by director Nicolas Roeg. The Baxters (Donald Sutherland and Julie Christie) travel to Venice after the accidental death of their young daughter. They become involved with two odd sisters (Hilary Mason and Clelia Matania), one of whom is a psychic and claims she can help them contact their daughter.¹ Nothing is what it seems in this strange film, which, with Roeg’s fine camerawork and the Venice location, is stunning to watch. Sutherland and Christie give intense performances, but if you demand a logical plot with an equally logical conclusion, you will find this film irritating. If you let its surreal magic seduce you, you’ll understand why it has a strong cult following. *** ”

[no listing in "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

¹ *She certainly doesn't make any such claim*

Top 50 lists are pretty meaningless in the main, but if I were looking down the business end of a Kalashnikov and had to supply a top 50 favourite films, this one would certainly be well up the list. Roeg pulls off the very delicate trick of creating a genuinely sinister film, and achieves this by mood, atmosphere and clever editing, supported by a flawless cast and a script which hints at much, but actually shows us very little. The chief star, of course, is Venice itself, described as being "like a city in aspic, left behind after a party when all the guests are dead". Sound and camera are used to optimum effect, making the empty and shabby bye-ways of the city a place of nightmares, every nook and cranny overlooked by dark and sightless windows, echoing to grisly noises. It is a ghost city, haunted by the living, and crumbling quietly into the canals that lap – very unromantically – around it.

The supernatural undertones of the story – precognition, predestination – require a steady, phlegmatic, common-sensical leading man, and Sutherland supplies this. Julie Christie is effective as his impressionable, borderline neurotic wife. But every supporting character – the police inspector, the hotel manager, the bishop, and above all the two English sisters – add flavour and nuance to the story, contributing to that mounting sense of disquiet. **"DON'T LOOK NOW"** is a ghost film, where the ghost somehow neglects to put in an appearance, always the most sensible policy for ghosts.

See also **"BADKONAK-E SEFID"** and **"BASHU"** - both recent Iranian films, and subject index under **ARAB WORLD / MIDDLE EAST**.