Script Coverage Assessment: "The House on the Borderland"

Genre: Psychological/ cosmic horror

Length: Feature (24 pages).

Screenwriters: Glyndwr Edwards/ Alan Edwards

The House on the Borderland is an intriguing adaption of a novel by William Hope Hodgson that was deemed unfilmable due to budgetary constraints.

The symbolism of the house is well-depicted here: a threshold, if crossed, where physical space and time dissolve into cosmic planes.

Also, are the fears of the recluse partly responsible for what he envisions? Once the recluse leaves the safety of the house, he knows his sanity will never be the same again.

The adaption stays faithful to the original source material without losing any of its ambiguity and panoramic depiction of the earth destroyed millions of years in the future, as seen through the recluse's odyssey through time and space.

Framed around two fishermen on holiday in Ireland in 1877, Tonnison and Berregnog, the screenplay utilises Tonnison as the psychic fulcrum with the unnamed recluse to have flashbacks of what the old man endured.

Of course, the recluse is the central figure and a multitude of scenes from the novel come into play here, especially with the recluse's discovery of his dog Pepper when he returns to his study after a journey. All incidents underpin the trauma that the recluse suffers at the hands of the Swine-things. This comes to the fore in "The Sea of Sleep" when the recluse again meets his long-lost love.

This intriguing scenario would use a minimal budget and retain all underlying contradictions of the original novel. The screenplay begins with the opening events foreshadowing the rest of the story and its ambiguous conclusion. The silence, shadows, fear of the recluse, add to the trepidation of what is to come. His demise is underplayed and left to the imagination.

Any director would be pleased to film this scene which would leave the viewer in shock after his brutal slaying by the Swine-thing that enters the study.

Tonnison is the emotional anchor for this adaption and, through his eyes, we experience traumatic occurrences in the recluse's story that are later confirmed by Berregnog's discovery of the diary. The production scope for this feature is achievable and would sit well within prestige festivals.

The period dialogue reflects the era admirably. Berregnog's scepticism is antagonistic and this is well-nuanced, with Tonnison brokering no argument about his depiction of events.

This is a well-written feature that explores the truth of our fears, nightmares, and what lies behind the reality we perceive every day. Obviously, the pacing is slow-burn, but when events spiral out of control, as they do for the protagonist, we are left in no doubt as to his fate.