

HARD CANDY

USA | 2005 | 104' | Crima, Drama, Thriller | Rated R

Directed by

David Slade

Written by

Brian Nelson

With

Patrick Wilson
Ellen Page
Sandra Oh

Original Music by

Harry Escott
Molly Nyman



Première:

?/01/2005 (Sundance)

World release:

14/04/2006

Strangers should not talk to little girls.

Budget: \$950.000

Gross: \$7.022.209

REVIEW

Hayley seems a normal 14-year-old girl, whose primary goal is to find someone to love. She begins to chat with Jeff, a professional photographer, and she decides to go out with him. Sooner, the initial roles will be reverted and old skeletons in Jeff's closet will be unveiled, threatening his entire life.

If the goal of the movie was talking about the risks of the internet relationships for teens, the first twenty minutes would be perfect: the little girl ingenuity in revealing herself too much through an online chat makes her hang out with a thirty-year-old adult and even end up at his place; the photographer's plan, making the girl believe she's leading the game until it's too late... then, it all falls. The colours change, the lens is darkened (without an evident change of the scene or its environmental conditions) and Haley takes the lead for real, of a game which is no longer a game.

Until this moment, the screenplay wisely make the characters talk in the right way at the right time. After that, from the turning point of the movie, a slight defiance is in order, also because of the partial lack of the truthfulness the story had in its beginning. Looking at the whole picture, this thriller of the first-timer David Slade risks too much and, in its foga di strafare, glues the audience to its place for the whole time, leaving though a certain dissatisfaction to the viewer who would like an at least sufficient narrative coherence added to the high pathos level. Brian Nelson, screenwriter, is of little help with his story that, as already said, is held together from an emotional pow but fails, in the second half, in recreating a realistic and credible situation.

Truth be told, this is an independent production and Lionsgate bought the screening credits after a positive critic reaction at the Sundance Film Festival, well-known for its importance in this field, but there are another few things not working in a movie that, right after the end, seems to leave a good impression. Ellen Page, acting as Haley, had to go back to her 14-year-old self (she was already 17 during the shooting) and in doing she does an impressive but impressing job, risking a very mature attitude which she succeed in keeping truthful for a teenager; on the other side, Patrick Wilson, older but less experienced, plays and holds to her level, considering that being the only characters for 90' the risk of failing and falling apart is most high.

Being the actors so good, what's wrong with the movie? The story, for one and 'only'. If the regular roles had been kept themselves, with Haley as the victim and Jeff as the ogre, the result would have probably been great. But the their inversion, even if innovative and tremendously effective on the emotive scale, soon reaches extreme peaks, risking (and succeeding) in leaving the girl in the wrong while the audience watches her building a perverse game which easily passes from psychological to physical with an adult who is left submissive to the masochistic dominance of his young mistress.

A movie rated 'R', though nudity is spared to the view, has to be extremely crude, in language and actions (hidden and left to imagination with maniacal attention by Slade: point in his favour, this one).

Music in this movie is very important, as it always is in a thriller, and Nyman and Escott's job is impressive, because it hides beneath the story with efficiency without being invasive or overwhelming. We will certainly here from them again, these two.

Last but not least: the trailer is one of the best I've ever seen: no spoilers and great pathos, just like the movie itself. Amazing detail, it shows the beginning of the conversation between the two characters, not shown in the final cut.

ASSESSMENT	
POSTER	78%
TAGLINE	78%
TRAILER	85%
SATISFACTION	58%
DIRECTING	55%
SCREENPLAY	48%
PRODUCTION DESIGN	67%
CINEMATOGRAPHY	60%
CAST	80%
MUSIC	78%
TOTAL	64% - D