

## Bittersweet Flashback Flick Follows Orphan's Tragic Trajectory

Written by Film Review by Kam Williams

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*Women's Prison*

Julie Ann (Gemma Lee) spent her formative years watching her mom (Katie Madonna Lee) suffer the wrath of her father's violent outbursts. Eventually, Susan Mabry decided enough was enough, and split, taking her young daughter in tow. The two proceeded to take refuge in a series of seedy motels in a futile attempt to stay a step ahead of the venomous monster. But eventually, the creep did manage to track them down, whereupon he murdered his wife in cold blood.

The sudden loss sent the traumatized little girl's life into a downward spiral, setting off a chain of events from which she would never recover. For despite the fact that she was subsequently adopted by her Aunt Marsha (Kelly Daisy) and Uncle Vic (Paul Frye), a couple of Bible-thumping Evangelicals, Julie Anne continued to find herself plagued by further dysfunction during her adolescence, mostly at the hands of malevolent males.

First, it turned out that Uncle Vic was just another abuser in fundamentalist Christian clothing. So, she and her cousin, Britney (Angela Swartz), agreed to flee the unsafe household together, only to encounter an equally-perilous existence on the streets as teen runaways. This predicament led Julie to lean on the shoulder of Butch (Brandon Phillipson), an older boy with a car but not a whole lot more going for him.

But when their presumably Platonic liaison turned intimate an unplanned pregnancy left Julie weighing her options. Then, an impulsive act she came to regret forever landed her behind bars on Death Row. And only while awaiting her State of Indiana sanctioned rendezvous with destiny, does the "dead woman walking" finally have an opportunity to pause to reflect upon the trajectory of her disastrous childhood.

"There but for fortune" perhaps best summarizes the theme underpinning *Woman's Prison*, a character-driven flashback flick from Katie Madonna Lee. Triple-threat Lee makes an impressive writing/acting/directorial debut, here, considering the constraints of the micro-budget with which she was operating. An alternately terrifying, thought-provoking and unabashedly empathetic look at life from the harrowing perspective of a never-protected female.

Excellent (3.5 stars)

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Unrated

Running time: 105 Minutes

Distributor: Anthology Film Archives

To see a trailer for Woman's Prison, visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUSlQhme15Y>

Woman's Prison premieres in NYC at Anthology Film Archives on April 2nd at 8:30 PM. For more info, call (212) 505-5181.