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The Devil All the Time is a Southern Gothic Film Noir Brimming in Tragedy and Violence, written by Donald Ray Pollock, is the latest book-to-film adaptation released exclusively on Netflix that is directed by Antonio Campos and executive produced by Jake Gyllenhaal. It features an all-star ensemble cast starring Tom Holland, Robert Pattinson, Sebastian Stan, Jason Clarke, and Mia Wasikowska among many others.

The film examines various people living in two rural towns that take place in the span of a couple decades starting at the end of World War II and going into the Vietnam War; Knockemstiff, Ohio and Coal Creek, West Virginia. Many of these characters face their own struggles and/or demons that are brought up in unexpected ways as the film progresses.

When we see Knockemstiff, we are introduced to Willard Russell, a discharged World War II veteran who goes back home suffering PTSD after witnessing a gruesome crucifixion to one of his fellow soldiers by the Japanese army while serving in the Solomon Islands. He soon meets a lovely diner waitress named Charlotte who he starts a family with. Later on his only son is born, Arvin Russell, who he raises until his wife starts to develop cancer. Willard decides to reconnect with God by building a “prayer log” as a makeshift shrine in the hopes that his wife will recover from the illness.

Unfortunately for Arvin, he loses both his parents where he suddenly lives out his teenage years with his aunt and uncle along with his younger step-sister Lenora.

Religion becomes a prevalent theme in the film, particularly Christianity, as it affects the myriad band of characters that drives them to commit acts of crime and deceit to those closest to them. A false preacher named Preston Teagardin manipulates his biblical teachings to his advantage by sexually corrupting young girls like Lenora; Willard's desperate pleas with God alone shifts his son's outlook on God as he crucifies their family dog - the brief shot of the dog nailed on the cross being one of the most shocking frames in the entire film. Even Carl Henderson, a serial killer with a knack for photography, has a grim perspective to faith. The narrator, Pollock, describes Carl by saying, "Only in the presence of death could he feel the presence of something like God".

While the grotesque violence and gloomy suspense in the film may not be for everyone, the performances alone make this film worth watching for yourselves. Even if the narration sometimes lessens the impact over certain scenes. Besides those issues, I would gladly give the film a rating of a 8.5 out of 10.

SOURCES:

<https://www.binged.com/reviews/the-devil-all-the-time-netflix-movie-review/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElzazUv2gtI>