

Esther

written & directed by: Montana Mann

starring: Emily Vere Nicoll, Hannah James, Danny Fisher

produced by: Montana Mann, Emily Vere Nicoll, Hannah James,
Rachel Vere Nicoll, and Andre Champagne

cinematographer: Matthew Plaxco

genre: crime, thriller

format: 2:35 scope

runtime: 10:14 minutes

logline: A husband plots to kill his wife with his mistress, but their plans take a turn when unsettling mysterious events occur that night.

synopsis: In 1912, an abusive gentleman farmer uses his mistress to kill his wife. They store the body in the barn until they can bury it. But later that night their world is turned upside down when the body of the murdered wife seemingly comes back to life to haunt the husband and his mistress. Has the wife really risen from the dead or is there something else going on?

previous recognition:



Cast & Crew Bios

Emily Vere Nicoll

(actress, producer, plays Esther)



Emily Vere Nicoll is a British American film and television actor and voice over artist based in New York City. Growing up on a working farm in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains and traveling extensively to foreign lands ignited her creative artistic spirit. She recently appeared on Netflix's Original Series Black Mirror in notably one of the more shocking episodes starring Letitia Wright and Douglas Hodge, "Black Museum." She can also be seen on NBC's Chicago Med in the episode "Folie a Deux."

Hannah James

(actress, producer, plays Cora)



Hannah James is a British American actress known for her portrayal of Emma Green on Ridley Scott's "Mercy Street" and most recently Lady Geneva in Season 3 of "Outlander". Trained as a ballerina from an early age, Hannah transitioned into acting upon graduating high school. She attended the Guildford School Of Acting in England for three years and soon after moved to Los Angeles where she launched her career in television three months after settling back in the States. She currently resides in both London and LA. This year she will join the CW series "Supergirl" as Maeve Nel

Montana Mann

(writer, director, producer)



Writer/director Montana Mann has won awards for her short films as well as commercial work. Shoot Magazine named her one of the top new directors to watch out for. Her commercial work earned her a CTA (Emmy) finalist nod, a YDA nomination at Cannes, Best Director at La Femme Film Festival, and top slots at numerous other competitions. She wrote two indie thrillers, one of which went into production last year. Recently she sold her TV pitch to UCP (SyFy, Universal Studios).

Director's Statement

Growing up in Virginia was an odd place for a girl of Iranian background to find herself. One of the most beautiful places I have ever seen, but the serenity and landscape also bring about a feeling of unsettling unknowingness. I felt it ever since I was a child. There seemed to be something lurking behind the gorgeous never-ending fields that stole my heart and my curiosity - a history both beautiful and haunting.

The two lead actresses in this short film I grew up with in Virginia. The farm house we filmed inside belongs to their family and a constant place I found myself as a child. The house itself, the horses, the fields, the wild flowers - were a mystical destination where myself and Emily (who plays Esther) used to find ourselves running around the streams on her farm creating magical and spooky stories.

It is hard to describe one's culture on paper. It's usually something you have to experience and immerse yourself in to really understand. There is a quietness to the Persian culture that alludes to it's ancient history. It's felt through its people, through its hospitality and through its love of the arts which it culturally championed since before the Persian Empire. Filmmakers like Asghar Farhadi do a wonderful job of bringing that peaceful stillness to life.

For me, Esther's visual tempo and style is a combination of the worlds in which I found myself as a child. The Virginian landscape I fell in love with, and the slow burn poetic cinematography that remind me of the art of my Persian ancestors.

As individuals we constantly ask ourselves what makes up who we are? As a child I felt like an outsider looking in. Never quite southern enough and never quite Persian enough for the spectators - but through film I can begin to make sense of my unique artistic genetic makeup. And so here in lies Esther, a short film made from the childhood feelings of young girls running wild in Virginia planes full of thrilling and haunting adventures, and with it the style of a culture far far away. The two seem instantly contrasting, but Esther shows there can be a magical marriage found between them.

Love,
Montana Mann
writer/director

