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CAST

Marcia Forbes Jamie Godard
Harlan Cary Poe Charlie Belmont
Evelyn Kingsley Pearl Valdi
Luis Arroyo Eddie
Fran Warren Edna Godard
Peter Lightstone Phillip Godard
Tiberia Mitri Jamie as a Child
N.J. Osrag Max Geunther
Jack Cobb The Blindfolded "John"
Ronnie Kahn Hank
Irene Signoretti Gloria

CREW

Directed by **Stanley H. Brasloff**
Produced by **Samuel M. Chartock, Stanley H. Brasloff**
Written by **Macs McAree, Stanley H. Brasloff**
Editor **Jerry Siegel**
Director of Photography **Rolph Laubé**
Music by **Cathy Lynn, Jacques Urbont**
Title Song 'Lonely Am I' Sung by **T.L. Davis**



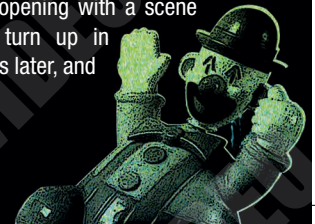


TOYSEXUAL: THE BIZARRELY PROGRESSIVE, STRANGELY MODERN PSYCHO-SEXUAL WORLD OF *TOYS ARE NOT FOR CHILDREN*

by Preston Fassel

The 70s are hardly what we would call a progressive era in entertainment. With a rape scene in seemingly every genre film, casual dismissal of female characters as sex objects, and an unhealthy fixation on the notion of the swaggering, macho alpha male as uncomplicated protagonist, one could safely make the argument that cinema somehow managed to take a step backwards during the decade in its depiction of women and gender dynamics. One need look no further than the films of Sam Peckinpah, with their sexual violence and casual abuse of female characters (Ali McGraw is apparently so used to being literally pushed around by Steve McQueen in *The Getaway* that she almost literally shrugs off getting slugged by him), or even the original *Tombs of the Blind Dead* (1972), which, for all of its fantastic originality, feels the need to stop the action at one point simply to shoehorn in a rape scene with no bearing on the plot. If you were a woman in a genre film in the 70s, you could expect to be beaten, tortured, sexually abused, and probably killed, and by the time the end credits rolled you'd be lucky if anyone in the audience even remembered your name. That's what makes *Toys Are Not for Children* so fascinating: even though it falls victim to some of the sexual excesses of the decade, it stands out as a thoughtful, serious depiction of one profoundly fucked-up woman's mental deterioration, and the people in her life who attempt to lend a helping hand.

The film immediately subverts genre expectations by opening with a scene of female masturbation, something that wouldn't turn up in mainstream cinema on the regular until a few decades later, and



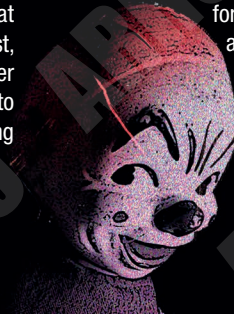


even today it's a relatively unusual sight compared to the myriad jockoff scenes employed for humorous effect in so many bro comedies. True, it's a scene of profoundly strange masturbation – we meet Jamie splayed on her back beneath a stuffed toy soldier, mimicking coitus with it – but, nonetheless, one of the opening images of the film is a woman finding unashamed sexual pleasure on her own terms. Even when her harridan mother barges in to bring an end to the self-gratification session, Jamie insists there's nothing wrong with what she's doing, only that her mother is wrong for interrupting her; and while the audience will come to realize that the stuffed soldier's role in the proceedings does in fact speak to something profoundly wrong with Jamie, our sympathies still remain with her. She's our focal character, and we're invited to share in her humiliation at being walked-in on in the course of an immensely private act by a parental figure.

It's a sympathetic tone that runs throughout the movie, as the film seriously attempts to understand Jamie, and encourages the viewer to understand her as well. Most powerfully, the audience is asked to directly identify with Jamie by focalizing the film through her eyes – the film presents the world the way she sees it, as a pastel-colored wonderland full of toys. Scenes are lit and sets decorated like a child's playroom, with soft pinks, blues, magentas and turquoises lending the film a nursery feel that echoes the way in which Jamie sees life, and the idyllic childhood fantasy into which she wishes to escape. The viewer is further encouraged to empathize with her through the film's unconventional narrative structure, which puts us directly inside of Jamie's mind. *Toys* employs the device of a disordered chronology to represent Jamie's own displacement in time, moving back and forth through her entire life, not just flashing back to her childhood but also occasionally to memories of her unconventional courtship with Charlie and time spent working at the toy store, so that there are moments when the audience is uncertain if they're seeing past, present, or future – just as Jamie herself is at once woman and child, her mind occupying multiple eras simultaneously. We're literally asked to see the world and experience time as Jamie does, further endearing

us to her and welcoming us to sympathize with her, even if we can't ever quite understand her.

Not that the film doesn't at least attempt to understand Jamie, and it's in those moments when we delve deeply into her psychology that we're presented with a portrait of a uniquely disturbed individual. Other films dealing with female mental illness are often content to simplify and dismiss, mimicking the mental health system's routine dismissal of women's issues. While on a surface level, we can read a reductive assessment of Jamie's problem – she has daddy issues – the script by Macs McAree instead delves into the precise nature of these issues and their profoundly complex, interwoven nature (in this regard, the film has much in common with another 1972 dadsploitation film, *Love Me Deadly*, which replaces toys with necrophilia). Jamie isn't simply a woman looking for a sexual partner who reminds her – physically or emotionally – of her father – she *literally* wants to have sex with her dad. Further still, this desire doesn't manifest as a simple sexual urge – because she associates her father so much with the toys he gave her as a child, and the joy the act of giving provided him, Jamie wants to become a literal toy herself. Already resembling the classic image of a baby doll, with her small mouth, alabaster skin and doe eyes, Marcia Forbes becomes more and more doll-like throughout the film, styling her hair, doing her makeup, and ultimately wearing (literal) babydoll dresses so that she looks like a giant, living toy. Far from simply a physical transformation, Jamie also wants to be *treated* like a toy – she only finds sexual fulfillment when she's used by other men – *literally* played with. It's a desire that finds its ultimate satisfaction when she at last becomes a prostitute, submitting herself to the whims, desires, and dictates of whoever pays to make her his actual plaything. It's a very bizarre, strange form of derangement, yet the film never judges Jamie, even as it invites the audience to realize how very weird this all is; indeed, the final image of the film, fixated on Jamie's longing, confused eyes as we fade into a perhaps imagined childhood memory of joy and innocence, asks us for sympathy rather than judgment.



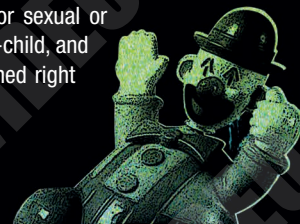
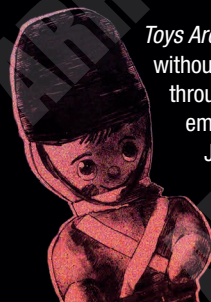


“Sympathy rather than judgment” is, startlingly, the philosophy employed by many of the film’s supporting characters in a further divergence from traditional 70s genre fare. The first time we meet Charlie, he’s mugging at Jamie from behind a customer’s back, before Jamie’s exasperated admission that he’s been pawing at her all day. The audience’s expectation, then, becomes that Charlie will emerge as a very familiar sort of creeper, the kind of guy who feels entitled to do whatever he wants with a woman’s body and thinks that unwanted groping is an acceptable form of flirtation. It comes as a surprise, then, when she not only marries him, but when Charlie accepts her refusal to have sex on their wedding night with uncommon sensitivity. Far from simply acknowledging that she’s not ready to sleep with him, Charlie further refrains from attempting to guilt, bully, or coerce her into a sexual encounter, instead acknowledging that the pair have their entire future together and that this is simply one night in the scope of their relationship. It’s a strangely touching and affecting scene, made all the more powerful by Charlie’s initial romantic overtures before Jamie puts the brakes on things – instead of jumping on her like a Neanderthal, he instead attempts to initiate lovemaking with foreplay and compliments, intending to physically and emotionally arouse his new bride. Many other 70s genre films would’ve concluded the scene with a rape sequence, framed either as harrowing and degrading or filmed so as to be titillating and “liberating.” *Toys* has higher ambitions. Even unto the end, Charlie is represented as a supportive, understanding, and loving figure – even when he attempts to cheat on Jamie, his thoughts are still with her welfare and wellbeing.


Those ambitions are further realized in the film’s treatment of its characters’ various sexual hang-ups. While the movie does tacitly acknowledge the deviance of Jamie’s desire to have sex with her own dad, and the weirdness of her apparent toysexuality, it also explores a variety of kinks and aspects of human sexuality still considered taboo today. While Jamie’s arousal at the prospect of rape appears initially reductive, the film does, ultimately, make it clear that Jamie has rape *fantasies*, and does not wish to actually be raped – a delineation that’s still difficult to reconcile for many in 2019. She resists when Eddie

tries to force himself upon her; when he frames his advances within the context of a rough yet consensual sexual encounter, she willingly goes along, roleplaying the part of victim, an act she later repeats (and encourages) with Charlie. That men and women may have fantasies of dominance and submission is a concept only now being explored and understood outside of the BDSM community, and even then, only in the gentlest and most vanilla of terms. For a movie made in 1972 to recognize that, in a safe and consensual context, a woman might enjoy a rape fantasy was unusually progressive. Similarly, the film also has a surprisingly accepting and healthy attitude towards sex work: Jamie is spellbound at the idea that her new friend, Pearl, is a prostitute, and rather than call down shame on her, inquires as to the ins-and-outs of “the life.” While Pearl may ultimately make some poor decisions in her treatment of Jamie, they’re never tied directly to being a sex worker; the film instead presents it as a viable, if not unusual, career choice, even as Pearl and Charlie desperately attempt to pull Jamie out of it. The actual act of being a prostitute is never represented as harmful, detrimental, or damaging; it’s during her time as a sex worker that Jamie finds the most fulfillment and happiness, and, one gets the impression that, if she weren’t so hung up on becoming a living doll, she might even find some degree of self-actualization through it, as Pearl has. A note on Pearl – rarely has a film, especially of this vintage, treated a sex worker with such humanity. Content in her job, Pearl never makes any apologies for the life she’s chosen (and the film is careful to let us know that, yes, she has *chosen* this, and isn’t being forced into anything). Even though Eddie initially looms large as a traditional depiction of a predatory pimp, his later (tacit) admission that *he* is afraid of *Pearl* (even if he can’t bring himself to verbally admit it, his actions speak louder than words) demonstrates that she’s the one with the real power in their relationship.

Toys Are Not for Children isn’t a revelatory piece of feminist cinema, and it isn’t without its problematic elements. There’s still a patriarchal streak running through the movie, with male characters jockeying for sexual or emotional dominance of a vulnerable, mentally ill girl-child, and Jamie’s shrieking caricature of a mother is spawned right







from an MRA fever dream. It's even entirely possible that the film's progressive tone is an accident – director Stanley H. Brasloff's only other feature was the rape-fueled roughie *Two Girls for a Madman* (1968), while “Sultan of Sexploitation” Harry H. Novak is listed in many places as an uncredited producer. By accident or design, *Toys Are Not for Children* is a remarkable if not utterly bizarre artifact of a less socially conscious time in the history of genre cinema – a singularly bizarre psychosexual journey into the mind of a uniquely disturbed woman that asks the viewer to sympathize with her dysfunction while at the same time celebrating her sexuality. It's a line that few films today are brave enough to walk, addressing a subject few directors would dare tackle. For that alone it's worth a watch, and eminently worthy of preservation, if not necessarily praise.

Preston Fassel is an award-winning author and journalist. He currently serves as a staff writer at Fangoria Magazine and a creative executive at Cinestate. His debut novel, Our Lady of the Inferno, won the 2019 Independent Publisher Book Award for Horror.







ABOUT THE RESTORATION

Toys Are Not for Children has been exclusively restored by Arrow Films and is presented in 1.85:1 with mono audio. An original 35mm dupe negative was scanned in 2K resolution, graded and restored at OCN Digital Labs. The soundtrack was sourced from a combination of answer print and release print elements. Additional audio remastering was completed at Pinewood Studios.

All original materials used in this restoration were accessed from Valiant International Pictures.

Restoration produced by **James White, Arrow Films**

Colorist: **Lannie Lorence**

OCN Digital: **Joe Rubin**

Pinewood Studios: **Rebecca Budds, Jashesh Jhaveri**

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and Booklet Produced by **Ewan Cant**

Executive Producers **Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni**

Technical Producer **James White**

QC **Nora Mehenni, Alan Simmons**

Production Assistant **Samuel Thiery**

Blu-ray Mastering and Subtitling **The Engine House Media Services**

Artwork by **The Twins of Evil**

Design **Obviously Creative**

SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, Heather Drain, Kat Ellinger, Alexandra Heller-Nicholas, Marc Morris,
Michael Mackenzie, Carmen Novak, Casey Scott and Stephen Thrower



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