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Movie Review



'The Enchanted' Set in Florida's Wilderness

In "The Enchanted," filmmaker Carter Lord matches a New England folk tale with the natural beauty of the Florida wilderness to weave a moody, contemporary story of love and the collision of reality with fantasy.

Filmed over a 14-week period in Manatee, DeSoto, Polk and Hardee counties - the principal shooting was done about 50 miles from Sarasota this side of the Peace River - "The Enchanted" was made with an amazingly low budget of \$1.2 million. It's playing regionally right now with an eye toward national distribution or a television sale. The movie opens today in Sarasota, Tampa, Clearwater and St. Petersburg.

The story concerns a young Florida man named Royce (Will Sennett) who has traveled the world as a sailor and is now returning to central Florida to raise cattle on family land he has inherited. Well known in the area, Royce quickly and easily takes up the rigorous lifestyle of ranching, hunting, tending an orange grove and looking for companionship wherever it turns up in the isolated area.

Royce's best friend and teacher is an older black man named Booker, who is respected as the best and smartest wilderness guide in the state. Booker and his basset hound, Pete, are probably the two wisest creatures in this whole movie, and the man who plays Booker (Julius Harris) is the best actor.

Booker advises Royce to keep his distance from a colorful family of day laborers who have emerged from the deep woods to find work. The family, named Perdry, is composed of parents and five children ranging from pre-teen to the oldest daughter named Twyla (Casey Blanton). All the family members are sweet tempered, hard working, loving toward one another and they wear the brightest and strangest assortment of clothing imaginable. They are complete vegetarians and seem complete unto themselves.

But when Twyla and Royce seem physically attracted to one another, the Perdry parents

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Will Sennett and Julius Harris star in 'The Enchanted.'

'Enchanted' Weaves Creative Tale

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encourage the alliance. In fact, the mother instructs Twyla to paint her face with pastel colors, put on a gauze-like flowing garment and sit perched in a tree to wait for Royce to come and claim her. Royce is enchanted with her beauty and takes her home to share his life and bed.

But Booker is skeptical. He condemns the union and repeatedly warns Royce that the Perdrys, especially Twyla, are bad news. The first day Booker saw the Perdry clan scurry out of the deep woods an owl screeched like "a witch on fire" and sat on the top of the Perdry trailer, a sure sign of death according to Booker.

Soon, a timber wolf, which hasn't been spotted in Florida in 40 years, starts attacking and killing Royce's calves. Booker associates the damage with Twyla. For her part, the young woman is terrified by a small kitten and faints dead away when Royce brings into the house a freshly-killed chicken. Twyla is afraid to be alone and she is consumed by painting a room-sized mural that appears to be telling the story of the screenplay. Twyla does not know how to write and has no memory of learning how to paint or draw.

Eventually, other strange and menacing incidents move the story to its shocking and supernatural climax.