



Monday, May 23, 7:30 pm

Reviewed by Michael Phillips Rated R 82 Mins.

The worst thing a critic can do for a film he loves is hard-sell its dramatic, aesthetic and emotional value, thereby raising expectations to unfulfillable levels.

The problem is, writer-director Trey Edward Shults' feature debut "Krisha" is terrific. Shults filmed it in his mother's house in Houston in nine days for under \$100,000. It'll be hard to find a stronger American independent feature this year. Efficient (82 minutes) yet swimming in observational details other filmmakers would've left behind in the name of staying "on message," "Krisha" depicts an extended Texas family's Thanksgiving that becomes a wracked nerve in unpredictable, live-wire motion.



There's very little plot machinery. The title character played by Shults' aunt, Krisha Fairchild, has been away for 10 years on a zigzag path of self-discovery. We first see her on screen in an unblinking tight shot. She regards the camera, as it encroaches. Her forest of wild gray-white hair frames a pair of bright but somehow tragic eyes. This is who she is; "Krisha" shows us how she got there.

Krisha is in charge of cooking a turkey large enough to be a "mutant," as she calls it. Her sister's house, to which Krisha has brought a single piece of wheeled luggage and her dog, bustles with noise and activity; her sisters' boys rarely quit arm-wrestling or tackling each other long enough to pay attention to this stranger in their midst.

We learn in dribs and drabs that Krisha has struggled to get sober, while inching toward the idea of reconciling with her now-grown son Trey (played by the filmmaker). Years earlier Krisha parked him with relatives for safekeeping during her long, long lost weekend and subsequent rehab. Back in the family fold, however uneasily, Krisha tells her brother-in-law Doyle (Bill Wise, sympathetic one

minute, needing the next) that she has been concentrating on "finding a peaceful person inside me." She knows all too well that in this family, she's what she calls "the eggshell one."

To her face, in a disarmingly fragmented backyard chat surrounded by barking dogs, Doyle one-ups that assessment. "You're heartbreak incarnate," he says. An awkward catch-up conversation between Krisha and estranged son Trey reveals a needy and vulnerable relationship without much of a foundation. The movie Trey, like the Trey who actually made the film, is a budding filmmaker. Krisha urges him to follow his dream; she speaks of the sadness of not finding her own passion at a crucial age. The old wounds are too much after a while. To cope, to lubricate, to isolate that sadness, eventually she reaches for the bottle.

In real life Shults' parents are both therapists, and he made "Krisha" using many family members. But this is more than a writer-director's therapy session in the guise of a narrative. So many films try to get behind the eyes and into the desperation of alcoholism. (Phoniest prestige example in that genre, despite good performances: "Leaving Las Vegas.") Few succeed in getting beneath the surface. "Krisha" is one of the few. Each shift in perspective, even in aspect ratio (the screen scrunches up, subtly, at key moments in Krisha's crisis), seems to come from, or speak to, Krisha's psyche.

Some members of the ensemble are professional actors, notably Fairchild, whom her director nephew swears is nothing like movie-Krisha in real life. Others are non-professionals and family members taking part in Shults' bittersweet labor of love. You don't notice anybody's acting. The film's chronology, thanks to Shults' free-association editing, has a way of keeping us off-balance; the same goes for composer Brian McOmber's nervous, skittery musical score. (There's also a striking use of the Nina Simone cover of "Just in Time.")

Expanded from a short film made a year earlier, "Krisha" is obviously personal for Shults, but there's a limit to that fact. The film's technique transcends the merely personal. Shults worked for a time for Terrence Malick, and many of the ground-level scramble shots in "Krisha," scampering after dogs and whatnot, put you in mind of a Malick film. Other shots, lit expertly by cinematographer Drew Daniels, favor the leisurely zoom-in or pull-back approach, recalling Robert Altman.

The naked emotions, when they finally break loose, carry serious weight, akin to a John Cassavetes psychodrama. Now and then a scene restates an idea without sufficient variation (the final dinner-table confrontation is a bit of a loose flap). But Shults wears his influences lightly, and "Krisha" — now that I've officially oversold it — manages to be both compact in size and formidable in impact.

"It Comes at Night" is the title of Shults' next film, also to be released by A24, boutique distributor of so much of modern filmmaking's most exciting talent. It's a horror film, of sorts. But then, so is "Krisha."

TIVOLI THEATRE

5021 Highland Avenue | Downers Grove, IL
630-968-0219 | www.classiccinemas.com
\$6 After Hours Members | \$10 Non-Members



Quote-Along / Sing-Along Monday, June 13, 7:30 pm

From its opening multi-language titles (that sure looks like Swedish) to the closing arrest of the entire Dark Ages cast by modern-day bobbies, Monty Python and the Holy Grail helped to define "irreverence" and became an instant cult classic. This time the Pythonites savage the legend of King Arthur, juxtaposing some excellently selected exterior locations with an unending stream of anachronistic one-liners, non sequiturs, and slapstick set pieces. The Knights of the Round Table set off in search of the Holy Grail on foot, as their lackeys make clippety-clop sounds with coconut shells. A plague-ridden community, ringing with the cry of "bring out your dead," offers its hale and hearty citizens to the body piles. A wedding of convenience is attacked by Arthur's minions while the pasty-faced groom continually attempts to burst into song. The good guys are nearly thwarted by the dreaded, tree-shaped "Knights Who Say Ni!" A feisty enemy warrior, bloodily shorn of his arms and legs in the thick of battle, threatens to bite off his opponent's kneecap. A French military officer shouts such taunts as "I fart in your general direction" and "I wave my private parts at your aunties." Rabbits are a particular obsession of the writers, ranging from the huge Trojan Rabbit to the "killer bunny" that decapitates one of the knights. Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, and Michael Palin collaborated on the script and assumed most onscreen roles, while Gilliam and Jones served as co-directors.

Interview with David Morgan - CBS News *Rated PG* *90 Mins.*

Is silliness timeless? That was the question last night following a 40th anniversary screening of "Monty Python and the Holy Grail."

He and the other living members of the comedy troupe were reunited on stage at New York's Beacon Theatre for a panel discussion as part of the Tribeca Film Festival. The anarchic talk was moderated by John Oliver, of HBO's "Last Week Tonight."

"It's been 40 years, four entire decades, since you did ['Holy Grail']. Why do you think this has lasted so well, other than being f----g great?" asked Oliver.

"Probably that's the only reason, replied Michael Palin. "It's just f----g great!"

"Holy Grail," a knockabout farce featuring the Knights of the Round Table, was the Pythons' first feature film to contain something resembling a narrative. Co-directed by Pythons Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones, the film was authentic in its depiction of medieval mud and grit, and paid homage to the stark filmmaking style of Pier Paolo Pasolini, while engaging in extremely silly antics (such as knights pretending to ride horses while their assistants banged coconut-halves together to simulate hoofbeats).

The gang told stories of the making of the movie, a low-budget affair which was financed by rock groups who were fans, including Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin.

Gilliam noted that just prior to filming, the National Trust banned them from using several castles as locations, "because we wouldn't respect 'the dignity of the fabric of the building,' where the most

horrible tortures, disemboweling had gone on!" Hence, large painted cutouts were often employed in the background.

Palin explained that the inspiration for the Knights Who Say "Ni" was a schoolteacher who would emit the word "Ni" whenever he crouched down examining the library shelves. Palin said years later he ran into the teacher, who asked "'Is it true the Knights Who Say 'Ni' were based on me?' 'Oh no.' 'What a pity, I love them!'"

When the film premiered in New York in 1975, the owner of Cinema II hired actors dressed as a knight and his assistant prancing about announcing the first thousand customers would be given free coconuts. The line on opening day wrapped around the block.

Oliver asked if the group had planned a similar offer for their subsequent film, "Life of Brian": "Did you give out free nails?"

"Free bris," said Palin.

"That's a hell of an offer!" said Oliver.

The Pythons did find it difficult to remain sitting in one place throughout the panel. John Cleese wondered off-stage a couple of times (with his hand making appearances through the curtain), followed by Gilliam; they both returned as a faux pantomime horse. The rest played musical chairs, as Oliver sorted through (and rejected) questions that had been tweeted into the theatre.

In talking about the anarchy and naughtiness of their comedy, Cleese railed against the current political correctness which dictates jokes that offend races are not permissible, at which point he told a couple. Targets: Mexicans, and the French ("Why do the French have so many civil wars? Because they like to win one now and again").

"In comedy there's two ways of attacking something. One is to just be rude about it, and the other is to take on those attitudes that make it ridiculous, like Stephen Colbert," Cleese said.

The group, whose BBC TV series ran from 1969-1974, reunited last summer for a series of shows at London's O2 Arena -- their first live performances since their Hollywood Bowl shows in 1980.

"The audience was so warm and welcoming," said Jones of the sold-out shows, which were also broadcast around the world.



This program serves as a fundraiser for the After Hours Film Society's Say It In Eight Student Film Festival.

Special Ticket Pricing Applies: \$8 Members | \$12 Non-Members

*Please join us for our thought provoking
post screening discussions!*



Monday, June 27, 7:30 pm

Reviewed by Michael Phillips Rated R 129 Mins.

The most remarkable thing about “Marguerite” is the effect it produces. It’s the story of a rich woman who fancies herself an opera singer, but she can’t sing at all. She can’t stay in tune or hit a high note. She is a complete disaster, but she has no idea. To her ears, she sounds like Maria Callas or Joan Sutherland, and she is so sweet-natured and so devoted to music that no one will give her the bad news.



This is, of course, the set-up for a comedy, and “Marguerite” can fairly be classified as such — there are, indeed, laughs. But the laughter is complicated. “Marguerite” is just as often painful and at times almost excruciating to watch, because we feel embarrassed for Marguerite. And there’s something weirdly transcendent about the film, too, because we’re witnessing someone in pursuit of the sublime, who is devoted to something beyond herself that she can apprehend but cannot reach.

“Marguerite” was the winner of four Cesar Awards (the French Oscar), including one for Catherine Frot, in the title role. We meet Marguerite at a private salon in her home, in which she performs. She has the poise, the temperament, even the carriage of a great diva. And then she opens her mouth and ... well, it’s unbelievable.

In fact, you may find it literally unbelievable that anyone could sing that badly. I had thought that, as well, but it turns out that “Marguerite” is inspired by the life of Florence Foster Jenkins, an American socialite who fancied herself a singer. Jenkins was just as committed as Marguerite, and she left behind several recordings. Frot’s rendition of “Der Holle Rache,” from “The Magic Flute,” the first song she demolishes in the film, is close to a note-for-note copy of Jenkins’ recorded version. Yes, it’s possible to love something that much and be so bad at it.

The tension of the film, which takes place during the 1920s, derives from the concern that Marguerite might find out how awful she really is. She has a coterie of people willing to humor her — a husband devoted to preserving her self-delusion, a critic charmed by her spirit, a Dadaist artist who actually thinks she’s good (or so bad she’s good), a voice teacher coerced and paid to give lessons, and a group of friends with a rare gift for sitting in an audience and keeping a straight face. But approval only feeds Marguerite’s desire to spread her wings and go professional, and so the risks and tensions multiply.

As Marguerite, Frot is a completely open vessel, ready to receive the muse that cannot come. She has a childlike quality here, but she also seems (and this is both funny and sad) very much the mature artist. We laugh during “Marguerite,” but we don’t laugh at Marguerite, because somehow director and co-writer Xavier Giannoli persuades us to see in her the universal tragedy. We all have things about ourselves that we’re better off not knowing. We go to “Marguerite” all ready to mock the other, and within minutes, we understand that the joke is on us.

In French with English Subtitles.



Please join us for our thought provoking post screening discussions!

Please enroll me as a member of **THE AFTER HOURS FILM SOCIETY**. This annual membership entitles me to mailings, discounted admissions, and special group benefits.

- \$25 Individual \$45 Family \$75 Sponsor \$200 Corporate \$500 Founder

Make check payable to **THE AFTER HOURS FILM SOCIETY** and send to P.O. Box 5266, Wheaton, Illinois 60189.

Name: _____ New Member Renewal
Address: _____ Apt. # _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: Preferred: _____ Other: _____
E-Mail: _____ E-Mail Newsletter as a PDF

THE AFTER HOURS FILM SOCIETY is a not-for-profit organization. Thank you for your support!



Post Office Box 5266
Wheaton, IL 60189
Phone: 630.534.4528
Info@afterhoursfilmsociety.com
www.afterhoursfilmsociety.com

THE 2016 "SAY IT IN EIGHT"
STUDENT FILM FESTIVAL

is now accepting film entries!

For details go to FilmFreeway.com
or Withoutabox.com

Submit with  **FilmFreeway** →

Withoutabox.



"Trey Edward Shults should be recognized as
a brilliant new filmmaker."

Mark Saldana, True View Reviews

Monday, May 23 at 7:30 pm

"Gloriously hysterically and splendiferously
unhinged, as fresh and funny as ever."

San Francisco Examiner

Special Sing-Along, Quote-Along Presentation!
Monday, June 13 at 7:30 pm



"Impressive. Catherine Frot in a
heartbreaking and hilarious performance."

A.O. Scott - New York Times

Monday, June 27 at 7:30 pm