

Fatal Attraction Encyclopedia Article

Fatal Attraction

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Fatal Attraction

Released in 1987 by Paramount Pictures, *Fatal Attraction* was one of the biggest box-office attractions of the year. More than just a popular success, the film, directed by Adrian Lyne, was a cultural phenomenon, inspiring discussion across the nation. The film is the story of an extramarital affair between Dan Gallagher, played by Michael Douglas, a married attorney and father of one, and Alex Forrest, a single, successful professional played by Glenn Close. After a brief, and seemingly uninvolved two night fling, Gallagher is stalked and terrorized by the obsessed Alex. The film sparked a new genre—that of the female psychopath—that included such films as *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle* (1992), *Single White Female* (1992), and *Basic Instinct* (1992). Though dangerous women have existed long before *Fatal Attraction*, the murderous female characters in these films were more violent, sexualized, and devious. Many critics view *Fatal Attraction* as characteristic of the 1980s and 1990s backlash against the feminist movement. The character of Alex, with her gender-neutral name, financial independence, and ability to express and act on her desire, though a far cry from the traditional Hollywood depiction of women as passive sexual objects, presented female power as destructive and deadly.

Further Reading:

Holmlund, Chris. "Reading Character with a Vengeance: The Fatal Attraction Phenomenon." *The Velvet-Light-Trap*. Spring 1991, 25-36.