

Review: Anna Kendrick makes haunting directorial debut with 'Woman of the Hour'

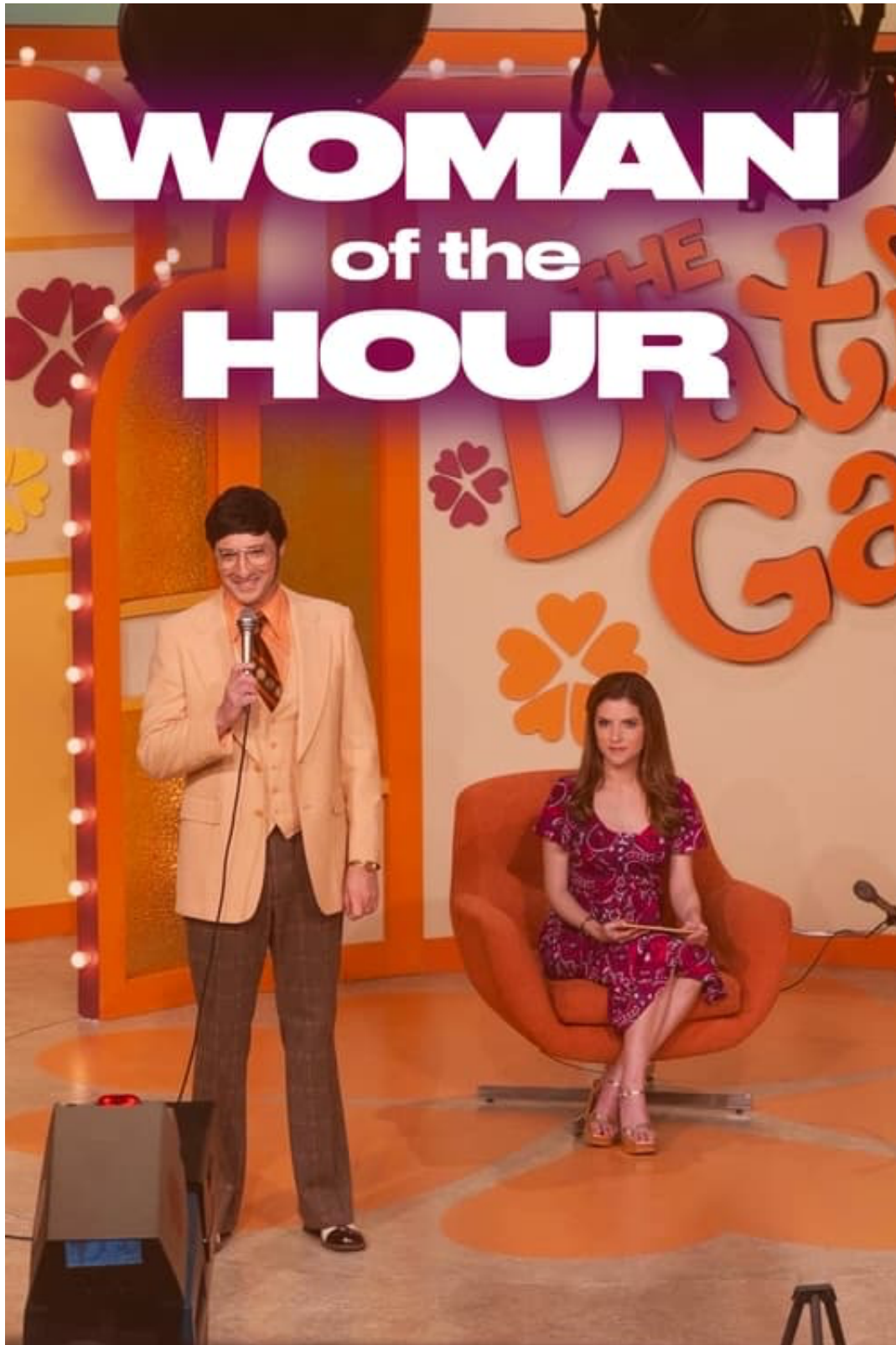


CHENNAI: Anna Kendrick's directorial debut "Woman of the Hour," which screened at Jeddah's Red Sea International Film Festival earlier this month, is a dark, true story of a serial killer that proves her mettle as a serious filmmaker who knows how to handle a serious topic with a light touch.

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Kendrick, who played a woman in distress in "Alice, Darling," creates a similar role in her directorial debut — a hauntingly unsettling piece of drama in which we see how a man turns into a monster.

Here, sadism occurs as the handiwork of a manipulative photographer named Rodney Alcalá (played by Daniel Zovatto). He is charming and has a way with women and young girls.



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Seductive to the core without being heavy-handed, he becomes a hit in a very popular ABC show and uses a dating game to close in on his prey. Kendrick's Cheryl Bradshaw, much to her misfortune, chooses him, spelling her doom.

The film is strange and fascinating, and Kendrick not only shows promise of a great future in cinema but, for a first-time effort, displays a flawless ability to weave a gripping and dark tale, a surprising departure from her usual light fare as an actress.

Although she has not shot the film in the actual location of the incident, which was the US, she does capture the mood of the moment, setting her piece in Canada. The script by Ian MacAllister McDonald is lean but manages to really sink into the character of Alcalá. It turns into a grim statement on the dangers of dating shows and how they have the ability to harm girls and women, with Zovatto turning in a terrifying performance that will linger with you long after the credits have rolled.

Kendrick is upfront in showing us Alcalá's violence; Zovatto is eerie and supremely confident of getting on with his serial killing. The murders are brutal and terrifying, and Kendrick does not flinch when it comes to details.

All in all, "Woman of the Hour" is a riveting debut from the promising director.
