

Red Sea Film Festival: Blonde Director Was 'Pleased' That Marilyn Monroe Biopic 'Outraged' Americans

By: Gautaman Bhaskaran

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Ana de Armas as Marilyn Monroe in Blonde movie.

Blonde has Ana de Armas headlining the seductive actress. The film was directed by Andrew Dominik.

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The recent feature on the Hollywood legend, Marilyn Monroe, by Andrew Dominik, understandably led to a massive controversy. Not unexpected. Monroe was an enigma, a demi-god that people may not have worshipped during her lifetime, but later, they sure did. And she was a fine actress, but a lost soul, who throughout her life searched for love and a father figure. She never knew who her father was, and her mother was addicted to drugs and spent a lot of time in and out psychiatric institutions. The movie outraged her fans and others, and well obviously.

At an in-conversation event at the ongoing Red Sea International Film Festival on Sunday, Australia-born Dominik said he was "really pleased that the film outraged so many people. Criticism only hurts if you agree with it, and I didn't really agree with any of it. I was expecting critical success and that no-one would see the movie; Blonde was kind of the opposite. In America, they hated the Blonde. They were angry, outraged by the movie – but a lot of people saw the film. I was kind of surprised by it."

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Dominik had worked on Blonde for 14 years, before he had the movie, which premiered at Venice last September. "There's a long history of directors dream projects being bad films. The critics in America would say that about Blonde. But they're wrong!"

He raked up further controversy when he said that it was his solemn duty to “offend” audiences. But today, the cinema industry is very conscious about this. It does not want to hurt people. It is very concerned about this aspect. (Coming from India, I should know this only too well).

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Dominik averred that he was never for rewriting truth. That is not right. “I think Blonde is great...I love it the way it has turned out to be”.

The helmer said viewers want hagiography. “They want a celebration of that person according to the mores of the time. Marilyn Monroe has meant different things at different times. Now we’re living in a time where it’s very important to present women as empowered, and they want to reinvent Monroe as an empowered woman.

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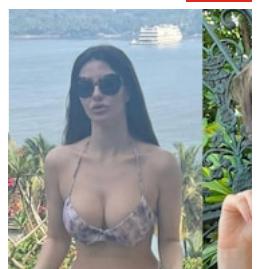
“I think her actual life was way worse than the movie,” he said. “If you spent 70 years enjoying a fantasy of a person; then a film comes along that says she was not complicit in your enjoyment, it puts you in an uncomfortable position for having enjoyed it. People don’t want to be put in that position; they want her to be the one that created their enjoyment, and was along for the ride, then had a bad year and killed herself. That’s not the way it works. There’s no redemption in suicide.”

“Americans don’t like you to monkey with their mitts too much,” he continued. “They very often want to jump to the solution without looking at any of the trauma.”

“What they said was that the film exploited her – which was kind of strange, because she’s dead. What they really mean is the movie exploited their memory or image of her – which is fair enough, it does. It’s trying to take things that you’re familiar with and turn the meaning of them inside out – that’s what they don’t like.”

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About the Author

GAUTAMAN BHASKARAN Gautaman Bhaskaran is a movie critic, commentator and an author, who penned the first ever biography of Adoor Gopalakrishnan, and has been covering ma... [Read More](#)

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