

She-Devil ★★★

Year of Release: 1989

Review by Randy Parker

Country: USA

Verdict: See It

Revenge may be ugly, but it sure is a lot of fun in *She-Devil*. In a casting coup, Meryl Streep plays the comic role, a glamorous romance novelist, and Roseanne Barr plays the serious part, an anything-but-glamorous housewife. The link between these two women is Ed Begley, Jr., who plays Barr's husband. He's having an affair with Streep ... and with his secretary. So Barr does what any sensible housewife would do: she seeks REVENGE—sweet, bloody, vicious revenge! Her goal is to systematically ruin Begley's life.

She-Devil is the blackest comedy I've seen since *Heathers*. And like *Heathers*, the movie is a fantasy; you're expected to take the outlandish story with a grain of salt. Director Susan Seidelman isn't concerned with giving us something to chew on; she's more intent on giving us a good time—and she does! *She-Devil* is a thoroughly enjoyable affair.

The movie stands out for its visual style. Seidelman makes extraordinarily good use of the movie camera. For example, the slow-mo of Barr tripping in high heels is hysterical—so is the silent movie parody of Barr and Linda Hunt fixing up an old warehouse. Seidelman's tour de force direc-

tion is almost as memorable as the performances.

What can you say about Streep that hasn't already been said? Well, for one, she makes a great dizzy blonde. Streep has played all sorts of roles before, but never one quite like this. It's jolting to see her act air-headed, ultra-feminine, and super-flirtatious. Streep is known as the greatest dramatic actresses of our time; *She-Devil* gives her the chance to show-off her knack for comedy. She emerges as a wonderfully gifted comic actress, turning a potentially generic role into something truly special ... and funny.

Barr is not Streep's equal, but even so, she holds her own against her more experienced co-star. Barr makes you feel sorry for her klutzy, unattractive character: you can't help but root for the rejected housewife as she carries out her revenge. Barr shows a surprisingly natural screen presence in her film debut.

She-Devil is essentially light-weight fluff, but you hardly notice because you're too busy appreciating the performances, the direction, and the humor.