

Glasshouse: SA's post-pandemic love triangle film "could become a modern classic"

Issued by [Showmax](#)

9 Feb 2022

Critically acclaimed South African sci-fi *Glasshouse* is now streaming on Showmax in Africa, as well as on Sky, iTunes, Amazon, Google, Xbox and other digital platforms in the UK.



Glasshouse is set after an airborne dementia known as The Shred has left humanity roaming like lost and dangerous animals, unable to remember who they are. Confined to their airtight glasshouse, a family does what they must to survive – until the sisters are seduced by a stranger who upsets the family's rituals, unearthing a past they have tried to bury.

Sensual and savage, this post-pandemic love triangle is the feature film directorial debut of Kelsey Egan, who co-wrote the script with associate producer, Emma Lungiswa de Wet.

Glasshouse is frequently billed as "*The Beguiled* for the pandemic era", but this can be misleading. "By openly courting comparisons to *The Beguiled*, *Glasshouse* distracts viewers from realising just how messed up things will get," warns *Comicon.com*, calling the film "a folk horror movie that could become a modern classic."

Glasshouse had its world premiere at North America's top genre film festival, Fantasia, in Montreal, Canada in August 2021 – and also screened at Fantastic Fest, the largest genre film festival in the USA, earning multiple five-star reviews and a 90% critics' rating on *Rotten Tomatoes*.

Film Threat's Lorry Kitka singled out *Glasshouse* as her "favourite film of the year so far"; *Exclaim* proclaimed: "Kelsey Egan is a filmmaker to keep an eye on"; and *Pop Culture Planet* included British actress Jessica Alexander (the upcoming live action remake of *The Little Mermaid*) in their list of the Best Performances of 2021, in good company alongside the likes of Jennifer Coolidge in *The White Lotus*.



The response to *Glasshouse*'s UK release has been similarly glowing, with four-star reviews in the likes of *Total Film* and *The Guardian*, who called it “a sinister, seductive meditation on memory, desire and loss.”

Alexander and breakout star Anja Taljaard play the sisters, Bee and Evie, opposite Hilton Pelter (the Bafta-nominated *Moffie*, the upcoming remake of *Dangerous Liaisons*) as The Stranger. *Glasshouse*'s stellar cast also includes film and theatre veteran Adrienne Pearce (the Bafta-winning *Troy* and the Emmy-winning *The Triangle*); 13-year-old Naledi Award winner and Fleur du Cap nominee Kitty Harris (*Matilda the Musical*); and Brent Vermeulen, who was singled out by *The Hollywood Reporter* as “one of this year's major acting discoveries in Cannes” when *The Harvesters* (*Die Stropers*) screened in Un Certain Regard in 2018.

For Egan, *Glasshouse* “explores two opposing coping mechanisms to trauma: holding tightly to the past as a form of preservation, and wilful forgetting.”

Director of photography Justus de Jager (an Africa Movie Academy Award nominee for *Siembamba*) shot *Glasshouse* at The Pearson Conservatory, the last standing Victorian glasshouse in South Africa, marooned in the Eastern Cape since 1881.

De Wet calls the national monument, which she remembers from childhood, “a perfect metaphor for the aesthetic goal of the colonial project. It feels timeless and placeless because that really was the objective – make everywhere into England! It's a rarified atmosphere that can be contained and controlled, modelled on an idealised, white-washed projection of ‘Home’. But it's also a fragile construction.”

Alexandra Heller-Nicholas, writing for *The Alliance of Women Film Journalists*, calls *Glasshouse*, “A masterclass in how small-scale fantastic allegory and its world-building potential can provide fertile ground with which to examine the stain of colonialism itself ... A thrilling reminder of just how powerful fantastic filmmaking is when placed in the hands of filmmakers who truly understand its power.”



A pandemic story filmed during Year One of the Covid-19 pandemic, *Glasshouse* is the first film in a three-picture dystopian slate Showmax has developed with Local Motion Pictures, in association with Crave Pictures, with Egan directing and Greig Buckle producing. Buckle was co-producer of the Oscar-shortlisted *Life, Above All* and line produced the #1 US box office hit *Chronicle*, among other high-profile service jobs in South Africa.

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