

VARIETY

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THE FALLING

(DRAMA — CANADIAN)

A Sodona Entertainment presentation, with participation of Telefilm Canada. (International sales: Sodona, Vancouver.) Produced by Greg Malcolm, Vicki Sotheran.

Directed, written by Raul Sanchez Inglis, based on a story by Sanchez Inglis and Simon Barry. Camera (color), Gregory Middleton; editor, Kelly Herron; music, Chris Ainscough; production designer, Tony Devenyi; costume designer, Michelle Hunter; sound (Ultra-Stereo), Sebastian Salm; sound designer, Ainscough; associate producer, Evan Tylor; casting, Audrey Skalbana. Reviewed at Chicago Film Festival (New Visions), Oct. 17, 1998. (Also in Toronto Film Festival — Perspective Canada.) Running time: 94 MIN.

Lars Christopher Shyer
Karis Nicole Oliver
Morgan Rob Lee
Simon John Cassini

By LISA NESSELSON

A North American subset of the "Rashomon" principle is alive and reasonably well in "The Falling," an ominous, willfully stylish and aggressively contemporary pic about a woman and two of the men in her life. Marred by an overbearing and insufficiently tight conclusion that detracts from the otherwise convincing and engaging premise, movie is ideal fest and cable fare.

Pic examines the conversations, sexual encounters and rivalries between hip, independent businesswoman Karis (Nicole Oliver), Lars (Christopher Shyer), the record exec she picks up in a club, and Morgan (Rob Lee), her former main man. Viewers' sympathies are toyed with in a carefully calibrated series of emotional showdowns, layered to prove that there's no such thing as objective reality in affairs of the heart.

Told in subjective, chapter-headed sections from the point of view of each player, film starts with a segment called "Lars," replays the same events with crucial variations in "Morgan," and retraces the same territory with tell-tale differences in "Karis." Karis' platonic friend and sounding board, Simon (John Cassini), illuminates the tale in yet other ways.

In "Lars," Morgan looks and acts like a hardnose with attitude to spare; in "Morgan," he's a wounded pussycat. Is he a romantic, pining for Karis or is he a deranged stalker? Is Karis a mercenary bitch with an aggressive bedroom style, or is she a reasonable and sensitive woman trying to get on with her professional and love lives? Is Lars a dreamboat or a nightmare?

Dramatically-lit story, awash in threatening overtones, takes place mostly at night or in enclosed spaces, with sinister sound design keeping things edgy. Thesps juggle the varying tones with skill, with special praise for Oliver.