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## ‘Her Smell’ a story of addiction’s toll

“Her Smell” chronicles the derailment, dissipation and redemption of Becky Something (Elisabeth Moss), the substance-abusing, megalomaniacal, front woman of a Riot Grrrl-style alt-rock band called Something She.

The basement punk club in where the film begins and ends is named Her Smell.

Although Something She is a trio, Becky steals credit for the band’s creative work. She cancels concerts or shows up hours late, abusively intimidating anyone who fails to bend to her cocaine-stoked whims.

“Her Smell” acknowledges that the raw vulnerability of creative people is complicated by the grinding machinery of the music business.

So many people — mother, manager, bandmates — are financially dependent on the star. Becky is surrounded by Stockholm-syndrome enablers. She’s made them that way. Now Something She’s bookings are in free fall.

A rising girl band of acolytes idolize Becky, who understands as they do not that they will inevitably take her place.

Unlike Becky, these adorable chicklets can read music, write fresh songs and show up for gigs on time.

As Becky craters through rock bottom into the abyss, the people who love and need her can only stand by, helplessly paralyzed and impotent, as she incinerates.

As the lawsuits, cancellations and volcanic rages pile up, the music never entirely falls away. What’s lost is her humanity.

“Her Smell” is “All About Eve” before biting the apple of knowingness. It’s “A Star is Born” with Becky as a post-punk Jackson Maine.

Director Alex Ross Perry follows frenzied Becky through the film with an ambient atonal soundscape, her own sonic theme. Known for his use of handheld cameras, Perry and cinematographer Sean Price Williams keep the lens close on Moss during Becky’s manic episodes. The underground club scenes are sparsely lit, giving the film a streaky look and unbalanced feel that intensifies our intimate participation in Becky’s crack-up.



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“Downton Abbey” dreamboat Dan Stevens plays an artist formerly known as Dirtbag Dan, Becky’s put-upon ex, who has long been crushed by the centrifugal force of Becky’s personality. Dan has custody of their infant daughter, Tama.

His single ambition is to persuade Becky — who is preoccupied with sham shamans, paranoid delusions and the doc-

umentary crew filming her conflagration — to bond with her.

Crucially, Tama provides a spark of light that may lead the way to Becky’s deliverance, and there is a quietly poetic scene in which Becky sings Bryan Adams’s “Heaven” to Tama at the piano.

Eric Stoltz plays Howard, a record executive and appointed Becky-wrangler, who watches his fortunes follow her down the drain. He understands the giving musicians room to create, but locks in a backup band just in case.

Becky immediately calls to mind Courtney Love. Yet Perry says Something She was inspired by Guns N’ Roses, a band with a history of break-ups. Becky is intended to be a woman who unapologetically acts like a rock star.

As the unfiltered, id-soaked, self-destructive Becky, Moss is entirely in control of letting go. We glimpsed this side of Moss as an actor earlier this year in Jordan Peele’s “Us.”

“Her Smell” captures the cravenness of the addict and rapaciousness of the fallen star as we join her in her hell.