This is one of the scariest horror films we’ve seen in a long while. It deals with the themes of power and conformity and how these can both corrupt and destroy.

The lead character, Ruthanne Lammison, starts off as a strong and successful woman, one who forged her own identity and a career in politics and leadership.

But she finds herself lured into a place which at first seems perfect, almost a utopia.

Union is a place where nothing bad ever happens. Its citizens are all happy and content, wealth oozes from it with no sign of poverty. It is well protected by the finest and most proactive police and security forces in the world, and any threat would, in any case, be easily seen off by the nuclear submarines parked in the local lake.

Right from the start, there is a slightly dark and sinister undertone to this utopia but the attention is diverted away from it initially by the sense of success and power it gives off, and it is this
which bedazzles Ruthanne and lures her in.

As the movie goes on though, realisation dawns that things are even more sinister than they appear. All the women, once so formidable and successful, begin to become subservient to their men, who in turn spend all their time in the union clubs talking in hushed terms.

They begin to talk the same way, to say the same things, to the point where they begin to sound almost like androids, programmed, no longer with minds of their own. There is one horrifying scene where you realise they are even now dressed the same! “All decent Union women are subservient to Union” becomes almost a mantra to anyone who questions the changes they see happening around them, especially those non-conformists who challenge or attempt to escape.

Meanwhile though, it’s not only the women who are affected. The union men too – again beginning as strong characters with differing political views – also appear to merge and blend into each other.
By the end of the film it has become near impossible to tell the difference between the three main male characters – Dave, Ed and Nick. When you add in secondary characters like the other Ed and first Ed’s brother Dave the confusion becomes even more intense. And it is in this merging of identities, opinions and speech that the film has most impact in demonstrating the corrupting and self-destructive nature of power and the desire for conformity, even to those who wield it.

Those who are unable to conform, for example the tragic characters of Ian (Smart) and other Ian (“the Chairchoob”), are finally driven mad by their own contradictions.

One of the finest quotes in the movie is, in fact from Ian (Chairchoob) who, musing on the nature of power says, “See ony wee wummun wha dae as I tell her? She’ll find hersel’ getting a doin’ eh?

“Cos Ah hate that. Wummin wha talk up tae ye as if they huv a richt tae spik back. Naw, oor Union wummin ur better than that. Dae as they’re telt, read fae their wee scripts, dinnae question ower much. No like thae Natz who’re aye yappin’ awa wanting tae be different. No bein’ different is a bad thing, eh?

“Except we’re no like thae Tories either, ken. Naw. Wha’s sayin’ Ah’m like thae Tories? Ah bluddy hate thae Tories almost as much as thae Natz!”

He then wanders off with a banner reading, “Ban the bedroom tax”, even though all the men in the union club had already agreed they all agreed with the bedroom tax.

The film ends with Irving Berlin’s fine 1954 song Sisters, Sisters and never have those lyrics had such spine-tingling impact as they do after watching the movie.

Sisters, sisters
There were never such devoted sisters,
Never had to have a chaperone, no sir,
I’m there to keep my eye on her
Caring, sharing
Every little thing that we are wearing
When a certain gentleman arrived from Rome
She wore the dress, and I stayed home
All kinds of weather, we stick together
The same in the rain and sun
Two different faces, but in tight places
We think and we act as one
Those who’ve seen us
Know that not a thing could come between us
Many men have tried to split us up, but no one can
Lord help the mister who comes between me and my sister
And lord help the sister, who comes between me and my man

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