

Movie Review: 'Friday the 13th' has more gore in store

by *Creators Syn. Movie Reviewers*

Parents: Need an effective approach to abstinence-only education? Fire those fire-juggling clowns with their insipid inspirational messages. Instead, load your teenagers into the SUV for an educational matinee of "Friday the 13th." It'll scare the pants onto them.

4 STARS - Excellent.

3 STARS - Worthy.

2 STARS - Mixed.

1 STAR - Poor.

0 - Forget It (a dog.) Like many teen horror movies, the lesson of "Friday the 13th" is that sinners die. Die good. Debauchers debase, onanists get obliterated, drinkers depart, and those who smoke pot, rot. Most importantly, premarital sex ends in coitus murderuptus.

The film's teen victims pay the price for having unrestrained fun. As killer Jason Voorhees' mother wails during the film's shoddy title sequence, "You need to be punished." Donning the world's cheapest scary costume, Jason transforms himself into Puritanism's Charles Bronson â€” a vigilante goody-goody.

This is the 13th movie in the series, and if the producers (including Michael Bay) had any wit, they'd have put "Friday the 13th: The 13th" on marquees. The franchise began in 1980 with a super-low-budget chiller that starred Kevin Bacon back when he was way more than six degrees separated. Most of the actors in the 2009 version weren't even born yet.

Maybe that's why this "Friday the 13th" has no story frills â€” no city relocation a la 1989's "Jason Takes Manhattan," no outer-space setting a la 2001's "Jason X." Instead it's a standard-formula, dead-meat-and-potatoes horror film for the next generation of sadomasochistic Americans. Shaggy haircuts and clothing styles have come full circle since 1980, so at times you can't tell whether "Friday the 13th" is meant to be modern or retro.

It starts with a campfire at a place called Crystal Lake, where five young people â€” two couples and one brainy dork â€” have gathered to enjoy nature and flaunt their freedom from authority. After referencing a line from David Lynch's "Blue Velvet" about foreign versus domestic beers, the movie wastes no time wasting people (and dropping a more gruesome Lynch reference). With 20 minutes of slash-and-burn mayhem, the opening scenes are practically a "Friday the 13th" movie in miniature.

Jumping ahead six weeks, the story introduces us to a wider demographic of soon-to-be victims. There's a nubile Nordic-looking blond couple (Ryan Hansen and Willa Ford), soon running off to the lake for some topless water-skiing and impalement.

There's also a rich cabin-owner (Travis Van Winkle) who resembles Christian Bale with feathered hair. His two girlfriends represent the dichotomy of the virgin (Danielle Panabaker, meekly exasperated) and the whore (Julianna Guill, barest of three bare-breasted babes). Winkle's sex talk with the latter is laughable: During the height of passion, he calls her "Dude."

That's two more girlfriends than the wacky Asian (Aaron Yoo) or the flippant black (Arlen Escarpeta) get. Instead, they get drunk, stoned and feebly aroused by the pages of a Macy's winter catalog. They also get most of the movie's funny lines: When the goalie-masked killer approaches Yoo, he helpfully hands him a hockey stick and tells him it completes his ensemble. Quiet and mindless, Jason does not laugh.

It's hard to say whether Escarpeta's and Yoo's thankless roles are ethnically offensive, winking old-school in-jokes, or emblematic of equal-opportunity slaughter. A smarter film would surprise us by turning one of them into the unlikely hero, bravely defeating Jason by drinking him under the table or impaling him with a bong.

Instead, the hero role goes to Jared Padalecki (from TV's "Supernatural"), who rides around on a motorcycle looking for his missing sister (Amanda Righetti) from the first group of victims. Padalecki is the only character that isn't a caricature, yet he remains entirely boring.

Suffice to say that "Friday the 13th" is garbage that no intelligent adult has any business viewing. But it's well-paced, steadily delivered garbage, and the actors seem to be having a pretty good time before they're predictably stabbed, slashed, bear-trapped or punctured on mounted deer antlers. For abstinence-only propaganda purposes, it kills.

"Friday the 13th." Rated: R. Running time: 1 hour, 35 minutes. 2 stars.

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