

Movie Review: '30 Days of Night'

by David_Elliott

"30 Days of Night" has the two things a horror movie most needs: strong atmosphere and creepy monsters. Unfortunately, it also has the common bane of horror movies: stark implausibility.

'30 DAYS OF NIGHT' - The isolated Alaskan town of Barrow is invaded by vampires led by Danny Huston in the horror film '30 Days of Night.' CNS Photo courtesy of Kirsty Griffin. RATINGS

4 STARS - Excellent.

3 STARS - Worthy.

2 STARS - Mixed.

1 STAR - Poor.

0 - Forget It (a dog.)

Inevitably, some plot slack must be cut for a Far North (Barrow, Alaska) movie featuring cannibalistic vampire dementos. This special breed comes from an old, abandoned ship, but only during the dim dead of winter night that shrouds the town in darkness for a month.

You'd think the stalkers might have long ago polished off Barrow (pop. 152 says the film, but 4,500 says Google). They find the place is a bountiful meat locker, although most citizens have fled south rather than

stick around to guard the polar bear statue during nocturnal hibernation.

The vamps have style. The leader (Danny Huston) seems to be the only one with an adult brain and full use of their croaky language. The others grunt, salivate through terrible teeth, or lift their heads in operatic wolf cries. Pale, bald or goth-haired, the lower face usually stained by blood, they're like an experimental theater troupe that took a dreadfully wrong turn.

Josh Hartnett is the young sheriff, first alarmed by a charred body in the snow, then by sled dogs with their throats cut. Not just cut, horribly mangled. Fast and strong, the beast people pounce like nightmares on steroids, wasting nearly as much blood as they suck (scariest element: They wear light clothing in the Arctic winter).

Before long, it's an Alamo or Fort Apache scenario. The few survivors hole up with Hartnett in a hidden attic soon after a great helicopter shot of iced streets blotched with red. Carnage prevails despite some heroics from Hartnett, who steels himself into North Slope manhood.

David Slade directed, his writers having mined a comic book. He really expects us to keep caring about the fragile state of Hartnett's bond with Stella (Melissa George). She tried to leave him right before the dark descended, and at moments must be thinking wistfully of that last flight from the Wiley Post/Will Rogers Memorial Airport.

The characterizations are intense, the action fairly imposing and then redundant. Obviously, we are meant to be too gripped to wonder about such questions as: How do the humans survive for days in a frigid attic in dead of Alaskan winter, without fire, stove or heaters?

Sam Raimi produced, and the craftily made "30 Days" is a slash above your standard gore grab. Speaking of that, remarkably poor use is made of the town's impressive waste disposal machine. After some grinding at the start, it returns for only one grisly, gnawing meal.

A Columbia Pictures release. Director: David Slade. Writers: Steve Niles, Stuart Beattie. Cast: Melissa George, Josh Hartnett, Danny Huston, Ben Foster. Running time: 1 hour, 37 minutes. Rated R. 2 1/2 stars.

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