

Wretched Remakes

A PANEL REVIEW BUFFET BY PAUL BLINOV, MIKE KENDRICK, SCOTT LILWALL, AND RAMIN OSTAD

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ollywood has recently added a new word to its favorite vocabulary: remake. It's a commonly accepted fact that the producers have simply run out of ideas. But the lucrative methods that the industry bigwigs are using to pack theatres and break box office records today are causing the market to be flooded with unnecessary sequels and "reimaginings" of classic favorites. No genre is safe from the wrath of directors who would destroy our childhood by making the stars of today play dress-up as their heroes from generations past. But fear not, dear readers: a skilled panel of Gateway horror film connoisseurs have endured gruelling hours and sat through some of the worst of the bunch, so that we may preserve your eyes and delicate sensibilities from the true horrors of Hollywood. Here, we bring you just a sample of what you can expect should you wish to subject yourself to the masochistic lashes of the horror movie remake.

BLACK CHRISTMAS (2006)



Many horror movie nuts celebrate 1978's *Halloween* as the birth the modern slasher flick, originating many of the conventions that have since become clichés. However, the true aficionado knows that the lesser-known Canadian creation *Black Christmas* first pioneered such staples as the killer POV and the threatening phone call coming from inside the house.

Given its impressive roots, the dismal *Black Christmas* remake seems even more horrible that it would as a stand-alone slasher crap-fest. The sorority girls that provide the fodder for the film's deranged killer don't even count as stereotypes. They're more based around single character traits: the drunk one, the shy one, the narcissistic one. Really, it feels more like *Teen Girl Squad: The Later Years*. Andrea Martin's not older than the other girls—she's just the ugly one.

There's not much else to it, unfortunately. A number of stock Greek girls are stalked by a stock killer and done away with in gory but obvious deaths. It all leads to a predictable "twist" at the end—and the predictable return of the killer.

THE WICKER MAN (2006)



The original 1973 *Wicker Man* is a landmark in the thriller genre. It's slow-paced, disturbing, and contains one hell of a shocking ending—all without having to soak the audience in gallons of gore and guts. The 2006 remake starring Nicolas Cage, however, takes a slightly different approach. It's certainly slow-paced, but the only disturbing part about the film is that the writer and casting director still have jobs.

Probably the biggest knock against the film is the liberal use of "creative license" to reimagine what *The Wicker Man* is all about. The 2006 edition trades religious conflict for misogynistic, he-man women-hating, and Edward Woodward's determined, virginal British inspector for Cage's asshole Californian patrolman. Instead of suspense and disturbing imagery, we get an hour of wooden characters and intense boredom. In place of a deeply unsettling conclusion, we're treated to Nicholas Cage running around in a bear suit, punching women. That's what our beloved cult classic has been reduced to: sexist *Ursidae* pugilism.

In the span of this cheesy remake, Cage almost falls off a two-story barn, gets attacked by a stack of lumber, and whacks a beehive with a bike. He's a bigger threat to himself than anything this island of misfit actresses can throw at him. If you absolutely feel the need to rent this film, at the very least watch the extended version, so you'll get the sick pleasure of watching Cage get his legs broken and strapped into the "bee helmet." You owe it to yourself.

HOUSE OF WAX (2005)



House of Wax is a remake of the 1953 movie of the same name, which is itself a remake of the 1933 *Mystery at the Wax Museum*. It's like one of those comic strips where someone clones a clone, and it ends up missing the frontal lobe. With an all-star cast of Paris Hilton, Jack Bauer's daughter, an Eminem knock-off, Pete Wentz's prettier little brother, and a token black guy, it's hard to see how this film could be anything but a success.

Maybe the movie is aimed at a different target audience, but it seems to market the message that every group of 20-somethings is supposed to go camping in the middle of an overgrown field and drink cheap beer while telling bad jokes and listening to generic nu-metal. Of course, this is only the catalyst to a typical setup involving their meeting a creepy hillbilly stranger with a lazy eye and a slack-jawed grin. Granted, the stranger

himself is only a catalyst to introduce the rest of the awful plot, at which point he's conveniently forgotten about until the end of the film, when—oops! Maybe he's the killer after all... God, please don't let there be a sequel to this tripe.

Also, for a movie about a crazy wax museum of death, a lot of the plot takes place outside, and wax doesn't play a large part in any of the deaths. That's disappointing. And the wax museum itself is made out of wax? How does that even come close to meeting building codes?

Giving credit where it's due, the film does make a few attempts at thought-provoking symbolic metaphors. Unfortunately, most of the references fall short of the efforts made by an eleventh-grade English class. Using *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane* as an allegory doesn't give your movie "cred." In fact, the irony is lost on everyone in this film, including the director.

Much like the countless other films that have tried to pay homage to the originals, *House of Wax* falls offensively short of the mark. The original had Vincent Price. The remake has Paris Hilton. We'll count this one as a win for the '50s.

TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE (2003)



This remake is a perfect example of why it's not always a good idea to remain "faithful to the original" in a few select categories. The reason the original *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* was such a success in the slasher genre is because of what it introduced. When the remake tries to recreate these firsts, it ends up as a chain of tired clichés that have all become overdone in the genre. What's worse, when it doesn't try to recreate, it lacks everything that the original did right. The attempt to replace disturbing imagery, fresh camera angles, and a minimalist score with gore and Jessica Biel's breasts just gets old after a while.

When it felt like this movie couldn't do much else wrong, they actually went ahead and decided to try some *new* stuff, too. How many times are we going to see the zoomed camera angle through the gunshot wound and out the back window?

It was striking the first time. Annoying the second. Tired the third. How can a movie about a giant man killing people with a chainsaw and wearing their faces be this fucking boring? How is that possible? By the middle of the film, the action had become so dry that Paul actually got up and went home. Don't waste your time, friends.

HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL (1999)



As far as Vincent Price tribute remakes go, *House on Haunted Hill* is probably the least offensive of the bunch. That's not to say that it's a good movie: if there's something less chastising to be said about it, though, it's tolerable at best.

Yet, it suffers from so many of the same knocks as every other contender in the category do. There's the modernized score containing at least one song from a dark metal rocker—in this case, Marilyn Manson himself. There's the bad CGI effects that attempt to update the look of the old-school smoke and mirrors effects but end up looking like an awkward copycat attempt by a blind Tim Burton-admirer. Worst of all, there's the cast composed half of no-name throwaways and half of big names that raise the question what they were even thinking signing up for the project.

Geoffrey Rush leads the pack playing the Vincent Price clone and owner of the haunted house. It's hard to see how he managed to salvage his career enough to land a role in *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Actually, a lot of these people are pretty good actors; how the hell did they end up here?

Meanwhile, Chris Kattan is cast as Jeff Goldblum playing Dr Ian Malcolm playing Chris Kattan. He can't quite decide what direction he wants to take his cautious and neurotic character, a move that ultimately makes his abrupt kill-scene all the more relieving. Through the movie, he's all like, "The house is alive!" and everyone else is like, "Nuh-uh," and he's all like "Uh-HUH." Then they die, and we're left to contemplate why we wasted more than an hour watching this.