

'The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It' isn't as bewitching as previous entries

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: ««

out of «««««

Running Time: 112 minutes

This feature from Warner Bros. opens at cinemas June 4.

In the eight years since *The Conjuring* first premiered at cinemas, its success has paved the way for a massive horror franchise. Most of the spin-offs, including

The Nun, *Annabelle*

and

The Curse of La Llorona

haven't managed to capture the magic of the original or even its follow-up.

The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It is

the third official sequel that once again follows the team of paranormal investigators known as the Warrens. The likable leads do add some gravitas to the proceedings, but truth be told, this effort ultimately feels like it has more in common with the lesser spin-offs than it does with the original.

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The story begins with medium Lorraine Warren (Vera Farmiga) and husband Ed (Patrick Wilson) attempting to help a family rid a child of demonic possession via an exorcism. Afterward, a young man involved in the procedure named Arne Johnson (Ruairi O’Connor) begins to show signs that the supernatural force has taken up new residence within his body. After Arne is arrested for a brutal murder, Lorraine and Ed vow to investigate the slaying and determine if the act was actually the result of the same body-jumping demon. They begin uncovering more history about the creature itself, as well as the disturbing practices of Satan-worshipping.

This feature attempts to add a bit of variety by shifting the focus away from the spirit-centric stories featured in the first two titles. Despite being slightly smaller in scope, the concept itself is perhaps even more outrageous than in the earlier titles. But at least the possession storyline does offer the opportunity for the leads to contend with a new malevolent presence that can take control of any unsuspecting human (and even a dead body when the opportunity presents itself). The frequent body-jumping does offer a few chills as the demon focuses its attention on the Warrens themselves and tries to break them apart.

The story also benefits from the tireless work of the leads, who do a decent job of selling the kooky material. Ed suffers from a severe heart condition in this tale and as a result the character feels more in danger than in previous entries. There are some nice and earnest moments between Farmiga and Wilson as they try to deal with his health issues while they take on a formidable foe. A couple of sequences, including a trip to a morgue in the dead of night and a showdown in a dimly lit catacomb, are reasonably tense and perilous for the protagonists.

However, there’s a lot that doesn’t work as effectively this time out. Perhaps we’ve seen them too many times over the past seven features, but most of the jump scares aren’t as unexpected or jarring this time. And while we get some decent character material with the Warrens, prisoner Arne and his interactions with supporting cast members aren’t as interesting. He’s cut off from the main cast and it feels like he’s part of a separate film.

Additionally, the villains aren’t nearly as well-drawn as previously. There is an explanation for the Satanic acts that come into play, but the motivation of the main foe isn’t particularly original or exciting.

While the climax does feature some creepy tunnels, there are no standout sets like the massive flooded basement from the previous entry or, well, the entire creepy house from the original film.

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These issues, as well as a mystery that isn’t particularly interesting, an undercooked villain and the hit-and-miss scare ratio prevent this entry from reaching the heights of its predecessors. Indeed, it ends up feeling more like a spin-off than a proper sequel. *The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It* has an excellent cast and a few chilling moments, but won’t bewitch horror fans as much as the earlier films did.

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