

New 'Candyman' sequel could save the franchise

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 03 September 2021 04:44



Rating: <<<

out of <<<<<<

Running Time: 91 minutes

This feature from Universal Pictures will open at cinemas Aug. 27.

In 1992, audiences got their first taste of the iconic horror character known as Candyman. The original film, based on a short story by Clive Barker, was striking and made a sizable impression on moviegoers. Unfortunately, the pair of follow-ups weren't nearly as successful critically or commercially, and the franchise quickly petered out. Now, enough time seems to have passed to move forward with a new and updated take on the figure.

While the new "Candyman" isn't as dynamic as the original film, it is certainly an improvement over the previous sequels.

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Artist Anthony McCoy (Yahya Abdul-Mateen II) once showed great promise, but finds himself experiencing a creative block. After hearing stories about the fabled Candyman, he decides to research the myth and the figure's old haunting grounds of Cabrini Green. The protagonist becomes inspired and fascinated with the legend, befriending local laundromat owner and Candyman authority, William Burke (Colman Domingo). Anthony's increasingly obsessive and erratic behavior begins to upset his significant other, art gallery director Brianna Cartwright (Teyonah Parris).

As the lead begins to uncover more, those around him begin dying violently under highly unusual circumstances.

Horror fans can rest assured that although the movie initially appears to be a reimagining or reboot, it is a direct sequel of the 1992 genre classic. This screenplay takes the opportunity to elaborate on and develop the history of the title character. As expected, the story attempts to connect Candyman to the many injustices committed against the African-American community and it even discusses the gentrification of the original Cabrini Green neighborhood. Conversations between the lead and supporting cast about these issues are anything but subtle. But this is a genre picture and at least an attempt is being made to delve deeper into the story's subtext.

The movie also benefits from some interesting photography. Those familiar with the sinister killer will know that he appears in the mirror whenever his name is uttered five times. The film has a lot of fun with reflections and there are some clever images of familiar icons, sets and even cityscapes reversed or framed upside-down. Many of these shots are impressive and the technique also serves as a nifty way to create a sense of unease with seemingly ordinary surroundings.

The unique shots also allow for some creative framing during the murder sequences.

While there's some good stuff in this feature, it does have its share of issues. The movie certainly attempts to develop its characters, but it takes too long for the menacing Candyman to actually appear and terrorize viewers. Early scenes also make a point of introducing Brianna's brother Troy (Nathan Stewart-Jarrett) and his partner Grady (Kyle Kaminsky). They're fun to watch, but they end up fading into the background and not playing a significant role in later scenes.

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While the movie provides reasoning for why Candyman targets specific individuals, tension and thrills would have been more prevalent had the film's stronger supporting cast members been put in danger.

Instead, the killer often attacks inconsequential figures whom the audience won't be particularly interested in. There's one sequence involving a group of students that is largely unrelated to the main story and feels wedged in to provide some gruesomeness during a lag in the proceedings. There's also a tendency to keep Candyman and even his victims offscreen. This can be effective, but here it sometimes mutes the impact of the slayings.

The lead also possesses some notable wounds that no one seems particularly interested in or concerned about, which strains credulity.

In the end, "Candyman" has some interesting ideas, a few strong moments and a nifty cameo for viewers who know the original movie well. However, it is unfortunate that the movie isn't as cutting or pulse pounding as it could have been. At least the film is better than many re-imaginings being released these days and offers some hope for the future of the franchise.

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