

'Halloween Kills' brings gore together with dark humor

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 22 October 2021 04:22



Rating: <<<
out of <<<<<<

Running Time: 105 minutes

Universal Pictures will release this film at cinemas on Oct. 15. It will also stream on paid tiers of [Peacock](#) for the next 60 days.

One of the longest-running franchises in horror history is the "Halloween" series, which follows the exploits of a masked psychopath named Michael Myers. In 43 years, there have been numerous sequels to the first film, a spin-off set during the same holiday season and a reboot featuring two standalone titles. "Halloween Kills" is the newest chapter. It follows a successful and entertaining 2018 effort that was a direct follow-up to the 1978 original, reuniting the maniac with the franchise's greatest heroine.

The latest effort has its share of tonal issues, but is still an extremely well-shot and acted effort that will still amuse genre fans.

The story begins with the original survivor of the killer's 1978 murder spree. Laurie Strode (Jamie Lee Curtis) has once again successfully fought off an attack from Michael Myers (James

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Jude Courtney). After arriving at the hospital with daughter Karen (Judy Greer) and granddaughter Allyson (Andi Matichak), some of the family members discover that Myers is still alive and hasn't finished slicing and dicing his way through their hometown. Word soon spreads everywhere that the maniac is still on the rampage.

One of the children whom Laurie babysat in 1978, Tommy Doyle (Anthony Michael Hall), decides that the justice system isn't doing enough to stop the threat. He recruits townspeople to catch and punish Myers themselves. But the group devolves into a violent and out-of-control mob.

Despite being a slasher pic, there's a lot going on in this sequel. As expected, the movie does detail Myers moving in the shadows and murdering people in incredibly violent and grotesque ways. These sequences are tense and well-shot, often climaxing with wince-inducing deaths. Some of the most effectively nasty bits involve horrific damage being delivered to faces and eyeballs.

These scenes aren't pretty to watch, but they are effective at making the threatening villain even more of a superhuman force, as he leaves body after body in his wake. Curtis is also excellent as always, lending gravitas to her long-surviving character and offering a new take on how this unstoppable evil force operates.

The supporting performers are solid, too, even down to the bit parts. There's a streak of dark humor running throughout the feature, allowing victims to get in a funny comment or two and make a likable impression before they meet their gruesome ends. Additionally, one admires the attempts to strive for a deeper meaning by adding a vengeful mob into the proceedings. Most horror films include angry villagers chasing monsters around.

This group, however, becomes just as horrible and cruel as the figure its members are pursuing.

Yet, somehow these intriguing elements don't always come together quite as smoothly as one would hope. Curtis herself ends up being sidelined for a lengthy portion of the story and discrepancies in tone do take their toll over the course of the running time. We cut back and forth from humorous exchanges between characters to extremely exaggerated murders. That's difficult enough to pull off, but adding in a serious subplot about normal people being

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transformed into killers via a mob, is a major contrast with the movie's over-the-top genre elements.

All of these parts might have played together more seamlessly if either the humor and gore had been toned down, or the vigilante aspect had been more grimly satirical and less serious than it ended up being.

Despite these issues, one appreciates the attempts to add subtext to a slasher film and there are enough jolts here to entertain. In fact, it's still better than many of the original's sequels released over the past four decades. Even those who are disappointed with some aspects on display should be pleased to learn that one last film is coming and that it promises to properly wrap things up (admittedly, this also occurred in the now disregarded 1998 effort, "Halloween H20: 20 Years Later," so take that claim with a grain of salt). In the end, "Halloween Kills" is not a franchise highlight, but enough of it works to keep audiences engaged in the moment and excited for a big finale in the future.

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