

'No Exit' fails to make an impression

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 04 March 2022 03:27



Rating: ««
out of «««««

Running Time:
96 minutes

This feature film from 20th Century Studios debuts on Hulu on Feb. 25.

If I have learned anything from genre films like “The Hills Have Eyes” (and its sequels and remakes), “Wrong Turn” (and its follow-ups and reboot), “Wolf Creek” (and that franchise) and dozens of other titles, it’s that driving a route off the beaten path will put you in the company of horrible people and lead to nothing but trouble. Some of these films have made a strong and effective impression, but those involved really have to do something unique and shocking to stand out.

“No Exit” is the latest chiller about violence befalling a group of stranded travelers. And while this story doesn’t involve psychotic maniacs hunting humans, it still feels overly familiar and ultimately fails to make an impression.

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When drug addict and rehab patient Darby Thorne (Havana Rose Liu) receives news that her mother has suffered a brain aneurysm and may pass away within hours, she begs the staff and doctors to let her leave. They refuse (nor do they investigate her claim), forcing the woman to break out and hit the road.

Darby doesn't get far before a big snowstorm arrives and she is rerouted through a remote state park mountain road. As conditions worsen, she ends up stuck in a visitor's center with four other travelers.

After meeting nervous and twitchy Lars (David Rysdahl), friendly Ash (Danny Ramirez), retired Marine Ed (Dennis Haysbert) and his wife Sandi (Dale Dickey), Darby makes a shocking discovery in the parking lot. There is a kidnapped child (Mila Harris) bound and locked in a van belonging to someone onsite.

The concept itself is intriguing as viewers hunker down to see how the protagonist will handle the situation, especially the danger involved in revealing a potentially armed villain to the entire group. Unfortunately, the tight surroundings and exaggerated, suspicious behavior that many individuals exude from the outset drain the plot of real mystery.

These people wander outside and all around the center to talk privately to one another, so much that it becomes humorous to witness. The responsible party is actually revealed very early on and the feature quickly shifts focus to deal with the protagonist finding a way to free the child and inform the innocent parties around her of the situation.

That is problematic, but like many similarly-themed genre films, its success truly depends upon how relatable the protagonist's actions are.

Alas, the behavior on display here isn't convincing or clever. There is a moment or two of interest when vehicle keys are hidden in order to be used as a bargaining chip and another scene in which the lead has to consider using an illicit substance to deal with an injury. However, other efforts seem deeply flawed.

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And even worse, the sinister faction makes a number of terrible decisions, diminishing the threat. The story also suffers from some added complications (involving a health condition for the child in peril) and a further turn that feels preposterous when revealed. The number of coincidences that must have occurred to arrive at the scenario boggle the mind.

As tensions rise and violence erupts towards the climax, there is a little anxiety generated as a character is pursued into the snowy woods, as well as an unsettling wound inflicted with a left-behind nail gun from an unfinished area in the visitor's center. And the movie itself is handsomely shot, with the warmly-hued visitor center nicely contrasting with the cold and snowy exteriors.

In the end, this is a well-shot thriller that does feature an appropriately messy finale. However, the story never feels believable and the interactions between the characters are stiffly delivered and awkwardly written. Genre fans may find the movie reasonably diverting, but there isn't enough about "No Exit" that is truly unexpected or memorable to warrant stopping and checking it out.

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