

'The Conjuring 2' is a goofy, unexceptional supernatural flick

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: «« out of 4 stars

Running Time: 134 min.

Horror films involving ghosts are a tricky proposition. So often, these types of film can't do much more than rattle dishes for an hour or so before eventually exorcising the spirits to the beyond. This week sees the release of a sequel to a movie that managed to succeed, despite genre conventions, and create some unsettling moments. *The Conjuring 2* does possess a couple of chills and will provide a decent enough night of jolts for horror fans, yet by comparison it's a hit-and-miss affair. Honestly, the movie never quite matches the eerie mood and tone that the original effortlessly generated.

The movie spends a significant amount of time reintroducing paranormal investigators Lorraine Warren (Vera Farmiga) and her husband, Ed Warren (Patrick Wilson). The two are asked by the Catholic Church to investigate claims made by a terrified and frustrated family in London. Peggy Hodgson (Francis O'Connor), the matriarch of the tormented clan, is particularly concerned about her daughter Janet (Madison Wolfe), who seems to be specifically targeted by a poltergeist. The Warrens arrive to investigate their row-housing unit (one that would fail any safety inspection, even back in the '70s) for the ghost.

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The cast is above average, despite having very silly material to work with. While they are forced to deliver a couple of groaners relating to doe-eyed declarations of love, they sell it as well as can be expected. And in spite of the familiarity of the set up, director James Wan (*Saw*, *Insidious*), the first

Conjuring

) knows his way around a fright film. There are some effective jump scares. In particular, those involving figures slowly appearing from the shadows. He's also got a scary supporting spirit in the white-faced Demonic Nun, a creation that looks disturbing every time it appears out of the blue.

There are also some nice camera moves, including impressive long takes in which the camera floats around the house through windows and doors, as well as following the characters into various dangerous environments. But while it's scary, the movie also possesses a stronger sense of humor than expected. This results in a couple of amusing moments of levity. One tense scene in the darkness climaxes with the audience staring at a photo of David Soul; another reference to the relative ease of early video-camera use earns a good laugh.

Still, the follow-up is not without several problems. Pacing is a big issue this time around. Despite being a very simple ghost story, the running time is so long that it trumps films like *The Exorcist*

. The movie is too slow-moving and doesn't set up the initial threat quickly enough. In fact, it's an exceptional amount of time before the Warrens are even sent to London. Frankly, 15 minutes of minor, repetitive scares in the first and middle acts should have been done away with.

Additionally, the initial spirit is seen very early in the film and it doesn't have a threatening presence (unless you find geriatrics who like to watch Queen Elizabeth parade around on TV terrifying). This significantly diminishes the tension. And while camerawork is impressive, it carries a glossy slickness and polish that also takes some of the edge off.

Finally, one can't be too hard on what is essentially a goofy supernatural flick, but there are some nonsensical elements. The row-housing location of the haunting also mutes the fear factor. It appears especially strange that despite all of the loud events occurring, most of the neighbors seem completely uninterested or unbothered by what's going on.

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As mentioned, *The Conjuring 2* certainly provides the odd jolt here and there and is a passable, if unexceptional follow-up. However, plumbing issues aside, the big frights found in this house never quite chill to the bone.

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