

“THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ALICE CREED” (Film Review)

Written by Michael Gingold
Tuesday, 27 April 2010 12:54



THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ALICE CREED isn't really a horror movie, but it's the best thing I've seen so far at this year's [Tribeca Film Festival](#), and is highly recommended to anyone who enjoys a good thriller, and being kept on the edge of their seat by the anticipation of plot twists and character revelations, not just violence. (General audiences will be able to see it when it goes into limited theatrical release August 6 from Anchor Bay.)

The title of this British production is something of a misnomer; we never experience Alice's disappearance from the point of view of loved ones or police, but spend the entire running time with her and her abductors. The opening scenes follow two men as they gather supplies and prepare the flat where they're going to keep their captive prisoner—soundproofing the walls, setting up the bed, etc., with plenty of nicely observed workaday details (my favorite: the duo replace an ornate antique clock with one that has easier-to-read numbers). Next thing you know, they're hauling in the bound, hooded, struggling Alice (Gemma Arterton), handcuffing and foot-tying her to that bed. She's stripped naked, and photographs are taken to be sent off with a ransom demand. It's a blunt, intense sequence, and quite the attention-grabbing setup.

Then the masks come off, and we get to know the kidnappers a little better. Vic (Eddie Marsan) is the older of the two, clearly the man with the plan and fiercely devoted to pulling it off with no deviations. The younger Danny (Martin Compston, previously seen in *WILD COUNTRY*, *DOOMSDAY* and *RED MIST*) seems like he might be in just a little bit over his head, but with Alice strapped down and shut up in the next room, he clearly can't back out now. Their dynamic between the duo is established as succinctly and effectively as Alice's plight, and then...



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Well, then a lot of stuff happens that shouldn't even be hinted at here. Having swiftly and solidly set up his players and their situation, writer/director J Blakeson (making his feature debut at the helm after short films, a few highly regarded screenplays and co-scripting detail on *THE DESCENT: PART 2*) begins slowly and inexorably turning the screws, as Vic and Danny's supposedly foolproof plot inevitably proves vulnerable to unexpected changes of attitude and allegiance. To even suggest what these are would spoil the fun, so suffice it to say that not everything is as it seems, and you can't always be sure where either the antagonists' or the victim's motivations and loyalties lie. Nothing can be trusted—not even the apartment's toilet (you'll know what I mean when you see the film).

With only three characters and a handful of locations, Blakeson succeeds in keeping the proceedings cinematic throughout, while resisting distracting visual flourishes that would call attention to themselves at the expense of the storyline. His clear, unfussy approach reflects a trust in his own material and in his performers, who return the favor with fine, complimentary turns. Arterton here gets to show multiple levels she wasn't able to in *CLASH OF THE TITANS*, while Marsan and Compston play expertly off each other. All three really throw themselves into their parts, which involve brief, startling bursts of violence as well as significant nudity.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ALICE CREED is the kind of movie that invites you to play along from your seat, and try to figure out where the next curveball is coming from. You may figure out one twist or another ahead of time, but you won't guess them all, and they're so well worked into the narrative and characterizations that they're all dramatically satisfying. I actually had the movie's final shot pegged a few minutes before it arrived—and it's such a fitting and appropriate conclusion that seeing it brought off was still just as satisfying as if it had been a surprise.



{comments on}