Merely a few years ago, film festivals were rampant with home invasion. As escalation is the natural order of things, it makes an odd sense we're now living in the year of the high-rise siege (quite possibly kicked into gear by 2011's outstanding ATTACK THE BLOCK). THE RAID, CITADEL, this month's DREDD and the UK's TOWER BLOCK all share themes centered around these concrete monoliths that increasingly populate cities internationally. Fortunately, each of the aforementioned counts real moments of intensity amongst their running times, making this contemporary revival of a classic storytelling device one worth keeping an eye on.

TOWER BLOCK, from directors James Nunn and Ronnie Thompson and SEVERANCE writer James Moran, is easily the most grounded of the current slate of siege (how relieving a subgenre trend can, and does, encompass varying approaches). It finds the remaining residents of soon-to-be-destroyed Tower Block 31 trapped within their halls as a sniper viciously attacks from outside over a weekend. The film posits two possible reasons for the sudden bursts of violence. One, the unsolved brutal murder of a young boy, which remains unsolved in part because the residents in question refused to pipe up. Two, the gentleman who's buying the building as a condo investment wants these stragglers out. Both scenarios speak to a current international climate which allows TOWER BLOCK a little meat to chew on in the wake of its brisk, to-the-point and admittedly narratively thin nature.

Moreover, this shift to high-rises, tenements, projects, etc. would seem the directly an extension of economic downturn and increasing atmosphere of frustration and explosive violence, which TOWER BLOCK deals a plenty in. Tower Block 31's inhabitants are all in various states of financial flux, and as the prologue and general environment indicates, under constant threat of random hostility. So it goes that the weekend's inciting murder is a fantastic moment that catches the audience, who's just settled into the ensemble, wholly off-guard. From there, it's many of the same beats stories such as these hit—in-fighting, speculating, action—but elevated by performances from heroine Sheridan Smith and Jack O'Connell (who previously essayed a violent youth in EDEN LAKE) and the rest of the cast, as well as directors Nunn and Thompson impressively guiding a stylistic, but not fetishistic or glamorizing, ever-roaming camera throughout their feature debut.

[redacted]