

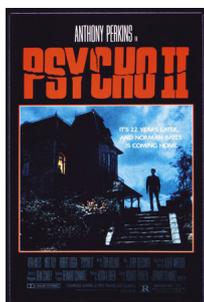
Fango Flashback: “PSYCHO II”

Written by Christine Hadden

Sunday, 12 September 2010 11:40



In the early '80s, sequelmania hit. Everyone was doing it: HALLOWEEN, FRIDAY THE 13TH, even JAWS stepped onto the sequel train, so it should have come as no surprise when PSYCHO II was announced. That said, it was certainly one of the longest waits in film history for a follow-up—especially considering they were using the same lead actor.



Directed by Richard Franklin and written by Tom Holland, PSYCHO II (1983) picks up 22 years after the 1960 Alfred Hitchcock classic. Undertaking the enormous task of crafting a sequel to one of the horror genre's greatest landmarks must have been quite intimidating to the filmmakers, but to be honest, it truly is a credible film that is often overlooked when worthy horror series are discussed.

Norman Bates (the spot-on Anthony Perkins, reprising his legendary role) has been institutionalized for the murder of not only his mother but the lovely Marion Crane among others. He has served his term and is ready to face society again. When he gets a job at a diner, he meets a young female co-worker (Meg Tilly) with boyfriend troubles and invites her to stay at his house with him and his...memories. Needless to say, Norman is trying hard to deal with not only his past, but his infamous reputation as well.

The heart of the film is Norman's attempt at a return to reality and his apparent descent back into madness. It's not a film that goes outside the box, but a return to the scenario that was such a success the first time around. After all, hadn't we all been wondering what Norman and Mother had been up to? Didn't we want to see the foreboding house on the hill and hear those screeching strings again?

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The original PSYCHO is such an untouchable classic (as is obvious from Gus Van Sant's embarrassing and unnecessary shot-by-shot remake in 1998) that it was difficult to imagine even writing an adequate follow-up, let alone pulling it off—despite the formidable Perkins returning in all his quirky, neurotic glory. But critics tend to agree that PSYCHO II was an impressive return to the Bates Motel, and two more sequels resulted from its own strong audience reception. The film captures quite well the feel of the anxious moments we remember from the original, with Norman as big a nervous Nellie as ever. Backed by a fantastic score by the late Jerry Goldsmith and utilizing the talents of such talented supporting actors as Tilly, Dennis Franz and Robert Loggia, it's a film that deserves to be seen and appreciated on its own merits.

PSYCHO II will soon get its due thanks to the documentary THE PSYCHO LEGACY, coming on DVD October 19 from Shout! Factory. Robert V. Galluzzo's 90-minute labor of love (with three hours of extra bonus material in the two-disc set) takes a long hard look at the entire PSYCHO series via new interviews, clips, archival material and more. Pick up Fango #298, on sale in October, for more on LEGACY and an interview with PSYCHO II producer Hilton A. Green.



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