

Unlucky Days: A Tribute to the “FRIDAY THE 13TH” series, Part Two

Written by Professor A. Griffin
Friday, 04 February 2011 09:49



Andy was a strong boy, and he grew up into a strong young man. Tonight he was feeling good; he had a nice buzz and had just finished making love to his girlfriend Debbie. They had made love many, many times, but never in a hammock. The experience was amazing and Debbie's body had never been so great to touch and feel.

Andy was in a great mood. He was feeling silly as he walked on his hands to Debbie in the shower. He loved watching her naked and wet, loved knowing that she was his, and felt that on this night, all was right with the world. Debbie asked for a beer and Andy could use one too, so back on his strong arms and upside down to world, Andy returned to the hallway, heading downstairs to get beer for himself and his love. He bet that he could make it all the way downstairs on his hands and back up again. It would hurt, but the workout would feel good and his arms would be pumped and his chest hard. It would feel good when he and Debbie made love again...it would...

...Whose feet are those? Shelly again? No, too big to be Shelly. Someone upside down...wearing a mask...both hands up holding a...OH, GOD!!...He heard himself scream as he saw the world and the lower half of his body fall sideways past him, and then everything turned red.



In 1982, I was 13 years old. And I was in the midst of my horror movie mania! That year saw ALONE IN THE DARK, THE BEAST WITHIN, CAT PEOPLE, CHRISTINE, CREEPSHOW, POLTERGIEST, THE EVIL DEAD and the return of Jason Voorhees in FRIDAY THE 13TH PART III (in 3D)! That's right, Night Creatures; can you imagine the thrill, the exuberance, that I felt when I first saw the come-ons for this film on television? This is when trailers for films were meant to scare you, to build up anticipation until the great day came. PART III (see Part One of our Unlucky Days series [here](#)) was released on a Friday the 13th, and it was one of the best. Certainly, it was no GHANDI (released the same year), but in terms of screams per minute and thrills, it was a nonstop rollercoaster ride, AND in box office, Jason ruled unequalled!

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PART III was the one that earned Jason the title of “The Sultan of Slaughter!” Jason suddenly became a pop culture figure with his new look. He appeared in comic strips, Halloween costumes and even Weird Al Yankovich’s song, “Nature Trail to Hell,” pays obvious homage to this film.

In FRIDAY THE 13TH PART III, Jason receives two things that he keeps throughout the remainder of the series: (1) the now-trademark hockey mask and (2) the ax wound on the left side of his head.

(Side note: THE ROAD WARRIOR was released in 1981, and the main villain in that film, Lord Humongous, wears a hockey mask and looks very much like the Jason we know today. Could the producers of FRIDAY THE 13TH have seen that film and insisted that J.V. adapt a similar look? Far fetched? Coincidence? Perhaps. But before that, nobody thought of a hockey mask as being a frightening thing. Well, nobody except a hockey player trying to score.)

PART III takes place immediately following the events in PART 2, which puzzle Jason-o-philes, because Jason has suddenly gained 20-30 pounds and has lost his beard and all the hair on his head. Oh well, continuity be damned, this Jason (now played by Richard Brooker) is a monster. Huge, hulking and deliberate, Jason Voorhees works very hard in this film. The body count this time, is at 12 with his running total at 22. Jason kills a group of teenagers staying at a cabin in the woods that are not counselors and have nothing to do with trying to open a summer camp. They are just eight sex-crazed, drug using, post-high school grads trying to have a good time IN JASON’S WOODS!

In PART III, the revenge motive wears thin, and Jason seems to be killing for no good reason. Perhaps he recognizes the emotions of lust and exuberance and instinctively wants to snuff it out? Well, whatever is going on inside Jason’s rage-filled brain, believe me, this film works in the best classic, campfire, urban legend style.

Beware the crazy retarded son of Mrs. Voorhees, he’s out there and he’ll kill you!

Why? That’s what’s so disturbing about it, there is no real reason, is there? Jason has his work

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cut out (sorry) for him, as he not only has numerous teens to kill, but a gang of bikers as well.

But this time the action on the screen leaps into your lap in 3D! Numerous sharp implements, a dangling eyeball, a yo-yo, a harpoon, a joint and Jason’s outstretched arms popped out of the screen and in our faces. The 3D effect was a nice touch but the film plays just as well in 2D.

The most memorable part of the film for me? Rick (Paul Kratka), the preppy hero type, is grabbed by Jason just outside the cabin. His girlfriend, our heroine Chris (Dana Kimmell), steps out to look for him and just misses him behind her, struggling and being held silent by Jason. His eyes plead in terror for her to see him, hear him...help him! But alas, she turns and goes back inside, shutting the door and eliminating his chances for survival. Jason places both hands on either side of Rick’s head, lifts him off the ground and pops his head like a zit. His eyeball flies at the audience in 3D! Chris, by the way, tells Rick earlier about a dim memory of being attacked by Jason years earlier in these same woods. The memory flashback is a bit confusing, as it really has no bearing on anything else. It also shows a pre-hockey mask Jason without his hair! The ending is a cop-out as it relies too much on the shock ending set-up from the original, but substitutes Mrs. Voorhees jumping out of the lake and grabbing the lone survivor (who has just put an ax into Jason’s head and left him for dead in the barn.)



OK, so the end doesn’t make much sense. Mrs. Voorhees had her disembodied head reattached when she attacked, and even if it was a hallucination, which the film’s ambiguous ending leads you to believe, why would Mrs. Voorhees play a part in Chris’ nightmare? Does Chris even know who Mrs. Voorhees was? The final shot of the film shows Jason right where Chris left him in the barn, with the ax still embedded in his head, very still and apparently very dead.

But despite the ending, as a whole, PART III, from the opening, where Harry Manfredini’s famous theme is given the new wave treatment, to the gut-wrenching heart-pounding

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conclusion with Chris locked in a barn with a rampaging Jason, is the classic FRIDAY THE 13TH film.

I recall sitting in a crowded four-screen Cineplex, wearing my 3D glasses just like everyone else, and screaming with excitement and joy with each Jason appearance. I loved watching my fellow audience members in this film, they laughed shrieked, and talked back to the screen. Girls hid in the crook of their date's arms and a shocked group scream in the theater was always followed by giggles. In short, everyone was having fun! It was incredible.

So far, the FRIDAY THE 13TH series was a cash cow for Paramount, but morality groups protested the films and the Motion Picture Association of America, which had previously allowed so much with the initial entry, was starting to pay more attention. This unwanted attention would be the beginning of the end for the series.

TO BE CONTINUED

{comments on}