Written by Joshua Keefe
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Coming to DVD and Blu-ray tomorrow from Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, Paul W.S. Anderson’s RESIDENT EVIL: AFTERLIFE continues the story from the previous entry, EXTINCTION. This time, Alice (Milla Jovovich, who kicks ass with aplomb) travels from Tokyo to Alaska to LA in her ongoing mission to destroy the evil Umbrella Corporation and the T-virus-bred zombies that have overrun the world.

Though it’s plagued by the same plotting pitfalls that hamper every entry in the series, fans who liked the last installment will continue to enjoy what AFTERLIFE has to offer. There’s action, zombies and conspiracies aplenty. Too bad the characters (including returning co-heroine Ali Larter and a newcomer played by Kim Coates) are thrown in and out like pieces of meat, and most are given little time to engage the audience.

Presented in its Blu-ray incarnation in 1080p high definition and a 2:35.1 aspect ratio, the film doesn’t play as well in 2-D as it did in the theatrical 3-D (although it is available in a digital dimensional version for 3-D television sets). But there are some outstanding sequences that work well in any visual presentation (hint: quarters + shotgun = entertainment).

AFTERLIFE utilized the same “phantom” camera and 3-D technology created for James Cameron’s AVATAR, though the special features unfortunately spend very little time highlighting their actual on-set use. The spotlight on them only lasts about seven minutes in the discs’ featurettes collection, and as a huge fan of 3-D technology, I would have liked to learn more about the process, considering it’s being touted as the “future” of filmmaking. Among the more satisfying segments provided is one that compares the movie to the video-game franchise. This writer missed the last few RESIDENT EVIL games, so it was genuinely interesting to see how close the movies are now attempting to stick with their sources. From costumes to creatures

(and there are a few awesome creatures in this one), this featurette breaks down in great detail the amount of time and effort put in to keep longtime fans of the games happy—which, as we know when it comes to game-to-film adaptations, is no easy task.

An audio commentary by writer/director Anderson and producers Jeremy Bolt and Robert Kulzer goes deep into the day-to-day aspects of filming AFTERLIFE. On the whole, it’s a terrific track, and I did appreciate their reasoning behind the heavy usage of the phantom camera (which captures slow motion in excruciating detail, an element of AFTERLIFE that has been condemned by some and is a bit distracting in the 2-D version). More visual material is offered in an “Undead Vision” picture-in-picture feature that’s offered exclusively on the Blu-ray, as are deleted scenes and outtakes. And as a special bonus on both discs, there’s even a sneak peek of RESIDENT EVIL: DAMNATION, the upcoming CGI feature continuation of the first animated EVIL feature, DEGENERATION.

All in all, the film is business as usual, but the Blu-ray supplemental package, and to a lesser extent that on the DVD, are more than worth the purchase price.

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DISC PACKAGES: 💀💀💀💀

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