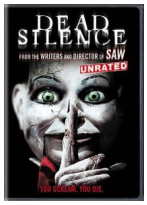
So far, James Wan & Leigh Whannell’s INSIDIOUS has pulled in close to $27 million domestically, and after the movie’s $13 million opening weekend, it held strong during this past weekend at the box office, earning another $9 million and coming in at number five. That’s already better than Wan & Whannell’s previous collaboration, DEAD SILENCE, a film that suffered from studio interference and a troubled production. While DEAD SILENCE was much maligned during its initial release, the film does have its fans. Here’s Chris Haberman’s review of that 2007 picture.



Ventriloquists and their dummies usually only frighten two types of people: those who believe that the art can evoke dangerous variations of schizophrenia within the artist, and those who worry about inanimate yet lifelike objects supernaturally coming to dangerous life to harm the living. But what of those who lie awake in bed at night, fretting over the notion that somewhere, the vengeful ghost of a humiliated ventriloquist may be sending out her haunted dummies to help her rip out the tongues of those who once dwelled in her hometown? Those are the poor souls who will rent or purchase DEAD SILENCE in the hopes of finally confronting their lifelong obsession once and for all, in order to lead a fruitful and normal life in which the only real fears permeating their dreams are those of illness and financial instability. What an oddly soothing disappointment it will be when they realize their worst nightmare ain’t all that scary, after all.

Written and directed by SAW’s Leigh Whannell and James Wan respectively, DEAD SILENCE has many hallmarks of the first in that trilogy. The music is serious, hip and big, thanks to the return of composer Charlie Clouser. The visuals are highly stylized, this time offering cold blues and blood reds instead of SAW’s nauseous greens and infectious rust. A multilayered story is also in place, which eventually climaxes with a sharp cut to black for the end credits, immediately after a neck-breaking series of flashbacks which help us cope with a devastating final-reel plot twist. Yet in spite of the familiarities of the young duo who brought the original and reckless SAW to lucrative life, DEAD SILENCE damnably evidences the big-studio influence that Whannell himself admitted to feeling clutching his shoulder while writing the script.

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