Written by Jeremy Webster
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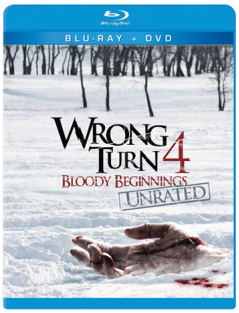
With WRONG TURN 4: BLOODY BEGINNINGS (on DVD and Blu-ray/DVD combo from Fox Home Entertainment), Declan O’Brien graduates up from director—the post he served on WRONG TURN 3: LEFT FOR DEAD—to wear the writer’s hat as well. A prequel set long before the first WRONG TURN film, this fourth entry starts out in 1974, with the hillbilly mutant brothers Three Finger, One Eye, and Saw Tooth—ages 8, 9 and 10 respectively—interred as patients in a sanitorium. As is to be expected, the patients escape and overwhelm the staff in particularly gruesome fashion.

Jump forward to 2003: A nude college-age woman is bouncing on top of her boyfriend and, in the bed just across the room, two more nude college-age women have some lesbian shenanigans going on. Later, after all this sexual activity, these young people meet up with other young people they know to go snowmobiling. Wouldn’t you know it, though, they got lost right before a snowstorm comes in. Good thing that abandoned hospital’s out there!



Yes, this is pretty much what we’ve come to with this series. There are no real surprises, there are no real scares and there’s no real dread. This prequel is more or less a spiritual successor to the mid-range FRIDAY THE 13TH films—it feels as if its aim isn’t necessarily to create suspense or terror in its audience, but rather to deliver a series of gory setpieces with the sadism dial turned fully to 10. While I would grant you that Dario Argento and Lucio Fulci made

some pretty damned fine films with this logic, their visual artistry is absent here, replaced only with a grungy, icky visual atmosphere that’s likely heavily inspired by the aesthetic sensibilities of the SAW and rebooted TEXAS CHAINSAW franchises.

Of course, plenty of basic, potentially run-of-the-mill slashers have been salvaged by great writing—an element that’s sadly lacking here. There’s a sequence where, after listening to a friend getting hideously tortured to death for 10 or 15 minutes, the survivors succeed in a desperate attempt to lock the three deformed cannibals in a cell. They’re doused with oil, and just as one guy is about to throw in his Zippo to light ’em up, one of his friends pleads with him not to do it. “They deserve it,” he responds. Her reply: “Yeah, but you don’t.” I would imagine that if just a fraction of the effort that went into the filming of the two lesbian makeout sessions had been put into the dialogue, we’d have a far more interesting film on our hands.

What O’Brien clearly does believe is that we need a few really nasty death sequences along the way, and he demonstrates a preference for practical FX when he can use them—though their believability is inconsistent, likely due to budget or time constraints. When CGI FX are used, they’re far less convincing, with a kill by snowmobile late in the film outright embarrassing. And where the hell did these three inbred hillbillies learn how to operate a snowmobile in the first place?

So, what does this leave? The cast wages a valiant battle against their own limitations—as well as those placed on them by the script—and succeed more than they fail on the basis of being attractive placeholders waiting their turn on the butcher block. (Though someone forgot to tell the male leads that the Justin Bieber hairstyle probably wasn’t all the rage in 2003.) Meanwhile, the trio playing the inbred brothers seem to be having a lot of fun in the roles, and their makeup is pretty damned effective.

The discs come with a decent amount of supplementary material. O’Brien provides a dry commentary track that’s heavy on production details, plus an eight-minute series of “Director’s Die-aries” webisode-type videos shot on location during production. The 13-minute featurette “Making Another WRONG TURN” provides the obligatory behind-the-scenes stuff, along with a lot of back-patting for being able to get the thing shot on a 19-day schedule for a modest budget, with a special and deserved little sequence toward the end devoted to makeup artist Doug Morrow. A five-minute featurette entitled “Lifestyles of the Sick and Infamous” is devoted to the abandoned Brandon Mental Health Care Centre in Brandon, Manitoba, which served as the film’s principal location and frequently gave the cast and crew the heebie-jeebies.

There’s also a music video featuring the Blackout City Kids playing the “Wrong Turn” song that plays over the end credits. The song is a ballad for all intents and purposes, and while it’s pleasant enough, I have to doubt the mental faculties of anyone who would decide that the pre-chorus line “I need you now” should be accompanied by the visual of a deformed 10-year old biting off a grown man’s nose. Finally, there are 18 minutes’ worth of deleted scenes, which, sadly, really add nothing to the story or characters, although series fans may find a bit in which one of the three villains keeps chasing away the other two as they try to sneak bites of their latest kill mildly amusing. These disappointing snippets aside, though, the extras are mostly more enjoyable than the film itself.

In the end, there’s very little to suggest that WRONG TURN 4 is anything other than a franchise death rattle, a rushed last gasp for what few remaining pennies it can pull in before the coffin lid shuts on this cannibal clan forever. The writing’s weak, the characters are two-dimensional meat puppets awaiting evisceration and the plot would have been called formulaic 20 years ago, let alone today, Fans of old-school slasher fare will probably find this worth a peek if they’re willing to fast-forward through the dull bits and get directly to the kills, though the obvious and ineffective digital work in a couple of them is likely to be an irritant. WRONG TURN 4 is really a dead end in disguise.

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