Written by Chris Haberman
Wednesday, 19 May 2010 08:23

On the commentary for the DVD and Blu-ray of THE NEW DAUGHTER, conducted solo by director Luis Berdejo, he walks us through his beautifully lensed feature. He mentions the lack of cell phones and Internet. “It’s not a period movie,” he says. “But the feeling of it…I wanted it to be like one of those classic movies from the ’80s.”

It’s not really an ’80s throwback, but THE NEW DAUGHTER is indeed a film for those who enjoyed PET SEMETARY. And THE EXORCIST. And THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT. And THE DESCENT. And TROLL, ALIENS, SIGNS, THE SHINING, THE SIXTH SENSE, POLTERGEIST, and FRIDAY THE 13TH PART 2.

If that seems extreme, try a drinking game. Take a shot every time you pick up on a stolen/borrowed shot from other horror flicks. By the time the “new daughter” asks her brother to “come play with” her in the third act, you’ll think you really are watching THE SHINING—on Neptune.

Kevin Costner plays Kevin Costner—I mean “John James,” a lonely father and struggling writer who has moved to a new house with his two children. The youngsters include a presumably 8-year-old boy and a probably 13-year-old girl (Louisa, essayed by PAN’S LABYRINTH’s Ivana Baquero). Louisa is angry at the recent divorce situation between Mom and Pop. Dad doesn’t know how to take care of them, Mom is a “slut” and her new boyfriend is a “shithead.”

Time to save *you* some time: an Indian burial mound causes trouble. Possession. Weird critters. An old fart pops up to tell the tale of a haunted house and his long-lost daughter.

Costner wears jeans and does minimal detective work on-line to solve his problems. Cool cinematography, overlit a lot of the time, and one of the strangest moments in genre-film history: After Louisa begins to act strange in the second act, she pushes a blonde bitch in her high school down some stairs. When Costner comes to pick her up, the school nurses have comforted Louisa by having her lie down and swaddling her in a black trenchcoat that she didn’t wear to school. Yeah.

The anamorphic 2.35:1 transfer, by the way, is crystal-clear enough for you to enjoy an awesome shot toward the beginning of a creature crawling on a roof. The 5.1 Surround audio is also sufficient for hearing spooky sounds jammed into your ears at every turn. The discs serve up trailers for legal thriller BEYOND A REASONABLE DOUBT (oooh—Michael Douglas!), emotional Jeff Bridges-Justin Timberlake road-trip flick THE OPEN ROAD and ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP. As difficult as the movie is to get through, the commentary is… Well, OK—a few minutes in, Berdejo speaks about how he wanted no red colors during the beginning of the film. But right when he mentions this, a child’s finger-painting is shown with a red stick figure. Berdejo clearly cares, but while the commentary is good for hearing how he approached other aspects of the film, it does tend to drag a bit.

Some behind-the-scenes material lets us hear from John Connolly, the author of the short story the film is based upon. His fascination with the “displays of adulthood” that reside in children make me long for—yep—a special edition where I could hear him talk through the film and expand upon his weird interests. Great Connolly quote: “You’re gonna be the worst, jerkiest adult ever because you’re a jerky kid, and I can *see it* in you!” Frankly, I was surprised to see Costner show up for the interviews here. There’s also a gaggle of deleted scenes—some are relevant, some are not. Alternate takes represent a few. Moving on…

Don’t give THE NEW DAUGHTER a rent for the drinking game, because I don’t condone that sort of behavior. It didn’t do any good for me, and it won’t do any good for you. Rent it for Costner. And for that really cool shot toward the beginning—even though it doesn’t pay off so well.

MOVIE: 💀💀💀💀

DVD PACKAGE: 💀💀💀💀

{jcomments on}