The despair and frightening solitude that horror often strives for has a real life parallel; life in the armed forces. It seems obvious, but it's rarely used to its full potential. Thankfully, THE SQUAD (world premiering at Fantastic Fest), the debut from Colombian filmmaker Jaime Osorio Marquez is an incredibly worthy and unsettling addition to the military horror section of our beloved genre.

Taking a page from THE THING in its palpable air of paranoia, resentment and distrust, THE SQUAD sees the titular crew tasked to aid an outpost, but upon arrival find nothing but blood spatter, corpses, the densest of fogs and a possible guerilla (and/or witch to blame). Upon the murder of their captain, the men find themselves enveloped in superstition, madness and isolation, as well as their own demons.

An absolute ensemble piece, THE SQUAD nails an essential aspect of any effective horror film in giving us a slew of well-rounded characters worth investing in. Set against the backdrop of a war-torn Colombia, the cast represents the diversity of the South American nation and as we watch the guilt-ridden Ponce (Juan Pablo Barragan), the desperate Arango (Andres Torres), the superstitious Fiquitiva (Nelson Camayo) and the menacing Cortez (Alejandro Agulilar) slowly lose their cool, the film becomes a harrowing tale of terror as much as it's seemingly a story of how both sides of a civil war are essentially battling themselves.

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