

“THE COLLECTION” (Movie Review)

Written by Abbie Bernstein

Wednesday, 24 October 2012 12:02



In 2009’s THE COLLECTOR, directed by Marcus Dunstan from a screenplay he wrote with Patrick Melton, we were introduced to Arkin (Josh Stewart), a comparatively innocent thief attempting to burglarize a house. Unfortunately, that home is simultaneously invaded by the Collector, a masked man who likes to wipe out a whole group of people in a short span of time via inventive contraptions. However, he always spares one to “collect,” torture at leisure and ultimately display for his own viewing pleasure.

In their sequel THE COLLECTION (opening November 30 from LD Entertainment), Dunstan and Melton concoct an amazing splatterfest of an opening sequence in which the Collector (played this time around by Randall Archer) wipes out a whole nightclub. The filmmakers then kick out the jams on their premise by taking us to the site where the title element is stored. In THE COLLECTOR, the action was confined to the single house; here, we find that the Collector keeps his many, many finds in an entire closed-to-the-public hotel, the Argento.



Arkin, once again played by Stewart, is also back, managing to escape the Collector’s clutches during the nightclub slaughter. When he awakens in the hospital, he’d like to recover in peace and skip town with his loving wife Lisa (Navi Rawat). However, the Collector leaves a note threatening Lisa, motivating Arkin to cooperate when he’s asked to help find Elena (Emma Fitzpatrick), the surviving trophy the Collector acquired at the nightclub. Her wealthy father

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(Christopher McDonald) has assembled a team headed up by Lucello (Lee Tergesen) to rescue her, and Arkin thinks all he'll have to do is point the way, but...

THE COLLECTION does something different within its particular subgenre, going not just for torture but also for tableaux. A lot of what we see in the hotel's labyrinthine layers is reminiscent of scenes in Clive Barker's BOOKS OF BLOOD and the works of H.R. Giger. Dunstan goes for not just jump-scares—though those are supplied—but for a kind of time-stopping awe of visual wrongness, with bodies reassembled out of order and abstract sculptures of bone. There is an internal logic at work here, so that we have some comprehension of what the Collector's aesthetic is and why he takes people.

On the other hand, the pace moves along pretty swiftly. The filmmakers give their grotesque sights enough space to make an impression, but the action slashes along insistently. This is not a work of creeping dread (as compared to, say, the current SINISTER), but rather an ultra-bloody, smart thrill ride that's in tune with its target audience. The sad-eyed Stewart, the resolute Tergesen and the very capable and physical Fitzpatrick all make us empathize with their characters and root for them, singly and collectively, to kick the Collector's acquisitive ass. Stewart is an especially smart choice for a protagonist here; he's neither the kind of flawed antihero found matching wits against Jigsaw in the SAW franchise nor the imperiled decent guy of many other movies. Instead, Arkin starts on a note of morally ambiguous desperation that makes us believe he can think outside the box (pardon the COLLECTION pun) while doing battle. Fitzpatrick is a strong heroine in the young Jamie Lee Curtis mold, and Tergesen has a special-ops credibility from the moment we meet him.

THE COLLECTION's ending leaves the door barn-wide open for at least one more sequel. Given the variety and energy in this installment, another COLLECTOR piece will be welcome.

