Written by Ken Michaels
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Why am I reviewing these two new flicks together, when one is hitting theaters all over the country in 3D and the other went straight to DVD/Blu-ray this week? Let me count the ways…

Well, 1) They’re sequels, obviously. 2) Both feature casts of British and Australian young actors (including a GAME OF THRONES veteran in each) playing American kids, leading to the fact that 3) both movies are principally set in West Virginia towns, yet nobody in either speaks with a regional accent. And sadly, 4) both are disappointments when compared to their predecessors.

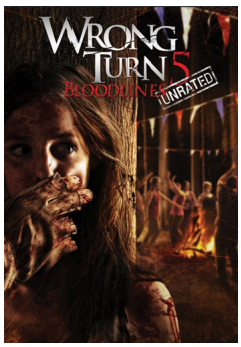
In SILENT HILL: REVELATION’s case, it’s not for lack of trying on writer/director Michael J. Bassett’s part. You can tell he was bound and determined to get the feel and the frights of the popular video game up on the big screen, and to sock it over in three dimensions. The movie is literally dripping with atmosphere, as falling ash really seems to be wafting down between you and the actors as you watch. Bassett throws fire and smoke and blood and thunder at you and comes up with some pretty freaky visuals, not to mention superior creature FX designed by Patrick Tatopoulos and created by Paul Jones. It’s a bit ironic, though, that the one that makes the strongest impression is a beastie that was created via CGI, and resembles a giant tarantula made out of mannequin parts that creeps and crawls after our heroine.

This girl is an about-to-turn-18-year-old named Heather, played by Adelaide Clemens, though it’s not really spoiling anything to reveal that she’s actually Sharon, the daughter who wound up trapped in Silent Hill with her mom Rosa at the end of the last movie. In the interim between the films, she has somehow managed to escape and has been on the run with her dad Harry, formerly Christopher (Sean Bean), though as REVELATION opens, the bad guys have caught up with them and whisked Harry off to the place he always warned Heather never to travel to. Of course, familial love always trumps such warnings, and Heather sets off to rescue Dad from Silent Hill—a place she’s been having horrible visions about, and with which her destiny is

inexorably tied yadda yadda yadda.

You hear a lot about Heather’s connection to Silent Hill, what it all means, how she might go about stopping the evil dwelling there, etc., because the dialogue is almost entirely devoted to exposition. In addition to Bean, Radha Mitchell as Rosa and Deborah Kara Unger as Dahlia return from Christophe Gans’ original movie, but they only appear for about two minutes each and solely to deliver nuggets of information. Two of the key new characters are a detective played by Martin Donovan (!?), who’s determined to protect Heather but whose true function is also to explain more about the situation, and the asylum-bound Leonard Wolf, who gets so much portentous buildup that when it turns out he’s portrayed by a campy Malcolm McDowell, his appearance plays like a punchline.

It’s a shame that a real story never emerges amidst all the setpieces, because the potential was here to make a follow-up worthy of Gans’ film, one of the few video-game flicks that got it right. I’ll admit that I’m not a gamer, so I can’t speak for how true to the source this movie is or isn’t, though favorite creatures from both incarnations like Red Pyramid (given too little to do) and the freaky, busty nurses (whose big scene seems like it was creepy in the conception but comes off less so in execution) do appear. So does evil little Alessa (now played by Erin Pitt), whose backstory is dutifully gone over again, perhaps for those experiencing the SILENT HILL phenomenon for the first time with REVELATION. If there’s going to be another movie, perhaps now that the mythology has been cinematically established twice over, the filmmakers can go for a plot that matches the interest level of the visuals.



On the other hand, there’s WRONG TURN 5: BLOODLINES (I just made a pun relating to the movie’s onscreen title, its only moment of wit), which marks a new nadir for this once-promising series. When 20th Century Fox released the original back in 2003, it was one of the first wide-release films to bring back the thrills of 1970s/’80s survival-horror fare; WRONG TURN 2, the first of the straight-to-video sequels, was clearly a lot cheaper but had the right amount of dark laughs stirred into the cannibal pot. It’s been downhill from there, and this newest entry doesn’t even have the decent production values of the previous one; the prosthetic FX are plastic and phony-looking, and it has been shot on the most obvious sets, interior and exterior,

that you’ve ever seen in a movie with a major-studio logo at its head.

Once again, Three Finger, Saw Tooth and One Eye are up to their cannibalistic antics, this time during a “Mountain Man Festival” commemorating their legend. That means that some of the attendees dress up in rubber masks of the characters—which look no less convincing than the actual makeups—but the idea of the mutants blending in amongst the revelers is barely developed. (See that image on the cover? Never happens in the movie itself.) Instead, we get a siege scenario in which a group of college dumbasses are imperiled after a violent encounter with the freaks’ guardian, Maynard J. Odets (Doug Bradley), leads them and him to the police station of local sheriff Angela Carter (Camilla Arfwedson). (The in-reference of Bradley’s character’s name will likely be lost on this flick’s target audience, and so, I’m sad to say, will hers.)

The scenario from there depends entirely on idiotic behavior to stretch (and stretch) the plot to feature length, and the movie confuses sadism played for cheap laughs for actual black humor. This is one mean-spirited movie, inviting you to chortle along as the stupid but basically innocent youths are subjected to SAW-esque traps and other excruciating fates. The young cast are too busy trying to conceal their foreign accents to build up much sympathy for these dolts, though at least Bradley seems to be having fun as he makes like Hannibal Lecter in his jail cell. The discs’ featurettes are basic making-of/behind-the-scenes fare, and there’s a commentary by writer/director/franchise regular Declan O’Brien in which he looks back on the production with affectionate humor. In fact, it’s perhaps understandable that the folks behind WRONG TURN 5 enjoyed themselves on the set enough that they didn’t realize how nasty and unpleasant the material would play on screen.

SILENT HILL: REVELATION: 💀💀💀💀

WRONG TURN 5:

MOVIE: 💀💀💀💀

DISC PACKAGE: 💀💀💀💀