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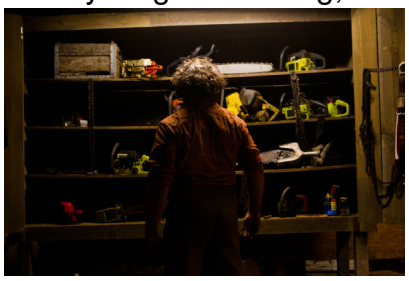
The moment is loaded with potential. You've seen glimpses in its trailer. A saw—one that is presumably family—rattles against a chain-link fence. It gives way, and a barrier between Leatherface's homestead rampages and the public has been knocked down. He's out in the world—in, of all places, a town carnival. Could TEXAS CHAINSAW 3D aim to match the hysterical lunacy of the original?

Instead, the ensuing sequence serves to encapsulate what's wrong with not just this film but the entirety of the remake/reboot-quel culture we find ourselves in. The chainsaw, with every pull, screeches dull lip service of reverence to Tobe Hooper's original, but about the moment a goofy SAW reference is dropped in, and you realize Leatherface's outfit is more akin to the black leather apron of HOSTEL, it's understood you will most certainly not be truly returning to Newt, Texas. And despite the promises, despite how they think THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE is the scariest movie ever made, despite the 30 seconds of screen time Bill Moseley and Gunnar Hansen receive, despite all of the ass-in-shorts tracking shots, no one involved ever had any intention of taking you there.

TEXAS CHAINSAW 3D is tonally and timeline-confused—a film with no focus and little in the way of redeeming value. Well, it does feature some stunning, proper practical FX from legends Greg Nicotero and Howard Berger, but even that gives way to smatterings of digital blood, a choice as deflating as trying to reconcile Alexandra Daddario's heroine as a 38-year-old is brain-busting.

TEXAS CHAINSAW 3D, for the most part, is all talk. If you'll allow, another example: A policeman enters the killer's basement hideout; he's mortified by the many masks, yes, but even more so by the presence of ladies' dresses and makeup. Unfortunately, director John Luessenhop never brings Leatherface to that alluded headspace—to the makeup and the dresses and the goofy but menacingly weird body movements. Leatherface is never allowed to be anything but hulking, and the audience never finds him anything but boring.



If you haven't noticed, this latest film in the series, which attempts to do away with even the original's direct sequels, has dropped MASSACRE from its title. It's telling. Like many of the remakes, or remake/sequel/begin-a-new-franchise efforts, that surround us, it's the name that matters, and so prevails a "have the cake and it eat too" atmosphere where the filmmakers swear their project is kin and canon to draw in real-deal fans, but have no interest in making good with an aesthetically or thematically unique picture. Of course, a carbon-copy retread would be uninteresting, but so is a film completely uninformed by that which it is trying to latch onto.

Possibly the biggest disappointment of TEXAS CHAINSAW 3D is its lack of a discernible mood. The utterly useless 3D begets a movie so overlit and glossy, it appears as soap opera. Tension is essentially unattainable throughout; it's as if TEXAS CHAINSAW is talking at you. Also unattainable—and this is a minor but amusing digression—is seemingly any emotion from singer/actor Tremaine "Trey Songz" Neverson. We've all encountered wooden performances, but when it looks like it's too much effort for him to give his girlfriend a hug following her finding out she was adopted, it's actually sort of rousing, and one of the movie's more entertaining moments. What's more, Daddario—or more likely her stunt double—takes two amazing falls in the film that manage to be more visceral than any of the kills. Some elements of the film's final act—like the carnival, the ladies' dresses as set décor and the KNB gore—are brief bubbles of air. The film reaches to take a slightly gonzo turn, and maybe seeming even more so because what precedes it is so disengaging, but the old saying "too little, too late" is time-honored for a reason. The ending and post-credits gag are no saving graces.

One more example: Under siege from Leatherface, Tania Raymonde's Nikki, who didn't grow up in the state, grabs a shotgun and lets out her best "Welcome to Texas, motherf**ker!" to a character who in all likelihood has never traveled anywhere else. Leatherface knows Texas. He's certainly been to Texas. Mr. Luessenhop,
have you
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