

## Freddy Got Face Riffed

Written by Jeff Tuttle  
Tuesday, 25 May 2010 11:58

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A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET has come and gone and has definitely left a taste in my mouth—a taste I can't quite identify. Sometimes I think it's pizza, a treat that lingers as a reminder of how awesome it was to enjoy. Other times it's like drinking orange juice after you brush your teeth. It's just wrong and should not have been done. What I'm trying to say is that I may have eaten a few of my words... only a few of them. Just a little snack and not a full spread of "told-you-so."

Writers Wesley Strick and Eric Heisserer took the story in some interesting new directions and Jackie Earle Haley once again proves he makes a great anti-hero. The overall sense of dread is a constant throughout the film whereas its predecessor planted the silly-seeds that blossomed as the franchise aged. Remember when Nancy went all "Macaulay Culkin" and set up HOME ALONE traps around the house for the final battle? What the hell was that? Needless to say, I was glad that didn't happen again. At the very least, a great majority of these remakes have the balls to take themselves seriously. I don't need my Freddy to be Don Rickles. I need him to look ugly and say creepy shit before he kills kids—that is it.



On the other hand, we have the special FX. While the screenplay, tone and acting may have hit their marks (although Heather Langenkamp will always be my Nancy), the CGI doesn't work. If you ask me, CGI in horror is never going to work. So much of what we all love about horror is predicated on the can-do attitude of the makeup artists. "Where there is a will there is a way" is taking a backseat to, "We'll worry about it in post." We saw this same trend begin in the music industry in the '80s with the rise of digital music technology. This technology continued to build and eventually gave us PROTOOLS. In short, PROTOOLS is a digital recording program that has the dubious honor of being the greatest advancement in music technology and the vacuum that is sucking out its very soul. If a drummer's rhythm is off, the track can be placed over a grid and lined up perfectly. If you turn on the radio and hear a voice that sounds like a robot, that is PROTOOLS hard at work creating a generation of talentless "singers" who equate success with copious Myspace friends. Talent is no longer a necessity for making a hit record; PROTOOLS is the CGI of music.

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I'm not saying the digital age is pure evil and I'm not saying that all CGI is the devil. This technology does have its place on the big screen. There are some amazing artists out there who are using the medium in some very exciting ways. However, just as with music, it should never be a stand-in for raw talent and fortitude. It saddens me to hear George Romero pardons his use of CGI by stating that it's easier and more cost effective. I'm not one of those "art is pain" types, but those are two ideals that rarely ever provide for greatness.

Getting back to NIGHTMARE, the 1984 original featured a simple, but very effective scene that had Freddy materializing through Nancy's bedroom wall. The wall was made out of latex and kept the gag in the realm of reality while suggesting an otherworldly nature. This same gag was replicated in the redux, but was done digitally. It may have been easier to accomplish, but its cartoonish look fails to illicit that feeling of fear we all crave. Hopefully, a balance can be found between the practical and the digital. Musically speaking, many analog artists were able to "get with the times" and continue making relevant records. Many did fall victim to the synthesizer and an inability to grasp the direction of the industry, but once the artist caught up with the technology it proved fruitful. For those truly talented artists, the best of both worlds became fused. It's my hope that CGI simply hasn't yet hit its stride in horror.

Regardless, I stand behind A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET and have subsequently identified the taste it left behind. It is pizza, but it's Little Caesars pizza. It fills the void in my belly, but my guts yearn for that NYC deep dish while they scream, "They don't make 'em like they used to!"

{jcomments on}