With over 100 years of cinema to look back upon, I tend to cut genre movies a bit of slack when it comes to original ideas; let’s face it, there really isn’t a whole lot that’s new under the sun when it comes to terror flicks. With that little caveat accepted, there’s certainly some fun to be had from seeing an idea that isn’t just old, but even hackneyed, being run through the mill one more time, as long as there’s a fresh point of view operating behind it that adds a whole new dimension of fun or thrills into the mix.

So while the independent feature “2” could hardly be called an original endeavor, as it is wholly indebted to the structures and conventions of the last-man-on-Earth-vs.-zombies subgenre, it offers a number of entertaining twists and unexpected turns. This makes this 2007 production a happy surprise that has so far eluded wide attention, but that should change now that it’s set for DVD and Blu-ray release this August from Elite/Hannover House.

“2”, written and directed by Andy Davis (no relation to the FUGITIVE helmer), begins with David, a lone man who wakes up in a car with a zombie child in the back seat. After wandering through the snowy wasteland of a deserted industrial landscape somewhere in rural Maine, he meets a lone woman, Sarah, who’s also struggling to survive. Neither has any memory of their lives from before the current catastrophe; David wonders if the zombie child in the car was his, and Sarah discovers that she’s pregnant. And from there, things get really, um, *strange*…

I don’t want to say too much more about “2” because it’s so smart about hitting all the bases you expect a movie of this type to cycle through, managing to dispense with all the clichés in the first half-hour before moving into pretty dark and weird territory in its second half. The chilly winter landscape, with visible breath often streaming out of the performers’ mouths, helps set up a bleak environment not often seen in this type of movie, especially one with such a low-budget. A couple of zombie crowd shots and some particularly disgusting and uncomfortable gore scenes help raise the production value a bit, but overall it’s mostly a two-actor show. Both C. James Roberts and Molly Roberts acquit themselves nicely in performances that are properly

understated during the quieter moments, and they become increasingly committed to their roles as the plot makes greater demands from them.

What sets “2” apart from many other movies with the exact same plot description is its bold willingness to approach the familiar trappings with a creative enthusiasm that generates a genuine sense of audience goodwill. That may seem like a weird way to describe such a bleak-sounding scenario, but it’s a good feeling to trust a movie that seems hell-bent on not succumbing to audience expectations, while at the same time clearly eager to deliver the goods in its own way and at its own pace. It should be noted that “2” isn’t perfect; there are pacing problems here and there, and while Covered in Bees contributes a mostly effective soundtrack, the music occasionally feels out of place—sometimes too emphatic for what’s happening on-screen and at others too eccentric to be proper background score. But these details are minor gripes in the overall scheme of things. For more on the movie, check out its official website here .

{jcomments on}