

Written by Jeremiah Kipp
Sunday, 02 May 2010 07:28



Do any of these titles sound familiar? SNAKES ON A TRAIN? THE DA VINCI TREASURE? PARANORMAL ENTITY? These cheap knockoffs of theatrical blockbusters all came from The Asylum, whose mission has been to create straight-to-video movies capitalizing on the strength of their major-studio “inspirations.” Some of the Asylum gang recently branched out to form Night Light Films, which just had four DVDs hit the shelves via Echo Bridge Entertainment, all for the low price of \$6.99 each.

One could argue that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, but one can't help feeling ripped off after watching one of The Asylum's cheap, flimsily written, generically photographed, barely disguised imitations, mainly because the creative team seems to make no special effort to make their product distinctive on its own. The tradition continues with the Night Light flicks, though since the films they're stealing from aren't embedded in the titles, the viewer has to work a little harder to figure out exactly which one they're lifting from.



THE FEAR CHAMBER is a “driven cop enters the mind of a serial killer” saga, not unlike many of the derivative works inspired by the successes of THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS and RED DRAGON. Nick Ferguson (Rhett Giles) is the detective on the edge, drawn back into a police investigation with great trepidation after being wounded by a diabolical murderer. What tips off the fact that this is an Asylum-style product is a scene directly lifted from SILENCE, where the villain pretends to be a victim (only instead of wearing a cast and trying to lift a heavy chair into a van, it's just a dude in a wheelchair asking for change, luring in his prey through the force of his personality). THE FEAR CHAMBER does make a few tepid attempts at being different from the Thomas Harris adaptations, such as making its protagonist a psychic instead of merely a perceptive investigator, and having the slayer steal body parts from his victims to sell on the black market instead of wearing them Ed Gein-style.

Written by Jeremiah Kipp
Sunday, 02 May 2010 07:28

The performances in the Night Light flicks are of the quality you would expect from a daytime soap opera, which especially undermines PASSED THE DOOR OF DARKNESS—another “chase the serial killer” movie in which an older cop nearing retirement and his younger hothead partner have to jump through hoops to find a criminal mastermind who tricks his victims into committing homicides SAW-style as a way to expunge their secret guilt. DARKNESS re-imagines the characters from SE7EN investigating the Jigsaw crimes in a world that looks less like a dark, bleak Gotham City and more like the world of GENERAL HOSPITAL.

MARKED is a low-key chiller that opens with an entire SWAT team being taken out by an invisible paranormal spirit, followed by a drawn-out and inert narrative about ghost hunters in a rural cabin trying to protect one of their own, who has been targeted by the malevolent spirit. While I couldn't figure out where they specifically lifted the plot, by the point I got to this third offering from Night Light (the fourth is a sci-fi adventure, BATTLE PLANET), utter fatigue and demoralization had set in. My only advice for the consumer is to instead revisit the popular entertainments these movies unsuccessfully pilfer from, or seek out independent low-budget cinema that actually makes an attempt to tell new stories in a compelling way. Whether or not those movies succeed or fail, they at least make an honest try, whereas the Night Light Films have that taint of greed that comes from cashing in on someone else's marketable idea.

ALL THREE: 🚫👤👤👤

{comments on}