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DVD REVIEW: PARANORMAL ACTIVITY
Allan Dart finds out if the film is just as scary for in-home viewing...



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PENANCE (DVD Review)

Ghastly Reviews - DVD & Blu-Ray

Friday, January 01 2010 | 02:03 PM

Marla Newborn



Horror is so huge right now that I feel as if I can safely say that nearly 5-10 of the best boxing movies each weekend are of the horror/thriller/sci-fi genre. SAW II boxed 90 million not to mention the recent success of PARANORMAL ACTIVITY at 104 million. Of course there are different types of horror: the most popular right now being Vampire (TWILIGHT, TRUE BLOOD, VAMPIRE DIARIES, and the soon to be released DAYBREAKERS). **PENANCE**, written and directed Jake Kennedy (DAYS OF DARKNESS), is most recently available on DVD and I will write upfront, if you are into torture, this is your movie.

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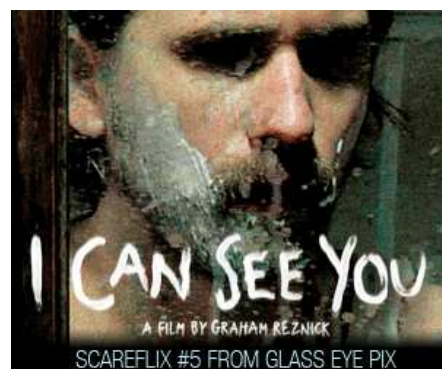
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Struggling to provide for her young child, single mom Amelia (Marieh Delfino of JEEPERS CREEPERS II) grudgingly decides to become a stripper to take care of her young daughter and herself. But her decision proves disastrous when it lands her in the throws of a self-righteous psychotic (Graham McTavish, RAMBO). Our psycho named Jeeves hates strippers, feels it is up him to mend their ways, and therefore in the case of poor Amelia it is a matter of wrong time and wrong place. However she is not alone. She is tossed into a dungeon with other strippers whose fate it is to repent against their stripper sins. So, there is our plot and at least there is a plot and a good one if you can stomach watching torture movies - for PENANCE is less horror than torture. Its heroes are likely the SAW series and Eli Roth's HOSTEL - albeit with a lower budget.



Kennedy ties to mix sex and horror which are the main ingredients of a potentially successful Horror Movie but in PENANCE the sexy stuff dissolves into the torture stuff quite fast. The sex is a literal tease. PENANCE is a torture movie. I mean, come on, our main villain has a "thing" for genital mutilation. I mean how much more can one squirm at the very thought if not while watching the film itself?

What surprised me was my lack of disturbance with the hand held camera. As much as I dislike these supposedly true stories because they are all caught on video as it may be, this one didn't bother me as much as PARANORMAL ACTIVITY. I was a big fan of THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT because in my naïveté, I followed the viral ad campaign and when it was time to go to the theater, I bought it. Oh silly me. But how great for me. Without being jaded about the hand-held-amateur-shaky-camera as I had become by the time PARANORMAL ACTIVITY hit the screen, I thought that those kids were literally lost in the woods with only their video camera left behind to record the events. Not so with PARANORMAL but as I sat down to screen PENANCE, I was sort of numb to the whole formula. Yes, PENANCE is almost 80 percent hand held, shaky-cam and it works. The other 20 percent was the, may I write, old fashioned camera, shooting scenes not covered by whoever was operating that camera. Now we don't know exactly how long Amelia was imprisoned by her captors but I kept thinking the whole time, "Why isn't the battery for the video camera running out?" After a few days if not hours, a battery will die and our heroine certainly didn't go into the dungeon with extra batteries. I promise you I never stopped wondering how director Jake Kennedy



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