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[Basement Jack \(2009\) – New](#)

## [DVD Movie Reviews](#)

By [The Vocabulariast](#) • November 17, 2009



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Basement Jack is a film that takes place in the same universe as Evilution, a great indie zombie flick that I encourage you all to check out. The film owes much of what it is to writer Brian Patrick O'Toole, who has crafted an excellent story this time around. Basement Jack, in addition to having one of the coolest titles in recent memory, is a nice little slasher flick that introduces one of the coolest slasher villains since Laid to Rest's Chrome Skull.

The film is about a killer named Basement Jack. 11 years ago, Basement Jack murdered the family of Karen Cook. He was caught in the process. Now, eleven years later, Basement Jack is loose and killing again. Now Karen is being hunted by Basement Jack, and with the help of an ineffective and largely worthless police department, she must kill him or be killed herself. It's not the most original storyline for a slasher flick, but the character development of Basement Jack is more than enough to make up for the clichéd main plot.

Basement Jack is a story filled with tons of potential. However, Director Michael Shelton doesn't appear to be the man to tell the story. Much of the story revolves around characters, exposition, and background information, but Shelton's inability to make these scenes pop is a fatal flaw within the movie. His set-ups during the character development scenes are lifeless and static. Conversations within the movie are painful to watch, and even though the dialogue within the film could work, Shelton's direction neuters every single line in the film. Actors who are normally capable of delivering solid lines look like incompetent D-level actors in the hands of Shelton, and you have to wonder why some of these scenes weren't given more takes. All of these poorly executed dialogue scenes create huge pacing problems within the film, and it isn't until the film's last act that the movie picks up... when characters stop talking and Basement Jack starts killing.

The cast of the film features many returning actors from Evilution, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. Eric Peter-Kaiser, who was also a producer of the film, is awesome as Basement Jack. He's got a whole Charles Manson/Viggo Mortensen vibe going on, and he is definitely the highlight of the film. Peter-Kaiser seems invested in the character, and there always seems to be something going on behind Basement Jack's eyes, which is more than I can say for most low-budget slashers. Noel Gugliemi, aka Noel G., and Billy Morrison both reprise their presence in the Evilution/Basement Jack universe, albeit in different roles, to play a couple of detectives. While their performances are poorly managed under the direction of Shelton, they still come close to being entertaining. There's even an appearance from everyone's favorite B-movie scream queen Tiffany Shepis.

Unfortunately, none of those people that I listed above are the stars of the film, which is a shame because any one of those folks would have done a better job than the actual leads in this movie. Michele Morrow, who plays Karen Cook, the besieged Basement Jack victim, egregiously over-acts in the film. She's trying way too hard to be good in this role, and a good director would have told her to scale it back a bit. On the flip side of the coin, we have Sam Skoryna, who plays a dim-witted cop who is caught up in Karen Cook's plight. Skoryna doesn't do anything for the film, and the lack of chemistry between Morrow and himself drags the film down to the point that you're constantly waiting impatiently to see Basement Jack again.

One of the best things about Basement Jack really has nothing at all to do with the main plot of the movie. In this film, the writer and the producer introduce the element of the "horror universe" as small elements from their first film *Evilution* pop up in Basement Jack. The apartment building from *Evilution* shows up, along with its crazy and fascinating caretaker, The Manager, played by Nathan Bexton. Bexton, besides Peter-Kaiser's performance as Basement Jack, is the best part of the film. The film may have its flaws, but these brief moments of Bexton are enough to make the film interesting.

Basement Jack features a variety of brutal killings that are unfortunately executed with the use of CGI. Most of the kills are done with slightly above average CGI for a low-budget flick, but it's still fake looking. I'd almost rather have seen the old cutaway technique and rather not see any gore than have to witness CGI machetes magically sliding through humans like butter. Still, the kill factor is nice and the make-up and costume design of Basement Jack is one of the highlights of the film. Reliance on more practical effects would have definitely upped the gore factor of the film, because despite the amount of kills in the movie, they are not totally satisfying as they stand now.

Despite all the film's flaws, I love what producers/writers/stars Brian Patrick O'Toole and Eric Peter-Kaiser are trying to do with *Evilution* and now Basement Jack. The world that they are creating is rich and rife with horror potential. Hopefully their films will find some sort of success, and they will begin to be able to work with larger budgets, which will take care of most of the flaws that pop up in their movies, flaws which are directly attributable to the budget factor. Heart and skill will get you places, but sometimes you need that cash to smooth things out.

I don't want to mislead people, especially low-budget horror fans. The film may only get a four, but as someone who has an appreciation of low-budget horror movies, I would probably give it a six from that standpoint. The "four" on this review is aimed at your typical moviegoer, and not the indie horror enthusiast. Depending on who you are, choose the appropriate score.

**Final Synopsis:** Basement Jack is an ambitious slasher film for a low-budget movie. With a switch in director and the use of practical special effects rather than CGI, it could have been something great. As it is, it's worth watching if you're a low-budget horror fan, but if you typically can't stomach the flaws of low-budget horror films, then you might want to skip this one.

**Points Lost:** -1 for poor direction, -1 for weak performances from a number of actors, -1 for weak CGI kills, -1 for poor pacing

**Bonus Points for the Low-Budget Indie Horror Enthusiast:** +1 for Eric Peter-Kaiser as Basement Jack, +1 for Nathan Bexton's triumphant and mind-enthralling return as The Manger of The Necropolitan

**Lesson Learned:** Machete's can slide into people like hot knives through butter.

**Burning Question:** Why does Basement Jack inexplicably leave Chris alive?

**Basement Jack**

4 or 6 out of 10 depending on what type of movie fan you are.

★★★★★ (2 votes, average: 4 out of 5)

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