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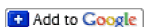
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Mara

[MVD Entertainment Group](#) // Unrated // June 18, 2013**List Price: \$14.95** [Buy now and save at [Amazon](#)] 2 people like this. Be the first of your friends.Review by [Rohit Rao](#) | posted August 2, 2013 | [E-mail the Author](#)

THE MOVIE:

You know how horror movies feature *girl next door* characters that never look like any girl that grew up next door to you? Well, the makers of **Mara** have taken that suspension of disbelief one step further by actually casting a Swedish supermodel in the role. Did I mention that **Mara** was made by 3 guys? Yeah, that explains it.

The film opens in gripping fashion (don't worry, the effect won't last long) as Jenny (Angelica Jansson) sits in a dimly lit room telling a cop exactly how she came to be covered in copious amounts of someone else's blood. We flash back to her being all awkward at a weekend getaway organized by her cousin Cissi (Cecilia Samuelsson). Her awkwardness is easily explained. You see, Cissi invited Jenny under the pretense of hooking her up with Jacob (Martin Brandt) who supposedly had his eye on her. It's weird then that he takes such a strong interest in the super flirty Stina (Emelie Frantz Nilsson).

As Jenny sulks about the house, we come to learn about her tortured past. In a flashback within the flashback, we see Jenny's loony mother punish her philandering father by introducing him to the business end of a knife 54 times. In any case, Jenny snaps out of her funk long enough to take a gratuitous shower before heading to bed. Elsewhere Stina puts the moves on Jacob but before they can get too far, they hear a bump in the night. Jacob goes to investigate and well, let's just say it doesn't end well for him (or anyone else). Jenny wakes up the next morning to a completely empty house...dun dun DUNNNNN! (that was supposed to be ominous music).

Will Jenny ever find out what happened to her friends? Will the cop ever turn on another light in that damn interrogation room? Will she escape the pesty gaze of the probing camera that gently molested her in the shower the previous night? You'll just have to see **Mara** to discover the answers to all these questions before the film is crushed under the weight of its ludicrous double-twist ending. Okay fine...Yes, No, No.

By now, you've hopefully picked up on my distaste for this movie. It honestly feels like the power trio of Fredrik Hedberg, Jacob Kondrup and Ake Gustafsson (who shot, edited, co-produced and co-directed this thing) dreamt up a *Twilight Zone* style short story, deemed its obvious twist ending too obvious (because it is), tacked on a second insanely dumb twist ending (because why not) and then unfurled it at a pace that would make a snail feel good about itself. The film is only 77 minutes long but seems to stretch on forever thanks to a tedious second act that just has Jenny roaming around the house. All tension has bled out of the movie by the time the climax comes around to deliver the deathblow. I'm a fan of twist endings but they have to be clever in order to really work. **Mara** simply tosses a bunch of tired horror tropes at the screen before arriving at a completely arbitrary conclusion.

Other than Angelica Jansson, who shockingly seems to *try*, none of the other performers leave much of an impression. In her film debut, Jansson goes with the flow and does what she can with an underwritten role. Despite the incessantly leering male gaze that follows her throughout the movie, she comes through this with dignity intact. The same can't be said for Kondrup-Hedberg-Gustafsson (as they are credited on the DVD). It's surprising that three directors were required to create such a subpar and frequently boring "thriller". I guess the old adage about too many cooks still holds water.

THE DVD:

Video:

The anamorphic widescreen image, while watchable, suffers from some noticeable issues. Dark shots (which dominate the movie) suffer the most. Shadow detail is lacking while banding pops up here and there. A number of scenes also have heavy grain and are visibly noisy. Brighter scenes fare a bit better as the muted color palette comes through more naturally.

Audio:

The audio is presented in a Swedish 5.1 Surround mix with optional English subtitles. This isn't a terribly immersive mix but it does provide adequate support to the moody score, especially in the early scenes. Dialogue also comes through loud and clear.

Extras:

This release features a surprising number of extras, starting with a lengthy **Behind the Scenes** featurette (1:14:11). This is essentially a video diary maintained by the filmmakers for the week that it took to shoot the movie in Sweden. While extensive, the footage has a slightly awkward tone and point of view. For example, the very first scene presents the filming of Jansson's shower scene. The camera lingers on her body, soaking in every second of nudity. When Jansson's hand accidentally covers up the camera's target, a sharp voice off-screen quickly instructs her to take her hand away. Like I said...awkward. This trend continues as additional footage carefully captures every other scene of female nudity in the film. Just so you don't think the filmmakers have a one track mind, they also cover some difficulties encountered during filming including multiple power outages...before returning to the nude scenes.

A pair of short featurettes are dedicated to the film's female lead. **Casting Mara** (3:55) has the casting director meeting Jansson for the first time and deeming her fit for the role while **Interview with Angelica Jansson** (3:05) give us some face time with the actress at a test screening. She's a genial speaker, giving her general impression of the film and discussing what the hardest scenes were for her to film. A **Trailer** (1:32) closes out the extras while making the film look more interesting than it is.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

Mara is the brainchild of 3 guys who thought it would be a good idea to train their leering camera on a


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Swedish supermodel and have her roam around an empty house. It is being sold as a psychological thriller but barely has any thrills and goes out of its way to insult our collective intelligence with its silly resolution. A competent performance by its female lead (Angelica Jansson) isn't enough to save this one. **Skip It.**

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