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[Haunted Changi \(MVD Visual\)](#)

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“Haunted Changi” jumps on board the found footage bandwagon that’s been rolling mighty fast since the “Blair Witch” epidemic and which has had its momentum maintained by the screaming popularity of the quickly cranked out “Paranormal Activity” trilogy. There are certain pitfalls inherent to the cinema verite conceit. Some films trip all over them. Then there are those films that in which the found footage motif is incidental to the story. Others just ape the established tropes. And some get it right. “Haunted Changi”, for example, gets it mostly right. There is just a mite bit of trope-ishness afoot, but as with any horror subgenre, it can be argued those tropes are staples. The line is fine and sometimes doesn’t

exist. A “Friday the 13th” movie has T&A plus over-the-top murder set pieces. There is a reason horror generally falls under the moniker “exploitation”. This doesn’t invalidate it as art, but that’s not an argument/tangent down which I care to tread in this review. Because this review is about “Haunted Changi” and how it is suspenseful, even scary at times, and spooky in a way that grows steadily throughout the course of the film. This review is about how “Changi”, while being on some counts derivative – and its derivations not all swipes from the cinema verite subgenre – uses its borrowings well and is far less guilty of many, many other horror flicks that just rip off shamelessly, as opposed to conscientiously using what works. You know it works because somebody did it before. How does any good post-”Halloween” or post-”F-13” slasher film work? Because it deftly handles established conventions while giving its own specific stamp of personality on the proceedings. Same here. “Haunted Changi” isn’t afraid to use ideas from elsewhere. Such as the cam shot of someone being dragged into darkness by an unseen force, which I first saw in the blatant “Blair Witch” coattail-rider “The St. Francisville Experiment” (which was actually an OK movie). Or the old, rundown, former asylum/sanitarium/hospital – a trope not specific to the found footage category. [RE: Unseen Force Dragging Victim - I'm giving nothing away since we see this footage near the beginning of the film.] But “Haunted Changi” takes these tricks and does right by them. And thus does right by the audience. “Changi” also brings some fresh ideas into the subgenre rather than just retreading the exact same schtick that’s been done before or relying totally on the found footage conceit and creepy setting to supply all the fear and to hell with story or characters. “Haunted Changi” has both. The characters have very distinct personalities and you feel like they are real people. And the film provides some structure and tweaks to this mode of cinematic storytelling. For one thing, the film doesn’t hang around the old hospital for the rest of the running time once the tale’s young documentary crew first visits the haunted structure. I’d have expected that once the setup was complete and the characters were immersed in the requisite scary setting that it would just go on from there. But, no – there are breaks in the abandoned building creepy cam stuff. More than once we are brought back to the filmmakers’ editing room, where they examine the footage they’ve shot. And each scene shows us the progressive influence of the obviously haunted place on its visitors, even when they are safe at home. (I won’t tell you what kind of influences. That

you’ll have to see unfold for yourself.) Plus, it allows “Changi” to indulge in a little fictional ghost hunter-y stuff. The characters review footage and discover creepy things. It helps set up the tension. And each subsequent visit to the haunted hospital is progressively darker and scarier than the last. In the climactic and final visit, the film closes in with claustrophobic intensity and there are some creative images from the head cam of one of the film crew members being fucked with in a pretty hardcore way by – something off screen. I wouldn’t dare ruin it for you. And the final HOLY SHIT! moment, well, that’s for you to discover, as well. “Haunted Changi” is definitely one of the better representatives of the cinema verite motif, at least among those I’ve seen.

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