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A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

HAUNTED CHANGI

Reviewed by: Ammon Gilbert

Directed by: Andrew Lau

Starring:

Sheena Chung
Farid Azlam
Audi Khalis

Movie: [3 yellow, 3 grey mugs]
DVD: [3 yellow, 3 grey mugs]
Overall: [3 yellow, 3 grey mugs]



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WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

A film crew sets off to make a documentary about Singapore's most haunted location: Changi Hospital. Over the course of a few weeks, they interview the locals, they walk around the old abandoned hospital, all in hopes to catch a glimpse of some supernatural activity. Of course, this is the footage found after they all met their demise, so it's pretty obvious where things go.

IS IT A GOOD MOVIE?

Over the years the "found footage" style of horror film has really become its own sub-genre, starting in 1999 with THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT and catapulting into stardom via PARANORMAL ACTIVITY, QUARANTINE, THE LAST EXORCISM, [REC], and even CLOVERFIELD. While it started off as a gimmick, there's now a whole collection of films that follow this format, and as an audience member, you either love them—or hate them. Or you're like me, and you're pretty much indifferent to them altogether.

But a movie is a movie and I like being entertained—and if I'm getting spooked or scared witless in the process, then all the better. HAUNTED CHANGI is just one of the many recent attempts to pull off the next big thing when it comes to being a low-budget found footage flick, and while it doesn't knock the ball completely out of the park, it still manages to deliver some serious creepy moments—and that's all anyone can ask for these days.

Unlike other found footage flicks, this footage is intertwined with the making of a documentary, much of

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which is already made and cut together. Therefore, most of the film quality is pretty good (documentary style) and more than just a shaky-cam camcorder that some mahoo just picked up and decided recording with. These folks are professional and it shows in the way they use the camera. And while going the route of a "making of" the documentary is a good one, its surprisingly hard to execute, because it feels like half the time they don't know if they're shooting the documentary—or the documentary of the documentary. And while that might not matter in the whole scheme of things, it does make it slightly hard to follow.

And speaking of believability, one of the film's biggest downfall is the actors playing the filmmakers. The cameraman, the sound man, the producer, and the director. They do a *decent* job, but nothing extraordinary, and never good enough to make me believe for a second that this footage could be *real*. They're going the BLAIR WITCH route of a group of kids searching for something supernatural, but unlike BLAIR WITCH, it's apparent these kids are actors and not the real deal.

The biggest flaw of HAUNTED CHANGI is that it took its Q from PARANORMAL ACTIVITY 2 and decided to have a lot of nothing happening throughout the majority of the movie, right up to the very end. Sure, there are a lot of creepy shots of the old hospital covered in graffiti and tons of footage of them walking around said hospital, but does anything actually happen? No. Not until the end. And as it's already running a tad long for a flick like this (85 minutes or so), waiting almost an hour before the supernatural spooks kick in is way too long. But if walking around a dump, abandoned hospital gives you the heebie-jeebies, then you'll be freaking your freak well before the paranormal shit kicks in.

VIDEO / AUDIO

Video: Presented in anamorphic widescreen (1.85:1), the flick looks a lot crisper, cleaner, and professional than it probably should have, especially considering this is your run of the mill low budget found footage flick—they handled it very well!

Audio: Mixed with a 5.1 track, the flick's sound is adequate, nothing more, nothing less. The sound sort of added to the creepiness going on here, but never packed quite the punch it could have if using all the audio channels to their advantage. But again, it's a low budget flick so what the hell are you gonna do?

THE EXTRAS

16mm Archival Footage - Singapore - World War II: a bunch of old footage from World War II, like an old news reel tacked to the beginning of a movie during the good ol' black and white days. The news story focuses on the fall of Singapore and the subsequent Japanese invasion. The footage and narrative feels like the real deal for the most part, making this a pretty cool little featurette, especially if you've never been privy to Singapore's involvement in the war. It also pains quite the picture of the atrocities that took place in Changi Hospital and why it's haunted.

Film Crew Blog Archived: Want to check out the film's official blog but you don't have the internet in front of your face? No worries, you can check out the full blog in pieces here by using your DVD remote to scroll through the pages. Simply providing the URL would have been fine, but if you're at all interested in reading about the making of the film and what happened to the crew members while they were making it, then by all means, check this out. But be warned... there are over 20 blog posts to get through here!

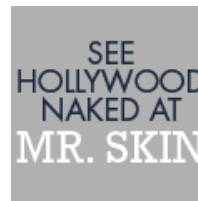
"What Happened to the Crew of Haunted Changi?": This little feature is the first 3 chapters of one of the filmmaker's book, elaborating on their experiences working on the film and what his insights are as to the whereabouts of the crew are today. This is slightly more interesting than the blog posts in the previous feature, but let's face it... it's a lot of reading to do on your TV screen. Maybe a booklet in the DVD case would have been the better way to go about it.

Theatrical Trailer: You guessed it, this here be the film's theatrical trailer!

LAST CALL

Found footage flicks are a dime a dozen these days and HAUNTED CHANGI is more or less just like the lot of them. It wasn't a bad movie—it flows well and there's just enough creepiness to keep you tuned in (save for anything really scary kicking in almost a full hour into it)—but it wasn't above and beyond what we've come to expect in a flick like this. I dug the viral approach to presenting the documentary's blog and journal that's featured within the film as part of the extras, as well as all that old war footage, thus giving the flick more street cred than all the performances put together. If you're a fan of the found footage flicks, you'll dig the creepiness of HAUNTED CHANGI, but if you're not... this is not the flick to convert you.

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