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[Movies](#)
[Television](#)
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[PlayStation Vita](#)
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Kids Go to the Woods... Kids Get Dead

2009

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The slasher film was once a huge part of the horror industry especially during the 80's when it truly began to take off but the problem quickly became that due to its success, every studio was looking for their own take on them even if it resulted in a rather poorly constructed movie. Plot took a backseat to what movie could outdo the other as far as the more graphic kill was concerned and ironically, the slasher ultimately killed itself. There have been many attempts to revive the genre but even those which have been given a huge amount of hype and are turned over to be reviewed by media who seem to love everything have been nothing more than pale attempts to recapture the magic that the slasher once had.

Kids Go to the Woods... Kids Get Dead is a tribute to the slasher films of the 80's, at least that's what the intention is. In the standard approach for the genre the movie centers on a group of teens who go for a weekend of camping . . . well, it's not really camping since they are staying at someone's cabin, but sticking with what is commonly seen, for the most part the names of our soon-to-be victims are hardly memorable aside from Casey (Leah Rudick) since they are going to celebrate her birthday. Of course they are given the general warning when stopping at the local convenience store to buy beer with their fake ID that they should turn around and go home as there is something sinister in the forest but they don't listen. Eventually they find that they should have listened but now it's too late as they are murdered one-by-one and Scott (Andrew Waffenschmidt) realizes that the murders as well as everything that has happened to them follows the plot of a horror novel he's been reading.

Aside from attempting to duplicate slasher films, *Kids Go to the Woods* also tries to bring in the feeling of the old, late night movie which you would generally find airing on some cable channel over the weekend. The movie works in parts where it looks like a videotaped movie complete parts where it is fast-forwarded and we see just a minor part of a commercial break, then return to the hostess, Candy Adams (Carly Goodspeed) who always has some uncreative one-liner before we return to the film.

Like many of the new slashers however, even when they are intending on replicating those of yesteryear, *Kids Go to the Woods* quickly has many flaws. I took some time and really thought about why it is that most of these throwbacks

TOOK SOME TIME AND REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT WHY IT IS THAT MOST OF THESE MLOWBACKS aren't managing to live up to their predecessors and I finally came to the conclusion that they lack a very important element; mythology. In virtually every slasher film from the 80's, there is at least some reasoning on why the killer has turned to murder and thus, there is a little creative background given. In the original *Friday the 13th* we have a mother avenging her dead son which has led to a number of dark rumors surrounding Camp Crystal Lake. This follows up with Jason returning to presumably avenge the death of his mother although from this point forward, the movies never really address why it is that he's alive, at least not in any way that makes sense. With *Halloween* Michael is going back to his childhood home, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* has a family who has embarked on a cannibalistic murder spree for years, Freddy was out to murder the children of those who killed him years before and even the movie *Pieces* at least gives some logical reason on why the killer is hacking up innocent young college students.

Kids Go to the Woods gives no reason at all on why the killer has decided to murder the teens aside from the fact that the movie is following what's in a book. That's not a good enough explanation; there needs to be more to it and most importantly, there needs to be at least a minor reasoning to give the character some type of background. The killer is never given any type of name which makes certain that he won't be as remembers as what Jason, Freddy, or Michael have been over the decades. Even his appearance in the movie is something which is quite uninspired; it's a guy running around in a gas mask which makes me think more of *My Bloody Valentine* than anything else. Then there are the murders, the moment of truth in any slasher, but they end up being rather typical. There aren't any outrageous death scenes that stick out in your mind. A knife across the throat just doesn't stand out in my mind as well as a double impalement performed on two campers have sex or a topless women having a pair of antlers shoved through her breasts.

Instead *Kids Go to the Woods* tries to work in the parts of slasher films which were never intended but became a huge part of virtually every movie. We have teens having sex, drinking, and doing drugs. This led to the movies as being thought of as tales of morality. If you do something immoral you'll meet an untimely death although this was never something which was really intended by the screenwriters. *Kids Go to the Woods* dwells on this a little too much and yet never really reaches the point of being that classic morality story. Even the survivor, Casey, doesn't come across as that wholesome character who we know right from the beginning will be the one who isn't killed. The movie also works in things which just aren't necessary such as the teens playing with a Ouija board and once again being given the message about them dying. In most cases the use of a Ouija board would have a deeper connection to something in the movie but here it seems like an excuse to waste more time. If you look at a movie with a similar idea, *Evil Dead*, messing with the reel-to-reel combined with the Necronomicon means huge problems, and very quickly, but in this case the Ouija board is nothing more than an aside.

The extras found on the disc are pretty standard. There is a behind the scenes feature which I didn't find terribly interesting, a collection of deleted scenes, and then a gag reel (I never find these to be funny.) Also, the trailer is included but overall, it's not terribly impressive.

Kids Go to the Woods... Kids Get Dead isn't the tribute that it wants to be. It genuinely lacks the most important parts of the slasher film and instead tries to work with other ideas that are merely pieces; they don't make it up as a whole. Until screenwriters and directors really sit down and understand just what made the slasher so popular in the 80's and what is lacking in the newer adaptations, there won't be any return to the glory days like so many are anticipating.

-mike-

Directed by:
Michael Hall

Written by:
Michael Hall

Cast:
Leah Rudick
Andrew Waffenschmidt
Joseph Campellone
Carly Goodspeed
Meghan Miller
Eric Carpenter
Amanda Rising
Kevin Shea

DVD Features:
Aspect Ratio: 1.78:1
Audio: English Dolby Digital 2.0
Behind the Scenes
Deleted Scenes
Gag Reel
Trailer

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