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Scream Park

by [Christian Bates-Hardy](#)

Published on 04-19-2014 08:10 AM

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Released by: [Wild Eye Releasing](#)

Released on: March , 2014

Directed by: Cary Hill

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Cast: Nicole Beattie, Nivek Orge, Doug Bradley,
Year: 2013

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The Movie

Funded by a successful Kickstarter campaign, *Scream Park* is a nostalgic throwback to the slasher films of the early 80s, written and directed by first-time filmmaker Cary Hill. *Scream Park* has been getting a lot of good buzz from screenings at Texas Nightmare Weekend and other horror festivals, and it's grabbed the attention of sites like Dread Central and Bloody Disgusting thanks to a heavily promoted cameo from Pinhead himself, Doug Bradley, but does it live up to the hype and carve out its own identity from the old-school slashers it tries to emulate?

The movie opens with a credits sequence that is a direct lift from the opening credits from the first four *Friday the 13th* movies. It's a nice little homage, but the composer of *Scream Park's* opening theme is no Harry Manfredini. After the credits, we're introduced to the staff of the Fright Land amusement park. It's the last day the park is open, and the staff are putting in their final shift before getting together to party after work. When the park finally closes and the party begins, the staff soon realize that they're not alone. It's a standard setup for this kind of film, and that's exactly what Hill is going for.

Scream Park tries to recreate the mood and atmosphere of the early slasher films, and fans of the genre will recognize a lot of references to *Halloween*, and an overall likeness to Tobe Hooper's carnival slasher, *The Funhouse*. The movie gets a lot of mileage out of its setting, filmed on location at Conneaut Lake Park, Pennsylvania. Without the authentic location to shoot in, the movie would look much more low budget, and this becomes obvious whenever the the movie isn't shot around the park. Cary Hill is clearly a fan of old-school slashers, and it shows in the cinematography. The movie uses a lot of long takes with an ominous figure in the distance or in the immediate foreground and frequent jump scares to create tension. It won't rattle any horror fans, but it hits the right beats for the genre.

Scream Park spend the majority of its first act establishing its characters before and introducing its pair of killers and bumping the kids off one by one. Our slashers are a couple of backwoods hicks in masks named Ogre and Iggy (Nivek Orge) that are reminiscent of Michael Myers and Chop-Top, respectively. The design of Ogre is pretty cool. He looks like a hulked-out version of Sam from *Trick R' Treat*. Iggy wears a cheap-looking Plague Doctor's mask for the first few scenes he's in, and then takes his mask off, probably because he talks a lot and the sound of his voice is muffled when he wears it. The

first murder doesn't occur until around the thirty minute mark, and then things pick up from there. Unfortunately, the practical gore effects are cheap, unconvincing, and generally uninspired. A few small highlights include a scalping, and a scene where a girl has her face pushed into a deep fryer while her killer grinds his hips into her, and these only work because of Nivek Ogre's greasy, unhinged performance. Otherwise, the gore has nothing to recommend it and that's really disappointing for a low-budget horror film like this.

For a movie like *Scream Park* to work, which emphasizes atmosphere and tension over gore, you have to care about the characters, and *Scream Park*'s cast of amateurs aren't charismatic or likeable. Even worse, they all seem to have trouble handling their lines. As a result, *Scream Park* is at its best when its in stalk-and-slash mode and nobody is talking. With the exception of Nivek Ogre, who gives his best Bill Moseley impression in the film, and one girl who looks like a young Barbara Crampton (no nudity from her though), none of the cast leave any kind of lasting impression. *Hellraiser*'s Doug Bradley has top billing, but barely makes an appearance in the movie. If you've seen the trailer, then you've seen Bradley's total contribution to the film. Having his name on the DVD case and promo material isn't exactly false advertising, but "*Hellraiser*'s Doug Bradley" is hardly present, and that's bound to upset a few people who contributed to the film's Kickstarter campaign.

Audio/Video/Extras

Scream Park is presented on DVD in 16:9 with an MPEG-2 encode, and looks about what you'd expect for a movie made for just over \$10,000 and shot on digital cameras. Actually, sometimes it looks a little bit worse than you'd expect. The video quality changes drastically from shot to shot. Outdoor scenes mostly feature nice lighting effects, provided by the naturally eerie lighting of the location, but the indoor scenes look like they were shot on prosumer grade equipment in someone's office after hours. It's not quite shot-on-video quality, but *Scream Park* looks like a student film and is nowhere near as polished as the movies it was inspired by.

Sound is Dolby Digital 2.0, and like the video presentation, the audio quality and volume changes from scene to scene. Sometimes dialogue is clear and crisp, in other scenes dialogue sounds like it was recorded in a tin can. Nivek Ogre's dialogue doesn't sound like it was mic'd under his mask, so until he takes the mask off after a few scenes his dialogue is muffled. Sound quality is especially bad during most shot-reverse-shot dialogue sequences, with the two speakers sounding like they were recorded in completely different locations or on different equipment. Again, I wouldn't attribute this to

Wild Eye's audio encode, but rather, the actual sound quality of the movie itself.

Extras include a commentary track with writer/director Cary Hill, a blooper reel, and trailers for Wild Eye releases, including: Scream Park, Final Entries, Mold!, Murder University, Caesar & Otto's Deadly Xmas, Disco Exorcist, and Exhumed. The commentary track is worth listening to only if you like the film and want to learn more about how it was made, how the filmmakers acquired the use of the amusement park, the Kickstarter campaign and more. It's a very unenthusiastic solo recording though, and the commentary could have been improved by including some of the cast or giving Hill someone else to talk to.

The Final Word

Scream Park has a lot of flaws, but it feels unfair to nitpick it to death. It's a crowd-funded slasher made by a first-time director who's an obvious fan of the horror genre. If you're a fan of low budget indie horror, 80s slashers, and homemade fan films, then you might be able to look past Scream Park's shortcomings.

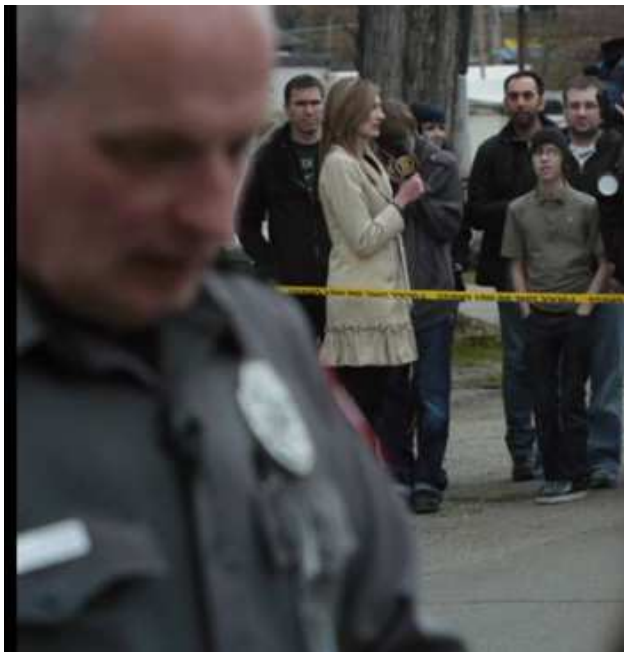












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