



Released by:
Critical Mass

Year of Release:
1974

Running time:
98 min.

Rating:
R

Color format:
Color

Audio / Subtitles:
Dolby Digital 2.0 - English, Dolby Digital Mono - English, Dolby Digital Mono - French, English Subtitles

Region Code:
1, NTSC

Aspect Ratio:
Widescreen

16:9 enhanced?
No

Special Features*:
Audio commentary with director Bob Clark, Audio commentary with actors John Saxon and

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DVD REVIEW

BLACK CHRISTMAS (aka STRANGER IN THE HOUSE) (1974)

Directed by Bob Clark

Reviewed by Nathan D. Pazsint



The perennially under appreciated classic **BLACK CHRISTMAS** finally comes to DVD in a package that can satisfy the fans and give a proper introduction to the uninitiated. Predating **FRIDAY THE 13th** and **HALLOWEEN** by a number of years this Canadian effort is often credited for heralding in the era of

the "teens in peril" film which would result in a virtual landslide of imitators. Although the film's visual style and black gloved killer owes much to its Italian predecessors, it would establish many conventions of its own creating some now classic archetypes and plot mechanisms.

Bob Clark, who would later helm another Christmas classic **A CHRISTMAS STORY** directs this menacing tale of a group of sorority sisters who stay at college during Christmas break only to be picked off one at a time by an unseen killer. Olivia Hussey (**ROMEO & JULIET**) leads the cast as Jessica Bradford, a young co-ed coming to terms with an unplanned pregnancy who unwittingly becomes the recipient of lurid, downright demonic phone calls from the taunting killer. Margot Kidder (**SUPERMAN**) plays a consistently trashed one of her sorority sisters in an early role that seems to bring her limitless amusement, and veteran actor John Saxon comfortably slides into the role of the town detective who leads the charge when the body count starts rising.



The film as a whole carries with it a totally enjoyable sense of experimentation and originality that make even its occasional flaws seem somehow appropriate and comforting. The atmosphere is soaked in dingy 70's shadows and drab colors, making the climatic throws of panic from the female protagonists all the more impacting. I dare you; I double dare you to find any example of cinematic crank calling more terrifying than the ones you'll see in this film. It is as if the filmmakers channeled voices straight

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Keir Dullea, **BLACK CHRISTMAS REVISITED**

documentary, Interviews with Bob Clark and John Saxon, **DARK DREAMERS** episode with John Saxon, TV and radio spots, Alternative title sequences, Picture and poster gallery, Complete original script (DVD-ROM), Press kit and Posters (DVD-ROM)

Trailer online:

No



(* We do not consider trailers, bios or chapter stops to be special features!)

from hell to provide the voice talent. The film clearly deserves its benchmark status and is far more genuinely fright inducing than most of its competitors.

The DVD presentation is fantastic, and although it would have been preferable as anamorphic widescreen, the 1.66:1 letterbox print looks great. As with most films of its budget and era it has its inherent flaws, but in this case they are minimal and in this critic's opinion actual lend a nostalgic touch to the proceedings. Sound is provided through a solid Dolby stereo track, although the viewer also has the option of both English and French mono as well. For those who are familiar with the film the real bargain is in the special features which



include commentary tracks with Bob Clark and actors John Saxon and Keir Dullea, a refreshingly humble yet informative documentary titled **BLACK CHRISTMAS REVISITED**, unabridged interviews with both Bob Clark and John Saxon, as well as an episode of the Canadian

television show **DARK DREAMERS** (as well with John Saxon), and a slew of other goodies the fans will devour. There is no doubt that the folks at Critical Mass lost some sleep working on this release, and boy does it show. This is one DVD that is guaranteed to give you your money's worth and then some.

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(5/8)

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