

CINEMA

Chuckster's back, but we don't know why

Child's Play 2

Alex Vincent and Christine Elise
 directed by John Lafia

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MIKE LONG

Movies

You can't build a good film series on a villain. *Child's Play 2* proves this point yet again. Yeh, yeh, yeh, I know that series such as *Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Friday the 13th*, and *Jaws* have spawned numerous sequels and have made tons of money for their money-hungry producers who don't care what kind of garbage they unleash on an unsuspecting public. But the sequels have never lived up to the quality of the originals, and the movies usually get

worse and more banal as the series grow. The movies are just vehicles for the villain, and the characters are always generic boos for the villain to prey upon. If that's your idea of entertainment, be my guest. I like a little originality in my films. Granted, Chucky the knife-wielding, foul-mouthed doll is an interesting and compelling villain, but he can't carry a series. The audience needs characters it can identify with, people that seem real. If you can identify with a two-dimensional, cardboard cutout of a character, seek professional help. *Child's Play 2* picks up where the original left off. Little Andy (Alex Vincent) has been blamed for the

murders that Chucky committed and placed in an orphanage. His mother is in the psycho ward. Chucky (who died in the first one) is rebuilt by his creators, Play Pals Toys, and brought back to life. No explanation is given for why the Chuckster is still kickin'. Anyway, Andy is adopted by Phil and Joanne Simpson (Gerrit Graham and Jenny Agutter) and befriended by the Simpson's other foster child, Kyle (Christine Elise). Meanwhile, Chucky kills two Play Pals employees and comes after Andy. In case you're unfamiliar with the first film, Chucky is really a mass-murderer who put his soul into a doll. He needs to put his soul into Andy so that he can be human again. If he doesn't, he will be trapped in the doll. The film then dissolves into a series of people getting in Chucky's way and Chucky killing them. Seventy-five minutes into the film, it gets good. By an incredible

twist of fate, Chucky chases Andy and Kyle into the Play Pals Toy factory. The set is painted in bright reds, blues, and greens. There are doll arms and legs hanging everywhere. The set seems like a madman's idea of a toy factory. There is a great suspenseful scene in which Chucky chases Andy and Kyle through an endless maze of identical doll boxes. Unfortunately, the finale becomes the usual "Chucky won't die, do 42 different things to stop him" cycle. Too bad. The highlight of the film is the special effects. FX man Kevin Yagher vastly improves on his work from the original. The new Chucky can walk out in the open (a little person was used in the original) and his dialogue (voice by Brad Durif) is better synched. Chucky can make more faces and looks twice as mean. Yagher's Chucky puppet is a wonderful achievement and it is the best actor

in the film, but it can't save the movie. Director John Lafia co-wrote the first *Child's Play*, and he admits that he is influenced by the likes of Carpenter, Hitchcock, and Raimi. His imitative style is obvious. He does a good job of paying homage to these masters, but he can't match the level of suspense they can create. Hats off to Alex Vincent, who once again does a great job as the boy with the killer doll who can't get any of those close-minded adults to believe his story. *Child's Play 2* is an unnecessary sequel and never should have been made. Chucky was a good, original character, and we don't need a series of second-rate movies to ruin his good name. The special effects are great, but the movie as a whole is boring. Rent the first one if you want to see Chucky in action or sneak in the theater, and watch the last 15 minutes of *Child's Play 2*.

The 'I'm a Pepper, you're a Pepper' guy is baffled

Steel and Lace

David Naughton, Stacy Haiduk,
 Bruce Davison and Clare Wren

directed by Ernest Farino

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JOE BOB BRIGGS

At the Drive-In

The economy must be improving. After seven years of unemployment, my cousin Cletis Tankersley finally got a job. We told him to never give up, even after that humiliating week when the Welfare Department gave him a gold I.D. card. One case worker got so sick of looking at Cletis's face that she would declare triple-stamp week if he would take all his food stamps at once and not come back for three weeks. But that's all over now. After being turned down for employment by every corporation in Texas and every government agency, including the Army, Cletis finally found a place that would take him: The Internal Revenue Service. Cletis is a tax collector — excuse me, an "assistant revenue agent." They must have seen something truly remarkable in Cletis's personality to let him talk on the phone all day to people who owe back taxes, specially since nobody in our family can understand Cletis when he talks. Cletis loves the job, though, because it requires no actual thought. They give you a script to read over the phone that goes like this: "Are you Mrs. Helen Terwilliger?" Then, if she is, you say: "I'm Officer Tankersley of the Internal Revenue Service, and I'm calling to collect the sum of \$8,497 in delinquent taxes." Then they ask what "delinquent" means. "That means you owe it," says Cletis.

This is the moment Cletis likes the most. The person on the other end of the phone either yells at him, or says nothing, or starts crying. "The ones that start crying are the worst," Cletis told me. "What do you say to em?" "I tell em I have to put em on hold till they stop crying." "You put em on hold!?" "It seems to work out." "What happens when they say they don't owe the money?" "I say it don't mean diddley squat, because they've already got letters, they've already got notices, it's too late to appeal — they got to pay up." "What happens when they call you a scum-weasel?" "That's the best part, Joe Bob. I get to charge em with a crime." "What?" "I'm a cop. I get to charge em with threatening a government employee. They can go to Big Tuna Prison for that." "And what if they're nice to you?" "I try to get em to pay out about, oh, three, four hundred a week, sell their car, sell their stereo, stop going out to restaurants, move into a cheaper apartment." "And what if they don't wanna do that?" "I tell em I'm gonna call up their boss and tell the boss to take it out of their paycheck." "Can you do that?" "Yep." "Cletis, do you realize that three weeks ago you were living in a cardboard box, panhandling for quarters, and now you have complete power over people's lives?" "Yep."

"Do you ever ask yourself, 'Why is this woman on the telephone crying like that? What has happened in this woman's life to bring her to this point? Do you ever ask yourself that?'" "Yep." "And what's the answer?" "She don't wanna pay the money. That's why she's crying." "And do you ever think about what might happen when you start calling up people's bosses and telling the boss how much tax they owe?" "Yep." "What might happen?" "The boss might fire em if they don't pay up the money." "Cletis, you ever heard of the somebody having a real excuse why they can't pay?" "Yep." "What is it?" "They're dead." The really strange thing is, Cletis has been like this all his life. We just never knew till now — he was born to work for the government. Trust me, the man'll be in Washington within two years. We're all sooooo proud of him. Speaking of androids, *Steel and Lace* is a new direct-to-video flick that almost slipped by because the title's so stinky you don't know what it's about. But this is actually a killer-robot revenge flick about a blonde transistor-head bimbo in a leather mini-skirt who squeezes her thumbs through one guy's neck, flings a nerd's head through a twirling helicopter blade, drills a hole the size of a bowling ball through a man's chest while kissing him, and plays classical piano in her spare time. The cops are baffled. Of course, the main cop is David Naughton, the "I'm a Pepper, You're a Pepper" guy, and so the cops aren't hard to baffle. Who can possibly stop this ultimate singles-bar robot? (Her eyes say "Yes yes yes," but her electrified steel-reinforced arm says "Is that your inter-

tine I'm feeling?") Only one person can stop her — David Naughton's ex-girlfriend, who had the good sense to dump him. She figures out that all the victims were involved in the same rape trial five years before, and the killer robot looks exactly like the rape victim. Could there be a connection? Naw, I can't give it away. Two breasts. Nine dead bodies. Mixmaster through the chest. Heads roll. Kung Fu. Breast implant Fu. Helicopter Fu. Drive-In Academy Award nominations for Michael Cerveris, as Danny the sleazeball real-estate tycoon, because when he's told

his best friend is dead, he says "So is Elvis — what do you want me to do about it?"; Stacy Haiduk, as the amateur-detective ex-girlfriend courtroom artist, for screaming "I won't castrate my art!"; Bruce Davison, as the maniac brother, for saying "She was dead — they were alive — it simply wasn't fair!"; Ernest Farino, the director, an obvious drive-in talent; and Clare Wren, as the killer robot, for saying "There's only one safe place." Four stars. Joe Bob says check it out. Want more? 1-900-4-JOEBOB.



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