

ENTERTAINMENT

New to Theaters: *Dream House* effective

Michael Dennis '12

Dream House is a good and effective movie, but not in the horror movie sense. No, this film works better as what it fundamentally is, which is a tightly-wound murder mystery.

Dream House is an interesting and well-acted mystery more in the vein of recent movies such as *Secret Window* and *Shutter Island* than it is something like... well, the majority of horror movies released these days. It's nothing particularly noteworthy, but it gets the job done through a well-established atmosphere and solid performances.

The story centers around a big city book editor named Will Atenton (Daniel Craig), who's recently bought a very nice house out in a quaint suburb, away from the city, and has moved there with his family, hoping to write a book. Will has a perfect family, involving a loving wife (Rachel Weisz) who helps raise their two beautiful young daughters. But curiously, the neighbors in the area seem to remain distant from the Atentons, especially across-the-street neighbor Ann Patterson (Naomi Watts). Will soon comes to find out that his new "dream house" was the site of the grisly murder of another family years ago. The murderer was the father, Peter Ward, who then spent years in a mental institution. Soon after, Will's investigation into the murders reveals a truth to him that was supposed to lie dormant.

The big plot twist midway through the film has been blatantly given away by the promotional campaign. However, there is a twist on top of that first twist, so I guess Universal Pictures giving away that first part is slightly forgivable. But



even with knowledge of the twist going into this movie, there's still a palpable and mystery-driven atmosphere that holds your interest.

That atmosphere is attributed to Jim Sheridan and a tight, slightly expository script by David Loucka, who keep both the proceedings and danger immediate, resorting to the clichéd jump-in-your-seat techniques only when necessary. The story is paced well at a brisk 92 minutes and it's fun to piece together the puzzle as everything moves along, but by the end, it all just comes down to the killer-in-the-house climax that we've seen a few too many times. And I thought the motivation behind a certain plot element seemed a bit too overblown.

But the central performances by Craig, Weisz and Watts do carry the movie well and because of them, it's not too difficult to get drawn into everything. Craig especially gets to show off his acting chops, as he expertly alternates between a man seemingly in control of his life and one who's forced to see it come crumbling down before his very eyes. Being James Bond has certainly helped his career. Weisz and Watts both provide good supporting work, easily eliciting sympathy with just a well-placed stare or something else of the like.

While *Dream House* may not be quite the movie you'd expect, the movie it ends up being is still good, interesting, atmospheric. Those who enjoy psychological thrillers should definitely check it out, as well as those looking for another good Daniel Craig movie. This would be a case of execution of material making the actual material a bit better than it should be.

GREEN

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Also good are Peter Sarsgaard and Mark Strong. I liked the dorkiness that Sarsgaard brought to Hector Hammond, as well as the over-the-topness he brings once Hector gets his telekinetic powers. Obviously, this performance is in the same vein as Willem Dafoe's in *Spider-Man*, and just like Dafoe, Sarsgaard (and we) have a lot of fun with his character. Then, Mark Strong is just badass as Sinestro. There's just no other word to describe him. In

fact, he was the character I wanted to see MORE of. C'mon, Green Lantern 2!

The effects were well-done, ESPECIALLY the world of Oa. Oa is just beautiful to look at. I also thought the film's shade of green was awesome, too. Parallax was decent enough, but could've used a bit more work. Most of the time, he just looks like a video game graphic instead of an actual living thing.

And I liked the tone of the film, which is in the vein of *Iron Man*. I liked that this film embraced its comic bookiness and made it work. It LOOKS like

a comic book brought to life. But back to the tone...if the writers had made this too dark/realistic or brooding, it wouldn't have worked as well. Green Lantern is part of a world steeped in sci-fi and fantasy elements, and needs to be handled as such. The filmmakers got that right.

Green Lantern is a good film and definitely shows potential for growth, which is something I hope potential sequels will do. For now, though, this is a solid B-level superhero movie which could just become a good franchise if certain aspects are tightened up.