

'Creepers' has audiences howling

Fans fall to humor instead of horror

BY TOM PREVITE
STAFF WRITER

A movie theater full of laughter was a bad sign.

It wasn't the kind of laughter one gets from campy moments in a horror film, like when a character gets squashed by a two-headed monster driving a truck.

No, the audience laughed during "Jeepers Creepers 2" because the movie was just that terrible.

The plot is standard horror fare: a winged monster (known as The Creeper) awakens to feed for 23 days before it must sleep for 23 years.

On the 23rd day, a group of high school basketball players, cheerleaders and coaches is returning home on a bus after winning the state championship. The Creeper blows out the tires of the bus and kills the coaches, leaving the kids alone to defend themselves from the seemingly invincible monster.

It's far from an Academy Award-winning script, but it sets the stage for a suspenseful, gory flick.

MOVIE REVIEW

"JEEPERS CREEPERS 2"

★

Unfortunately, the movie self-destructs before accomplishing much of anything.

The sheer awkwardness of "Jeepers Creepers 2" left the audience gasping for breath — from laughter. Imagine you're watching a nature documentary about the hunting habits of the hawk, and you'll get a good idea of The Creeper, which plucks humans from the ground like wild mice.

Nothing about that is remotely frightening. What's sad is that you can tell that director Victor Salva wanted The Creeper to be scary.

Salva uses the basic horror soundtrack, full of screeching violins, to emphasize what he believes to be scary.

But the problem is the way Salva depicts The Creeper's attacks. Nothing is happening when suddenly the music chimes in and The Creeper grabs a person



PHOTO COURTESY OF UNITED ARTISTS

Shocked and awed, Tom Tarantini falls to The Creeper, a beast which awakens to feed for 23 days, longer than its film will last in theaters.

and flies off. End of story. It's so brief the entire attack comes off more hokey than terrifying.

Then there's what might be one of the most bizarre scenes ever filmed.

All the members of the team leave the bus at the same time to relieve themselves on the side of the road. Apart from the fact that they stand close enough to hug each other and take about two minutes to finish, one player mocks another by making homosexual jokes in his direction.

It might hold some kind of meaning if the fight didn't sound like grade school name-calling. Now that's dramatic.

Finally, "Jeepers Creepers 2" takes the film industry to a new low

by trying to sound intelligent with a commentary on human instinct.

The argument boils down to the idea that when it comes to survival, the terrible nature of humanity reveals itself. Characters in the movie attempt to sell each other out in an effort to appease the monster.

A noble effort on the film's part, but it's completely trivialized because character development is nonexistent. So what the audience ends up with is "Jeepers Creepers 2," a movie that simultaneously manages to be unscary, strange and pretentious.

And you wonder why the audience laughs.

Contact the A&E Editor at artsdesk@unc.edu.

Freaks at 'Camp' prove irresistible

BY GERALD JOHNSON
STAFF WRITER

The characters in "Camp" are of a special breed, though not necessarily "special" meaning they're freaks, social outcasts or plagued with mental issues — although that's all pretty true.

But these characters aren't just any freaks — they're performance freaks.

They attend Camp Ovation, a summer haven for acting, singing and dance enthusiasts. Stephen Sondheim is their god and his endless collection of Broadway standards their Bible.

The movie's centerpiece is Vlad (Daniel Letterle), a doe-eyed guy with a guitar and a way with the ladies ... and fellas?

Vlad moves from sleeping with the blonde camp prima donna Jill (Alanna Allen) to courting the shy, talented Ellen (Joanna Chilcoat). His flirtatious personality even has Michael (Robin de Jesus), his gay roommate with a penchant for cross-dressing, developing a crush on him.

The ambiguity of Vlad's sexuality throughout the film serves as a reminder of what we should be focusing on anyway: the music.

Every two weeks, the kids perform show tunes onstage, and the film boasts a few remarkable numbers.

Often the musical performances best allow the characters to come alive and express who they are.

One comes from Fritzi (Anna Kendrick), a one-time servant of Jill who later exacts her revenge by psychotically stealing the performance of "The Ladies Who Lunch." The timid pushover transforms into a trash-talking diva with such ease that it seems being a bitch was her true calling all



PHOTO COURTESY OF IFC FILMS

Daniel Letterle plays the resident playboy, Vlad, at Camp Ovation, where "freaks" find themselves and lives are forever changed.

MOVIE REVIEW

"CAMP"

★★★★

along.

Another moment comes from Tiffany Taylor, whose performance unexpectedly elicits goose bumps and nearly tears with a dramatic rendition of "Here's Where I Stand." The overweight girl uses the ode to unconditional love and acceptance to confront her parents, who had her mouth wired shut.

As is to be expected with a first-time director, Todd Graff's dialogue and jokes are often clumsy, the story lines cliché and the acting amateurish.

For example, the story overlooks Tiffany's struggle, until it finally gives up and lets her break out of her shell with a voice that transcends the stifling boundaries of the script.

Having every character suffer from some personal problem predictably leads to formulaic melodrama and stereotypical portrayals of both theater actors and homosexuals.

Basically, everyone is depicted as an eccentric social misfit. But the movie never stoops to belittling them; rather, they are celebrated.

Maybe it's because Graff realizes that the thing with teenagers is that they're imperfect. They are awkward, weird and clumsy. They make mistakes; you can see their blemishes.

But despite their shortcomings, they share an uncontaminated innocence and naive enthusiasm for life that somehow override all the geekiness and render them disturbingly irresistible.

The same can be said about the kids at Camp Ovation, as well as the film itself.

Contact the A&E Editor at artsdesk@unc.edu.

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