

Blu-Ray Review: ‘A Nightmare on Elm Street’ Remake Fails Completely

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 7, 2010 - 3:59pm

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CHICAGO – The irony of Samuel Bayer’s remake of the Wes Craven classic, “A Nightmare on Elm Street,” is that most viewers will have more trouble staying awake than combatting actual fear. The saddest thing about this failed effort is that it could tarnish the reputation of Wes Craven’s brilliant original for a new generation. Ignore the new film. Just go rent the original.



Television Rating: **1.0/5.0**

Of course, that sounds clichéd and something that critics say about remakes far too often (although my recent 5-star review of “Let Me In” should make clear that I don’t believe all remakes to be worthless), but Bayer’s “A Nightmare on Elm Street” fails even if you ignore all comparisons to the first film. In fact, it fails in comparison to most of the awful sequels and a majority of the films inspired by Craven’s tale of Freddy Krueger. We don’t need comparisons to illustrate why the new “Nightmare” simply doesn’t work — it’s not scary, it’s poorly directed and horribly edited, the cast and their characters are forgettable at best, and the script is straight-up awful.



A Nightmare on Elm Street was released on Blu-ray and DVD on October 5th, 2010

Photo credit: MPI/IFC

Writers Wesley Strick and Eric Heisserer work from a script only loosely based on the original film. In fact, the new movie only bears a “characters based on” credit and picks up in full Freddy mode with the death of a teenager (Kellan Lutz of “The Twilight Saga: Eclipse”) in a diner. The man with the striped sweater and clawed hand has returned. He’s back to take the lives of the children who accused the human Freddy of child abuse before being burned alive.



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Photo credit: MPI/IFC

Jackie Earle Haley steps into the role made famous by Robert Englund and he uses much of the same ferocious energy he brought Rorschach in "Watchmen" but his performance is buried under some of the most poorly-designed makeup in years. The reimagined Freddy looks more like an alien than a burn victim. And he's buried even further by over-used genre camera and sound effects to the point that it's impossible to truly assess Haley's performance, a shame because he's typically such a strong actor without the cinematic clutter.

Freddy works his way through Kris Fowles (Katie Cassidy), Jesse Braun (Thomas Dekker), Quentin Smith (Kyle Gallner), and Nancy Holbrook (Rooney Mara, currently delivering a great performance in "The Social Network"), but none of the victims develop any personality at all. They essentially have one-word character descriptions that pass as development in Strick and Heisserer's script. Horror films regularly feature characters that serve little purpose beyond being victims for the big bad but rarely has one been populated entirely with such characters. Still, even through all of it, one can see the potential in Mara (who was recently tapped to star in David Fincher's "The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo"). The same can not be said for the awful Gallner and Dekker.

I know — who cares about performances and character in a remake of "A Nightmare on Elm Street"? You just want the movie to be scary enough for your date to jump into your lap on Blu-ray date night. That's unlikely. None of the horror scenes are well-staged enough to be scary. Bayer brings way too much of his music video background (making great clips for Garbage, Metallica, and The Smashing Pumpkins) to this material. The whole thing has the sheen and over-effects of a music video and there's never been an MTV clip that would be effectively scary for 90 minutes (except for maybe Justin Bieber).

The dream sequences are cut together so poorly that impossible to tell what's going on that you're even supposed to be scared by. Close-ups of Freddy's face and claws are intercut with loud music and a jump cut as the team behind this "Nightmare" have tried to pull the wisecracking humor from the franchise but left nothing in its place. A boring teenager falls asleep, the next five minutes look like a Metallica video, repeat.

Despite the failure of "A Nightmare on Elm Street," the film admittedly has a strong HD transfer on Blu-ray, as Warner Bros. continues to be at the forefront of this technology. Their HD video is simply the best of any of the major companies today. As for special features, they're pretty scant with just a few deleted scenes (including an alternate opening and ending), some picture-in-picture details, and a brief making-of featurette.

"A Nightmare on Elm Street" stars Jackie Earle Haley, Katie Cassidy, Kyle Gallner, Rooney Mara, Thomas Dekker, and Kellan Lutz. It was written by Wesley Strick and Eric Heisserer and directed by Samuel Bayer. Available on Blu-ray Combo Pack, DVD, On Demand and for Download 10/5! Check out the [official site](#) [15] to get your own copy.

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