

Blu-Ray Review: Disappointing Return of ‘Paranormal Activity 2’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 18, 2011 - 12:28pm

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CHICAGO – There’s something that horror movie producers never seem capable of understanding. A great horror movie is like watching a magic trick. It doesn’t work nearly as well the second time. The sequels to “Saw,” “The Blair Witch Project,” and now “Paranormal Activity,” are not that dissimilar from watching the same rabbit come out of the same hat with nothing much different than a new colored bandana around its neck. “Paranormal Activity 2” has moments but doesn’t amount to nearly the same overall experience as the first.

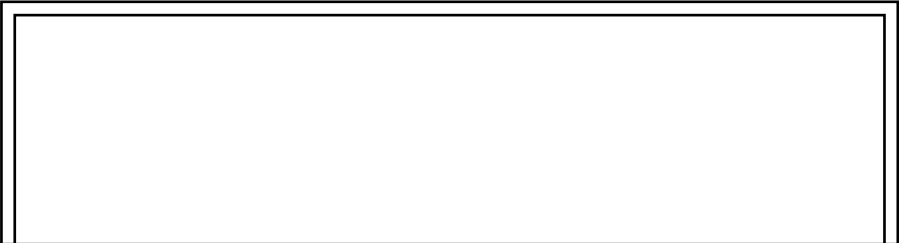


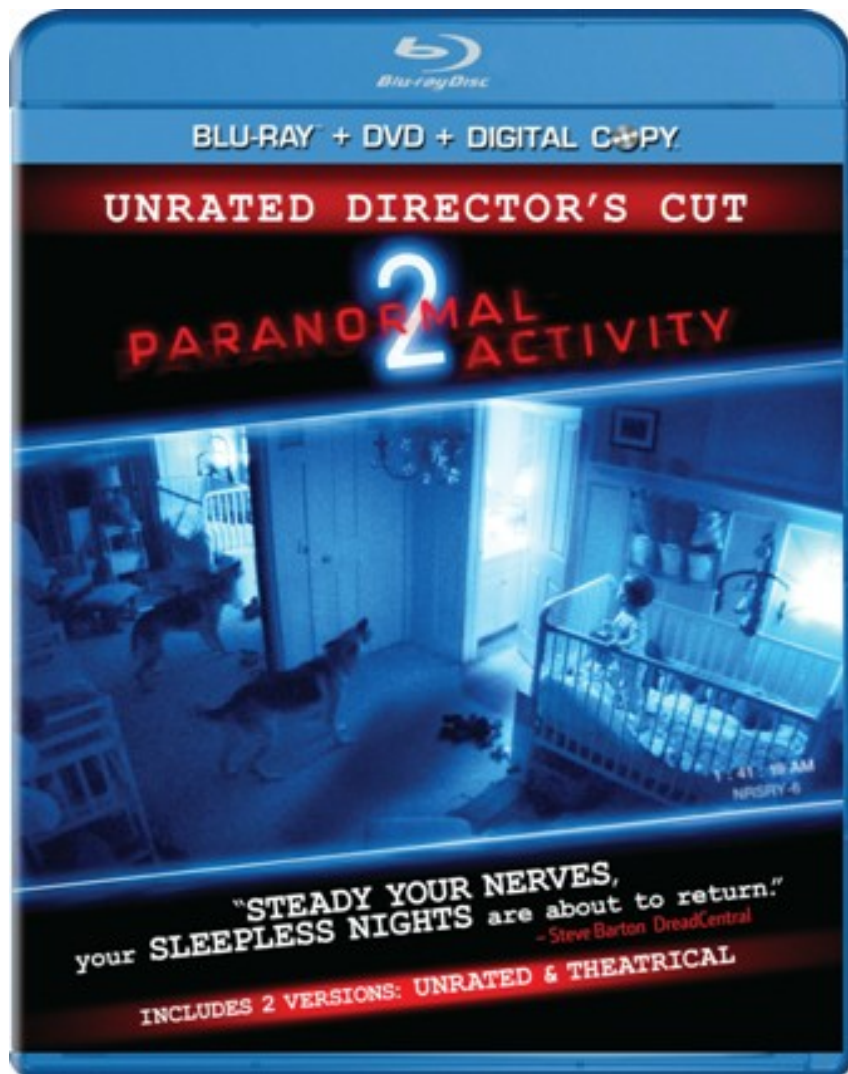
The most clever thing about “Paranormal Activity 2” is the fact that director Tod Williams (“The Door in the Floor”) and writers Michael R. Perry and Christopher Landon and Tom Pabst don’t make the mistake of trying to replicate the success of the original with a completely new house, cast, and haunting. Cleverly, they turn to the prequel, making a film that actually serves as a nifty bookend for the first movie.



Paranormal Activity 2 was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on February 8th, 2011
Photo credit: Paramount Home Video

If you saw the first movie (and I don’t know why on Earth you would see the second without having done so), you know that it was about an average couple (Katie Featherston & Micah Sloat) facing a demonic haunting. It ended with the death of Micah after Katie appeared to be possessed.





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Photo credit: Paramount Home Video

The sequel flashes back to reveal that Katie wasn't the first haunted member of her family, introducing us to her sister Kristi (Sprague Grayden), her husband Daniel (Brian Boland), stepdaughter Ali (Molly Ephraim), and baby Hunter (William Juan & Jackson Xenia Prieto). Shortly after moving into a new house, they return home to find it vandalized and so install cameras throughout the house, the main delivery system for the scares. Over the next several weeks, the supernatural activity increases in the home until, once again, a woman is being dragged down the stairs by unseen forces.

The cast of "Paranormal Activity 2" is effective and the concept is clever (especially in the final act), but the film is just not as scary as the original in any way, largely because not only have we seen these tricks before but they don't seem as believable. Great horror movies take you along for the ride. Mediocre ones have you asking questions like "Why did they install cameras and rarely watch the tapes?" "Why would dad leave at such a crucial moment for ANYTHING?" "Why isn't this as scary as last time?" Overall, the action doesn't feel as genuine as the first time. Never once do these people come off as anything more than actors pushed into a surveillance camera structure instead of the clever set-up of the first film.

Part of the problem comes with the extended edition of the film on Blu-ray, the only one I've seen. I checked and it seems clear that what was extended hurt the pace of the film I saw, leading one to remember yet again that just because there are deleted scenes does not mean they should be reinserted into the film. Maybe they were deleted for a reason?

"Paranormal Activity 2" isn't nearly as loathsome as "The Blair Witch Project 2" or all of the "Saw" sequels, but it's still a surprising disappointment. As the "Saw" franchise seems to be sputtering down to a point where it's supposedly over, it looks like "Paranormal" is going to take over the "annual Halloween sequel" spot. Let's hope they come up with a better magic trick for round three.

Special Features:

- o Found Footage
- o Digital Copy

"Paranormal Activity 2" stars Sprague Grayden, Brian Boland, Molly Ephraim, and Katie Featherston. It was written by Michael R. Perry and Christopher Landon and Tom Pabst. It was directed by Tod Williams. It was released on Blu-ray and DVD on February 8th, 2011. It is unrated and runs 98 minutes.



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