

DVD Review: World of Nightmares on Display in Effective ‘Heartless’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 22, 2011 - 3:26pm

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CHICAGO – “Heartless” is a Faustian nightmare, a story of a man who sees behind the curtain of the real world to the creatures of chaos that really run it. It’s a surprisingly riveting and accomplished piece of work, bursting at the seams with attitude and ideas. Many films have attempted to recreate a truly terrifying night vision but “Heartless” finds that dark place between the waking world and that of our worst dreams to become something that deserves (and probably will find on DVD) a wider audience.

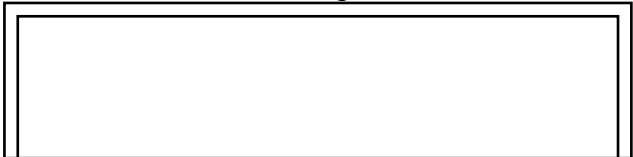


“Love can never be eternal. Only suffering can be eternal.” There have been films made about selling your soul to the devil and finding something much worse than you can even imagine in return but few have been as brazenly bizarre as “Heartless,” a film that starts with visions of hooded creatures and eventually gets to the point where a talking disembodied head is being eaten. At its best, “Heartless” reminds one of Dario Argento’s work in the way its creators are willing to play with ideas, themes, and concepts more than literal plotlines or characters. The film works best when it is defiantly open to interpretation, whether our protagonist is self-immolating to enter his deal with the devil or speaking to an imaginary Indian girl. It doesn’t need to “make sense” as long as it’s this thematically rich.



Heartless was released on DVD on April 12th, 2011
Photo credit: IFC

Said protagonist is a photographer named Jamie Morgan (Jim Sturgess) with a massive heart-shaped birthmark on his face and arm. His disfigurement has clearly made him a lonely soul and he wanders the streets of London looking for a good shot late at night. He stumbles upon a dark, dangerous world led by Papa B. (Joseph Mawle), a clear stand-in for Satan himself. After his mother (Ruth Sheen) is murdered by the creatures he saw in the middle of the night, Jamie plans to kill himself but he’s pulled from the brink by Papa B., who promises to heal his birthmark in exchange for a few favors.





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Photo credit: IFC

Jamie finds himself happy and even in love (with the beautiful Clemence Poesy of "127 Hours") but happiness comes with a price that is called in when the "Weapons Man" (a perfect Eddie Marsan) shows up on his doorstep and tells him he'll have to kill someone to keep chaos alive. He starts with a male prostitute but the stakes get significantly higher in the final act.

"Heartless" isn't perfect — it drags a bit and takes some time building up steam, but there are some striking moments in the film that should keep horror fans riveted. I like what director Phillip Ridley visually and conceptually brings to the film more than the lead work by Sturgess ("Across the Universe," "21"), an actor who often comes off as less than believable. He's not bad here but not ideally cast either. And the end of the film needed a bit of work, even if it does feature some powerful imagery.

Movies like "Heartless" have a hell of a time finding an audience in the States. They're too dark to get a wide theatrical release and not indie enough for the art house scene. It's a perfect film for DVD, where genre fans will surely find it and many will embrace it. This is not your typical straight-to-DVD horror crap. It's just something that fell through the cracks on its way overseas. You'll be happy if you take the time to find it.

Special Features:

- o Making Of
- o Behind the Scenes
- o BIFA Awards Footage
- o Heartless Audience Reactions
- o Jim Sturgess Music Video "Heartless" Live
- o Jim Sturgess Music Video "Other Me" Live
- o UK Trailer
- o US Trailer

"Heartless" stars Jim Sturgess, Clemence Poesy, Joseph Mawle, Ruth Sheen, Eddie Marsan, and Timothy Spall. It was written and directed by Phillip Ridley. It was released on DVD on April 12th, 2011 and is rated R.



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