

## Blu-Ray Review: 'Beastly' Fails on Every Conceivable Level

Submitted by [mattmovieman](#) [1] on July 6, 2011 - 1:20pm

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CHICAGO – What higher power in Hollywood decided that Alex Pettyfer should be allowed to have a film career? His “Alex Rider: Operation Stormbreaker” didn’t exactly set the world on fire, nor did “I Am Number Four.” He has the name of a Bond girl and the emotional range of Miley Cyrus. And yet, the dude is still considered bankable, purely because of his good looks. Apparently it’s more important to look like a movie star than to act like one.

Such Hollywood hypocrisy makes a tween weepie like “Beastly” all the more hideous. Here’s a film that clearly doesn’t believe in the message it preaches. Though the screenplay (based on Alex Flinn’s novel) champions inner beauty, the cast consists of actors who obviously haven’t been chosen for their personality. The filmmakers expect their audience to heed the fable’s cautionary message even if they don’t. You know there’s a problem with a modern retelling of “Beauty and the Beast” when even the beast is drop-dead gorgeous



Blu-Ray Rating: **1.0/5.0**

The film’s typical level of subtlety is sampled right at the top, as a shirtless Pettyfer ogles himself in the mirror while exercising to Lady Gaga’s “Vanity.” He plays Kyle, the smug king of his high school, which looks curiously like a corporate plaza. His popularity is so tremendous that his fellow peers carry signs in the shape of his vain mug. But the script from writer-director Daniel Barnz (“Phoebe in Wonderland”) wastes no time in revealing that Kyle’s father (Peter Krause) is a loveless jerk who spends every waking moment on the phone. This guy isn’t just distracted—he’s deeply deranged. When his blonde prettyboy of a son shows up at home bald, scarred and covered in doodles, the only reaction this man can muster is a vaguely perplexed, “...Kyle?” In short, he doesn’t react. In fact, no one does. Not even Kyle looks appropriately astonished after gazing at the new face given to him by a wronged teenage witch (Mary-Kate Olsen), the butt of his latest cruel, “Carrie”-like prank. Fans of the oft-told tale know the drill: Kyle will remain a beast until he undergoes an internal transformation that allows him to win the heart of a girl. The only problem is that Kyle could hardly be defined as “beastly.” He just looks like a Goth guy who’s spent one too many hours at the henna tattoo parlor. Perhaps the witch forgot that a toned body will always attract a fair maiden, no matter how many thorny vines you paste on it.



Vanessa Hudgens and Alex Pettyfer star in Daniel Barnz’s *Beastly*.

*Photo credit: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment*

The makeup slapped on Pettyfer’s face is such a moronic distraction that it derails the picture instantly. This gives “High School Musical”

alumnus Vanessa Hudgens very few chances to leave an impression as Kyle's sought-after love interest, Lindy. Like many young starlets tutored by Disney, Hudgens has a naturally sunny disposition. Her tendency to break out into a toothy grin might work in lightweight fare, but here just functions as filler for a tangible performance. She's nearly always smiling, even while unconscious. The few moments she's called on to emote feel painfully forced. Viewers may find themselves envisioning the scripted beats in her self-conscious dialogue as Lindy whines about the numerous things she hates until she realizes, "I just hate...hating." That line gets nearly as big of a guffaw as the text message sent by her father, whose criminal misdeeds have endangered the life of his daughter. He attempts to put Lindy's mind at ease by typing, "pls come home u r safe."

Yet these "so-bad-it's-funny" moments are few and far between. The film is mostly just plain dull. Lindy is immediately attracted to Kyle, thus diluting the plot of any potential suspense. Plus, the pampered douche is under the constant guidance and care of a blind tutor (Neil Patrick Harris, phoning it in) and a Jamaican maid (Lisa Gay Hamilton), who are allowed far fewer human dimensions than the talking silverware in Disney's "Beauty and the Beast." The message conveyed in Harris's weary eyes can best be articulated by this gem of a scripted quip, delivered by the ever-quippy Lindy: "It's lame-core, I know..."



Beastly was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on June 28, 2011.

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

'Beastly' is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 2.35:1 aspect ratio), and includes a few brief extras that do little more than solidify the film's awfulness. To be fair, Barnz does seem genuinely honest in a 10-minute making-of featurette as he reminisces about his high school years: "There were things that made me different and you learn to value that difference." He clearly had the best of intentions, and Lord knows the road to hell is paved with them. Pettyfer's soundbites are somewhat less enlightening, particularly when he attempts to highlight the beauty in life that is so consistently overlooked, such as, "birds singing in the trees and feeling rain." Seriously? The most interesting extra is the 5-minute featurette on special makeup designer Tony Gardner's misguided approach to envisioning a teenage beast. The three-and-a-half hours of prosthetics applied daily to Pettyfer's face were meant to represent all the things (tattoos, piercings, etc.) Kyle had ridiculed on the faces of others, allowing his abuse to be thrust back on him. Though the idea may sound intriguing on paper, it looks laughable onscreen. Gardner said he wanted his designs to be grounded in realism, yet why bother when the rest of the film is so fantastical?

Rounding out the extras are a music video from Kristina & The Dolls as well as 15 minutes of deleted footage. A profoundly stupid alternate ending allows the film's insipid subplot involving a menacing gunman to finally pay off. Pettyfer's acting here is borderline unwatchable. When he gets shot through the chest, he acts as if he's stubbed his toe. When he tries to cry, he looks like he's sucked on a sour lemon. And when he delivers the final (admittedly atrocious) line, "You look so beautiful—on the inside!" to an externally beautiful Hudgens, he appears to be mocking the film's entire message. As for the other alternate scenes, my favorite has got to be the one that was meant to follow Lindy's line, "I've seen worse," which she delivers after seeing Kyle's gothicized face for the first time. Instead of pumping his fists (as he does in the final cut), Kyle climbs a tower and shouts, "She's Seen Worse!" I'm surprised he didn't sprout a red nose and sail toward the heavens squealing, "She says I'm cuuute!"

*'Beastly' is released by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment and stars Alex Pettyfer, Vanessa Hudgens, Mary-Kate Olsen, Neil Patrick Harris, Lisa Gay Hamilton and Peter Krause. It was written and directed by Daniel Barnz. It was released on June 28, 2011. It is rated PG-13.*

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