

Blu-ray Review: 'Trespass' Held Hostage By Shrill Drama, Shallow Clichés

Submitted by [mattmovieman](#) [1] on November 9, 2011 - 8:13am

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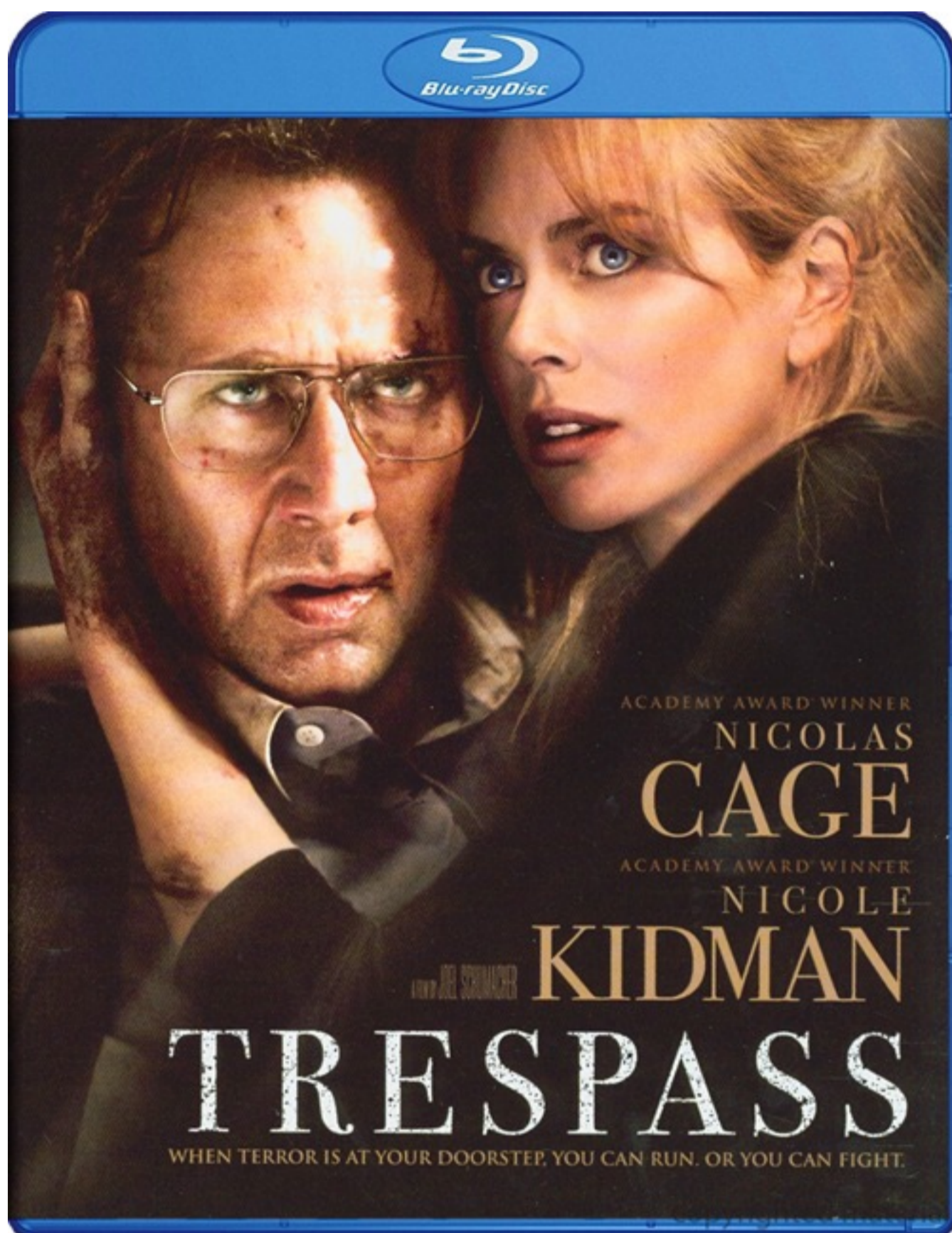
CHICAGO – Few Oscar-winning actors have made as many bad movies as Nicolas Cage. His cinematic bombs have become so numerous that one could easily mistake him for a bad actor. Yet that is hardly the case. In fact, his vast number of outrageous gambles outweighs his list of easy paychecks. He's a performer clearly unafraid of falling flat on his face.

Consider Cage's work in 1988's cult favorite "Vampire's Kiss" or Werner Herzog's marvelously loony 2009 effort, "The Bad Lieutenant: Port of Call New Orleans." In both pictures, Cage's performance is so bizarre, so risky, so go-for-broke loony that it takes on a sort of grandeur, thus transcending the routine subject matter. When Cage glides on autopilot through a routine blockbuster, he's a bore. But when he's given the opportunity to explore a character's warped psyche, there's no one more entertaining on the planet.



Blu-ray Rating: **1.5/5.0**

I mention this because Joel Schumacher's "Trespass" is the sort of bargain-basement vehicle that could've easily been redeemed by an unrestrained Cage portrayal. As a businessman whose opulent home is invaded by a quartet of masked crooks, Cage can't restrain his motormouth attempts at negotiations, even as guns are repeatedly pointed at heads of his wife (Nicole Kidman) and daughter (Liana Liberato). He's so desperate to strike a bargain with the thieves that he rambles on and on about the etymology of his prized diamonds until his dialogue reaches a point of absurdity. Too bad Schumacher doesn't appear to be in on the joke. Instead, he devotes far too much screen time to the family's mustached captor, played by a sour Ben Mendelsohn (of "Animal Kingdom" fame) in the role that Cage reportedly wanted (go figure). It's not long before the film devolves into a headache-inducing cry-a-thon where dim characters make dumb decisions and then wail about it. No wonder it took just eighteen days for this \$35 million misfire to arrive on Blu-ray and DVD after earning a pitiful \$24,904 during its limited theatrical release.



Trespass was released on Blu-ray and DVD on Nov. 1, 2011.

Photo credit: Millennium Entertainment

There's frankly little worth analyzing in this instantly forgettable direct-to-video fare, apart from its criminal waste of talent. Whatever possessed Kidman to take on such a thankless role after her Oscar-nominated comeback in "Rabbit Hole" remains a mystery more tantalizing than any of the twisty backstories staged in uninspired flashbacks by Karl Gajdusek's dud of a script. It's depressing to watch a young actress as exponentially gifted as Liberato stuck with undeliverable dialogue like, "Mom's being arbitrary and inflexible!" Few moviegoers saw "Trust," Liberato's other film released by Millennium Entertainment, in which she delivered one of the year's very best performances as a girl targeted by an online predator. She is capable of conveying raw and naturalistic emotion onscreen, and does so here. But she also proves her range in "Trespass" by playing a youthful teen entirely unlike her naïve victim in "Trust." Her character has a solid head on her shoulders, and can sneak off to a party without falling prey to the sleazy advances of strangers. Liberato's performance is the sole bright spot of this film, but that barely matters since she's also sidelined by the increasingly annoying plot contrivances.

One of the first major red flags emerges when the burglars break in by pulling the same prank as Marv and Harry in "Home Alone." Later on, Liberato outwits the whiniest of the villains by tempting her with Vicodin and then hurling her into the bathroom mirror. It's enough to make Moe, Larry and Curly slap their collective heads. This may sound like silly hokum, but "Trespass" is far from light escapism. Schumacher's lack of skillful suspense makes the unpleasantness of the family's plight all the more repellant. He also has an odd tendency to splice inexplicable whip pans between shots—the kind that are often inserted between unfunny setups and punchlines in comedy trailers. Perhaps Schumacher thought they would increase the tension, but all they do is add to the viewer's frustrated detachment. In the end, "Trespass" leaves us to ponder why so many filmmakers are drawn to the home invasion thriller sub-genre. They're no fun for the actors, and certainly no fun for the audience.

"Trespass" is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 2.40:1 aspect ratio), and includes a mere five-minute soundbite reel of cast and crew interviews. Schumacher says that it was his intention to make a film about two families whose penchant for "overreaching" has caused them to become hostages in a society that "encourages people to overreach." Schumacher's tendency to overreach has also been his downfall in the past, but in this case, he doesn't reach far enough. He allows his cast to become a hostage of the cliché-ridden plot while failing to push the material in any interesting direction. The only thing worth viewing on this disc would've been the nonexistent gag reel. One can only imagine what sort of hilarious pratfalls took place in between all the shrill on-camera blubbing.

'Trespass' is released by Millennium Entertainment and stars Nicolas Cage, Nicole Kidman, Ben Mendelsohn, Liana Liberato, Cam Gigandet, Jordana Spiro and Dash Mihok. It was written by Karl Gajdusek and directed by Joel Schumacher. It was released on Nov. 1, 2011. It is rated R.



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