

Film Review: Elizabeth Olsen Takes Misguided Trip to ‘Silent House’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on March 9, 2012 - 2:54pm

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Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Elizabeth Olsen does her damned best to save “Silent House” from itself but this quasi-thriller collapses under the weight of a script that just doesn’t work. It’s one of those horror movies with no internal logic and camera tricks as ways to heighten tension instead of anything that feels remotely genuine. The trip through “Silent House” starts promisingly but you’ll be running for the doors before it ends.

The trick behind “Silent House” is a relatively clever one. The story is told in one take, never leaving the location of its female protagonist, a clearly troubled girl named Sarah (Olsen) who is helping pack up an old house with her father John (Adam Trese) and her uncle Peter (Eric Sheffer Stevens). There are some obvious cuts (like when it gets pitch black, door transitions, or running scenes) but the film is an impressive technical accomplishment until one realizes that it’s almost all style and no substance. When “Silent House” is over, ask yourself if it would have worked without the one-shot trick. The answer is no and the film needed to exist on its own as a strong horror thriller and then had the technique employed to amplify its themes instead of the other way around.



[Read Brian Tallerico’s full review of “Silent House” in our reviews section.](#) [10]

After a long set-up that feels designed to basically just stretch the running time instead of actually enhancing the mood (Ti West knows how to do “slow burn” with his films like “House of the Devil” and “The Innkeepers”...this is more like “delayed start”), Sarah hears a knock at the door and meets a mysterious girl named Sophia (Julia Taylor Ross) who claims to have known her as a child. The two have an unusual conversation and promise to meet up later. When Sarah goes back inside, she hears a noise upstairs when she knows her dad isn’t up there. Since this is a vacation home that is about to be sold, the house has been heavily boarded up and padlocked to avoid squatters, adding to the sense of claustrophobia.

Sarah and her father slowly travel upstairs with lanterns (there’s no electricity either) to investigate. They don’t hear anything but John finds some Polaroids that startle him. He quickly hides them and Sarah goes to her room to start packing. She hears dad walk down the hall and then a loud sound like a body hitting the floor. This is the most effective moment in the film as we only know what Sarah does at this moment – she’s already scared from what came before and now this loud sound. She hesitantly leaves and tries to figure what’s going on. Before long, she’s being hunted by what first seems like a “Strangers”-esque home invasion but soon becomes something much more unusual.



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“Silent House” stars Elizabeth Olsen, Adam Trese, Eric Sheffer Stevens, and Julia Taylor Ross. It was written by Laura Lau and directed by Lau & Chris Kentis. It is rated R and was released on March 9th, 2012.



Silent House

Photo credit: Open Road

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