

Blu-ray Review: Roman Polanski's 'Carnage' with Jodie Foster Just Misses

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on March 27, 2012 - 11:01am

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CHICAGO – Why doesn't "Carnage" live up to its pedigree? With a certified genius like Roman Polanski behind the camera, a Pulitzer Prize-winning play as its source, and a cast in which three of the only four roles are played by actors who have won Oscars, one might have expected this to be a creative home run. It's not. It's a decent rental and there are some strong performances, but it's not quite what it should have been. And a mediocre Blu-ray release from Sony does nothing to change that opinion.



Blu-ray Rating: **3.5/5.0**

Penelope and Michael Longstreet (Jodie Foster & John C. Reilly) are in a socially awkward position. Their son has been assaulted and they have invited the abuser's parents, Nancy and Alan Cowan (Kate Winslet & Christoph Waltz), over to discuss the incident. As they cordially converse over cobbler, social and moral issues come to the surface and eventually explode.

The first act of "Carnage" is stellar, especially as we watch these incredibly talented actors bite into their characters. But the 80-minute drama feels too inconsequential in the end to really matter. It's about two egocentric couples who would never even meet if their kids hadn't been in a fight, but it doesn't exactly work as character statement or social study. The theatrical source of the material can always be felt as the Longstreets and Cowans never come across as fully three-dimensional, especially Winslet's Nancy, who is horribly underwritten.



Carnage

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Classics

Luckily, Polanski assembled such an amazing cast that they overcome many of the flaws of the paper-thin screenplay. Count the Oscars (Jodie has two, Roman has one, Christoph has one, Kate has one, and John even has a nomination). This is an amazing cast who knows how to deliver and they do so here. It's not Winslet's fault that her character is the least-defined and Reilly does decent work even if he seems a bit miscast. Overall, the piece belongs to Waltz and, to a lesser-but-notable extent, Foster. The star of "Inglourious Basterds" is riveting (even if his accent is a bit inconsistent) in every moment, cleverly understanding that Alan is the kind of guy who partially hates being there but also gets a sizable amount of amusement out of the ridiculous situation, especially as the wheels come off the civility. Most of those wheels come off Foster's character and she gets to go downright insane by the end as the only character who really gets to turn it up to eleven. Watching the carefully-but-poorly-crafted façade she's built up crumble down is one of the film's highlights.

There are some notable parts to "Carnage" even if the sum isn't quite what fans of Polanski, Foster, Winslet, or the source material hoped it would be. The Blu-ray is similarly average as it includes only three small special features, no commentary, and a mediocre transfer.

"Carnage" is one of those films that won't pop up in the lifetime achievement award montages for any of its players but doesn't derail them from getting one in the first place.

Special Features:

- o Actors' Notes
- o A Evening with John C. Reilly and Christoph Waltz
- o On the Red Carpet

"Carnage" stars Jodie Foster, Christoph Waltz, Kate Winslet, and John C. Reilly. It was written by Yasmina Reza & Roman Polanski and was released on Blu-ray and DVD on March 20th, 2012.

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