

DVD Review: 'In Their Skin' Rips Off Michael Haneke, Tacks on Sentimental Finale

Submitted by [mattmovieman](#) [1] on March 20, 2013 - 9:35am

- [DVD Review](#) [2]
- [Funny Games](#) [3]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [4]
- [IFC Films](#) [5]
- [In Their Skin](#) [6]
- [James D'Arcy](#) [7]
- [Jeremy Power Regimbal](#) [8]
- [Matt Fagerholm](#) [9]
- [Michael Haneke](#) [10]
- [Selma Blair](#) [11]
- [Theater, TV, DVD & Blu-Ray](#) [12]

CHICAGO – I may never know how “In Their Skin” came into being, but I have a pretty good theory. Screenwriter/star Josh Close was so appalled by the unapologetic bleakness of Michael Haneke’s “Funny Games” that he took it upon himself to make the exact same movie, more or less, but with a much happier ending. It’s a noble effort but every bit as pointless as Rod Lurie’s proudly non-misogynistic remake of “Straw Dogs.”

Perhaps Close was so offended by the killers’ blasé approach to offing a rich family in Haneke’s film that he wanted to illustrate how white upper class folk are every bit as prone to suffering as the rest of us. “We’re not perfect!” shouts Close at his captor, a ruthless madman hell-bent on stealing his identity. Instead of finding their home invaded by two creepy male sociopaths, the innocent trio of father (Close), mother (Selma Blair) and pint-sized son (Quinn Lord) in Close’s script are confronted by their dangerously envious doppelgangers, played to icy perfection by James D’Arcy, Rachel Miner and Alex Ferris, respectively.



DVD Rating: **2.0**/5.0

Even the seating arrangement of Close, Blair and Lord in their little car is identical to that of the doomed family in Haneke’s 1997 thriller, as well as his 2007 English-language remake (all that’s missing is Naked City’s “Bonehead” blaring on the soundtrack). Their car is framed as a mere speck on the landscape as it snakes along the curvy roads leading toward the family’s vacation home, just like in Haneke’s film. And it’s not long before some obscenely polite intruders invite themselves over while taking advantage of their soon-to-be-victims’ neighborly manners, just like in—well, you get the drift. All of this executed with assured skill by first-time feature director Jeremy Power Regimbal, but the overwhelming familiarity of the subject matter is a consistent distraction. The strongest scenes take place early on, as Close and Blair sit down to dinner with their eager house guests. The air of awkwardness that pervades every stab at sane conversation is so deliciously agonizing that perhaps only “Between Two Ferns” host Zach Galifianakis would find himself wholly comfortable at the table. Offering an adult variation on her deranged anti-heroine in Larry Clark’s “Bully,” Miner delivers her most chilling work in years. And with his mannered nervous tics meticulously designed to win over Close, D’Arcy provides movie buffs with the payoff to his astonishingly spot-on channeling of Anthony Perkins in Sacha Gervasi’s otherwise disappointing “Hitchcock.” Since that glib biopic gave D’Arcy no opportunity to actually play Norman Bates, it’s initially euphoric to watch him delve into the psyche of this creep, while remaining a dead ringer for Perkins.



In Their Skin was released on DVD on March 12th, 2013.

Photo credit: IFC Films

Yet any shred of “fun” predictably evaporates once D’Arcy reveals his true nature and turns homicidal. Close and Blair, a fine actress too often reduced to scowling through entire pictures, are sympathetic as they reflect on a recent tragedy in their shared past prior to the life-or-death battle of wits with D’Arcy, but the script requires them to make several moronic choices that guarantee their entrapment. Regimbal is a solid director, but he’s no Haneke. “In Their Skin” doesn’t even begin to match the gut-wrenching, Kubrickian dread of “Funny Games,” which Haneke made to punish viewers seeking the cheap thrills churned out by cheerfully pornographic slasher schlock. Haneke spared the audience of gore, but revved up the agony, culminating in a devastating prolonged take where the characters come to the realization that one of their dearest loved ones has just been obliterated before their eyes. Haneke’s “Games” wasn’t a film so much as it was an experimental film analysis that actively sought to repel audiences from the theater long before the end credits rolled. Not only does Regimbal deliver the goods in the gore department, he relies on generic genre tropes such as an overwrought score complete with loud clangs on the soundtrack. The sentimentalized ending may have been comforting to viewers rightfully sickened by Haneke’s film if it wasn’t so thoroughly unconvincing, not to mention anticlimactic.

“In Their Skin” is presented in its 2.40:1 aspect ratio, accompanied by English and Spanish subtitles, and includes no extras apart from a trailer.

‘In Their Skin’ is released by IFC Films and stars Selma Blair, Josh Close, James D’Arcy, Rachel Miner, Alex Ferris and Quinn Lord. It was written by Josh Close and directed by Jeremy Power Regimbal. It was released on March 12th, 2013. It is not rated.

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