

Blu-Ray Review: Mixed Bag of Clichés, Quality Performances in ‘Lakeview Terrace’

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CHICAGO – Neil LaBute’s “[Lakeview Terrace](#) [7]” delivers as close to the “marginal thumbs up or down” line as any movie released in 2008. There are some intriguing ideas about race and excellent performances, but the film feels like a missed opportunity to be something greater, even if a strong Blu-Ray release helps the final product.

The issues of racial and social tension used to belong to the “urban drama,” films set in major downtown cities like New York or L.A.. “Lakeview Terrace” tries to take some of those themes and move them to the suburbs. [Neil LaBute](#) [8], the famous playwright and writer/director of at least two above-average films - “In the Company of Men” and “The Shape of Things” - has always been fascinated by how good people co-exist with evil, making him a better fit for this “suburban drama” than you might first expect.



Lakeview Terrace was released by Sony Pictures Home Video on January 27th, 2009.
Photo credit: Sony Pictures

The basic set-up for “Lakeview Terrace” is not unlike what we’ve seen before in thrillers like “Unlawful Entry” and “Pacific Heights” and the film certainly falls prey to a lot of the storytelling traps that held back its genre brethren, most notably in the final act. But there is enough talent in front of and behind the camera to justify a viewing for fans of this kind of material or the people involved and the Blu-Ray presentation enhances the entire project.

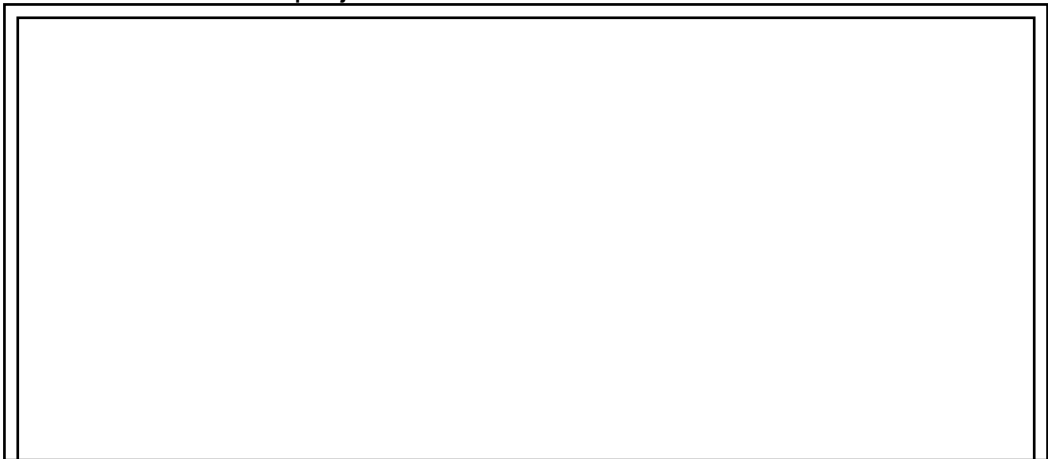




Photo credit: Sony Pictures

Abel Turner ([Samuel L. Jackson](#) [10]) is a single father trying to raise two children in a world that he has grown increasingly disturbed by in his role on the LAPD. Turner has seen kids gone bad on his beat every day and he's started to snap. He starts by clamping down on his children's behavior - correcting their grammar, pulling the iPod buds out of their ears - and then turns his eye to his new neighbors.

The bubble of a world that Abel has created is shattered by the arrival of the Mattsons, Chris ([Patrick Wilson](#) [9]) and Lisa ([Kerry Washington](#) [6]) in his back yard. The interracial couple pushes all of Abel's buttons. There are big issues like race at play in David Loughery and Howard Korder's script but it is the little ones that feel like LaBute touches - the liberal vs. conservative difference, the fact that Chris refers to living in a neighborhood that Abel has spent decades working to afford as a "starter home" - and are far more interesting.

Essentially, Abel snaps under the pressure of the changing world around him. He starts to harass his kindly neighbors with increasingly violent and dangerous behavior. The Mattsons won't move. Something has to give.

The problem with a film like "Lakeview Terrace" is that it almost always writes itself into a corner. The first two acts of the film are intriguing and complex. Jackson is better than he has been recently and Wilson ("Little Children," "[Watchmen](#) [12]") and Washington are intriguing young actors. But the final act succumbs to the inevitable, over-the-top ending.

The ridiculous twists and turns of the conclusion of "Lakeview Terrace" will sink the project for a lot of viewers. Wouldn't it be great to see a movie about a crazy neighbor that doesn't end predictably? Wouldn't it be fascinating to see not how the Abel Turners and Chris Mattsons of the world butt heads but how they are forced to live next door to each other? *That* would have been a great movie instead of the merely okay "Lakeview Terrace".

Sony continues to produce nearly flawless video and audio transfers with this release. The video is presented in 1080p High Definition with a 2.40:1 aspect ratio and the accompanying Dolby TrueHD 5.1 track fits it well.

Special features included in Sony's release of "Lakeview Terrace" are a commentary with LaBute and Washington, deleted scenes with commentary from LaBute and Washington, and three featurettes - "An Open House," "Meet Your Neighbors," and "Home Sweet Home". Each featurette has a different focus with the first looking at the development of the story, the second detailing the casting, and the last documenting the actual production.

A comprehensive collection of special features and a superior video/audio transfer help push the so-so "Lakeview Terrace" over the hill and into the neighborhood of quality Blu-Ray releases.

'Lakeview Terrace' is released by Sony Pictures Home Video and stars Samuel L. Jackson, Patrick Wilson, Kerry Washington, and Jay Hernandez. It was written by David Loughery and Howard Korder and directed by Neil LaBute. It was released on January 27th, 2009.



[Read our interview with "Lakeview Terrace" director Neil LaBute.](#) [13]



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