

Blu-Ray Review: 'Quarantine' With Jennifer Carpenter Rocks But Forgets Roots

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 18, 2009 - 4:19pm

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

CHICAGO – “[Quarantine](#) [13]” leaves this hardcore horror junkie conflicted. The film itself is one of the better genre entries of 2008, a thrill ride that will satisfy nearly everyone who rents or buys it on Blu-Ray. But the special features on the disc omit something unbelievably important and, in doing so, leave a bad taste in my mouth.

You could listen to the entire commentary by writer/director John Erick Dowdle and writer/producer Drew Dowdle and never know that “Quarantine” is a remake of the excellent Spanish film “[\[REC\]](#) [16]” by Jaume Balaguero and Paco Plaza. Conspiracy theorists have written manifestos on why “[REC]” still isn’t available stateside on DVD, but if you can track down an international copy, you should. It’s great.



Quarantine was released by Sony on February 17th, 2009.
Photo credit: Sony

Like “[Cloverfield](#) [18]” or “[The Blair Witch Project](#) [19],” “Quarantine” is a film that looks like it was shot entirely on handheld camera. The set-up is that a news crew, led by the excellent [Jennifer Carpenter](#) [10] (“[Dexter](#) [20]”), is spending a night at a fire department, chronicling the personalities there and what an average evening is like for the crew.

After a slow start of flirting with the firemen (including [Jay Hernandez](#) [9] and [Johnathon Schaech](#) [12]) and sliding down the fire pole, the news crew springs into action on a distress call. A woman has been screaming in her apartment. They bust down the door and enter an absolute nightmare.

“Quarantine” is surprisingly effective. Carpenter is consistently engaging and the direction is clever and underrated. The handheld conceit is expertly executed (the shot of the cameraman using his recorder as a weapon is one of my favorite horror movie deaths of the year) and the film is perfectly paced.

I loved how Dowdle takes his time between explosive moments in “Quarantine”. He builds tension through quiet, scared moments and then explodes in mayhem. At the fifty minute mark, when a lot of horror movie directors would have just barreled forward to the climax,

"Quarantine" allows for a scene where the residents do an apartment roll call, making sure everyone's still okay. So many horror movie directors fail to realize that roller coasters don't work with out the slow, tension-building rises to accompany the falls.

The funny thing about my praise for "Quarantine" is that a lot of it holds true for "[REC]" too, but most people will never get to see that film.



There are dozens of great international films not available on US DVD. It sucks but it's a fact of life. But having a film be unavailable and having a remake's creators completely ignore its existence outside of one credit are two different things.

Some of "Quarantine" is shot-for-shot with "[REC]" but the co-writers and director of the remake never acknowledge that on the commentary of their film. Were they put on a gag order by Sony, who are holding even the existence of "[REC]" secret? As the Dowdles comment on their action set-pieces and concept, how could they *not* want to recognize their inspiration? It's just weird.

"Quarantine" is a very good horror movie, but if the people who made it, including the studio releasing it, would recognize its roots, I wouldn't feel so cautious about praising it.

"Quarantine" looks very, very good. A lot of the film takes place in extreme darkness and the colors were always well-defined in 1080p. The sound is perfect in Dolby TrueHD 5.1. I adored the sound design in "Quarantine" with its use of helicopter sounds outside the building and the eerie silence before the chaos inside and it's been perfectly mixed on the Blu-Ray release. Sony may be leading the way in Blu-Ray audio.

As for special features, once (or if) you get past the odd dismissal of "[REC]," they are actually an interesting collection. The Dowdles seem like nice guys, constantly praising their talented cast and crew. "Anatomy of a Stunt" dissects a particularly complex shot, "Dressing the Infected: Robert Hall's Make-Up Design" is pretty self-explanatory, as is "Locked In: The Making of Quarantine".

In a very weak year for horror, "Quarantine" was one of the few bright spots. Now if they would only release "[REC]" in theaters so audiences could see where it all began.

'Quarantine' is released by Sony Pictures Home Video and stars Jennifer Carpenter, Jay Hernandez, Johnathon Schaech, Rade Serbedzija, Dania Ramirez, Steve Harris, Columbus Short, and Greg Germann. It was written by John Erick Dowdle & Drew Dowdle and directed by John Erick Dowdle. It was released on February 17th, 2009. It is rated R.



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