

DVD Review: 'After Dark Horrorfest III: 8 Films to Die For'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 23, 2009 - 10:58am

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CHICAGO – Lionsgate and After Dark Films’ recently released their third collection of “8 Films to Die For” and this year proved to be the most uninspiring octet to date. With fewer risks taken than the last two years and less extreme failures or successes, “After Dark Horrorfest III” is terrifyingly dull.

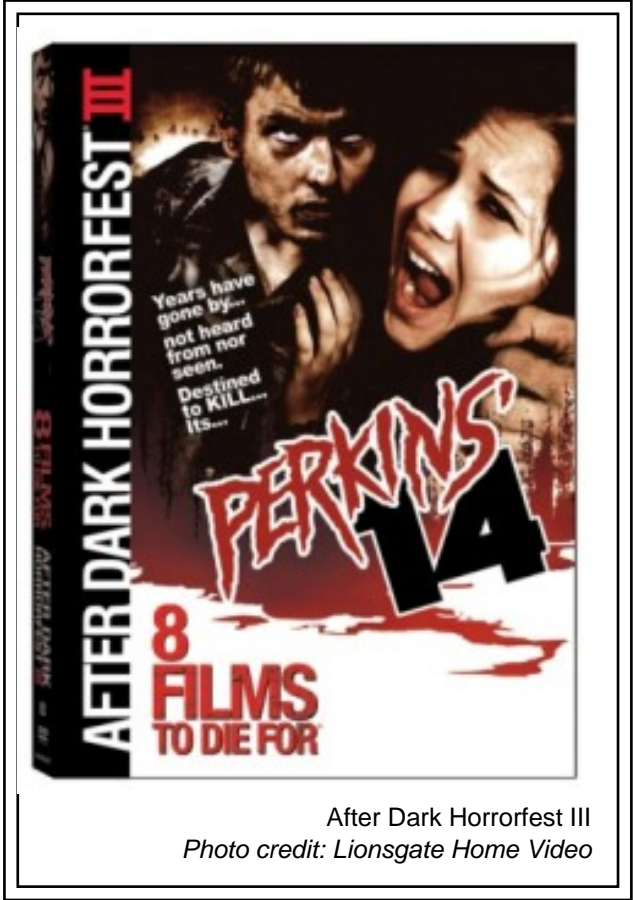
What makes this year’s collection rather forgettable is the lack of extremes on either side of the rating spectrum. The first two years produced some truly excellent genre gems including “Borderland,” “The Hamiltons,” and “The Abandoned.” At the same time, movies like “Lake Dead,” “Unearthed,” and “Nightmare Man” should be buried in a deep hole and never see the light of day again.

I have to admit that I liked the variety in quality of the last two years more than this year, when nearly every film registered as forgettable more than good or bad. There was one notable standout, a couple of films that almost worked, and a bunch of genre junk. In order of quality:

1. “Perkins’ 14”



Starring: Patrick O’Kane, Richard Brake, Michale Graves, Mihaela Mihut, and Shayla Beesley
Written by: Lane Shadgett
Directed by: Craig Singer



After Dark Horrorfest III
Photo credit: Lionsgate Home Video

Synopsis: Ten years ago, Officer Dwayne Hooper's son was abducted, the final victim in a string of fourteen local disappearances. Now,


Hooper’s suspicions have been aroused by a prison inmate who bears striking similarities to the purported kidnapper. Hooper finds evidence in the criminal’s apartment and seeks revenge – igniting a wave of carnage that engulfs the town.

“Perkins’ 14” is far-from-perfect but it does feature a few things that most of this year’s After Dark films do not - quality acting and an interesting premise. O’Kane and Brake give the best performances in all eight films as a police officer and the man who kidnapped his son ten years ago to the day.

After an investigation of the kidnappers basement reveals something incredibly dark, “Perkins’ 14” turns into a movie from the prime era of John Carpenter - good guys trapped in one place with the bad guys outside. There’s effective tension in the final act due to the quality acting in the first two.


The film was actually the winner of an online contest, in which an inexperienced writer submitted his idea and After Dark took it from there, even casting major roles online. The project was clearly rushed a bit but I think it says something about the art of moviemaking that the best film of this year’s collection came from the least experienced group of people.

2. “From Within”



DVD Rating: **2.5/5.0**

Starring: Elizabeth Rice, Thomas Dekker, Kelly Blatz, Laura Allen, Steven Culp, Rumer Willis, Jared Harris, and Adam Goldberg
Written by: Brad Keene
Directed by: Phedon Papamichael



After Dark Horrorfest III
Photo credit: Lionsgate Home Video

Synopsis: A rash of suicides has devastated the small community of Grovetown, with fear and panic spreading among local residents. As those around 18 year-old Lindsay continue to die grisly deaths, she begins to distrust everyone...and suspects she will become the next victim.

“From Within” has an interesting concept and some great character actors in the supporting cast, including Jared Harris of “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” and Adam Goldberg of “The Unusuals,” but the final product suffers deeply from “boring lead syndrome”. I thought Thomas Dekker was uncharismatic and dull on “The Terminator: The Sarah Conner Chronicles” but he’s downright scintillating compared to his drab performance here.

Papamichael (a famous cinematographer in his own right) has made the most professional-looking film of the set and he knows how to build tension but the final act has a few too many twists for its own good and I couldn’t stand the leads - two serious problems in the world of horror.

3. “The Broken”



DVD Rating: **2.5/5.0**

Starring: Lena Headey, Ulrich Thomsen, Melvil Poupaud, Michelle Duncan, Asier Newman, and Richard Jenkins
Written by: Sean Ellis
Directed by: Sean Ellis





After Dark Horrorfest III
Photo credit: Lionsgate Home
Video

Synopsis: The life of a successful radiologist spirals out of control when she sees the spitting image of herself driving down a London street. Attempting to discover the identity of her double, she stumbles into a terrifying mystery that involves her family and closest friends, leaving her with no one to trust.

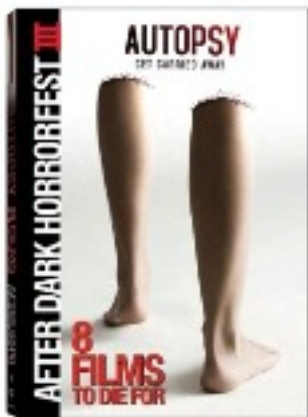
Honestly, I can't believe that this is #3. It shows you how quickly things slide off this year. The only reason it ranks this high this year is the caliber of the cast, including the great Richard Jenkins and intriguing Lena Headey. But as much as I wanted to like "The Broken," this thing is dull, dull, dull. It's all creepy music with nothing going on to support it. It's nearly comical in the way everything is dramatically overblown when we, the audience, have nothing to fear.

4. "Autopsy"



DVD Rating: 2.5/5.0

Starring: Robert Patrick, Jessica Lowndes, Jenette Goldstein, Michael Bowen, Robert Lasardo, and Ross Kohn
Written by: Adam Gierasch & Jace Anderson & E.L. Katz
Directed by: Adam Gierasch



After Dark Horrorfest III
Photo credit: Lionsgate Home
Video

Synopsis: A group of recent college grads is taking a final vacation together when an accident leaves them hurt and stranded on a lonely Louisiana road. An ambulance arrives and takes them to mercy hospital, an eerie, half empty place that harbors a chilling secret: a doctor conducting inhuman experiments on its helpless patients.

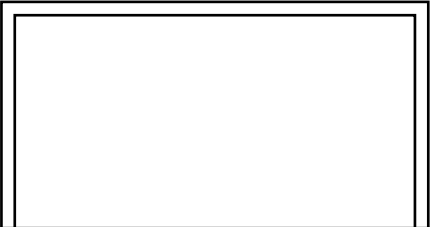
It's almost worth seeing "Autopsy" to see the two movies on display at the same time - the atmospheric, mad scientist movie that Robert Patrick thinks he's making and the tongue-in-cheek, early-era Peter Jackson flick that everyone else is filming. The gorehounds should go here first in the After Dark collection. There's some CRAZY gore, but the thing doesn't build at all and Patrick is half-asleep. There's no character there at all. The female lead isn't bad but the radical shifts in tone from atmosphere piece to gore extravaganza make for an ultimately unsatisfying experience.

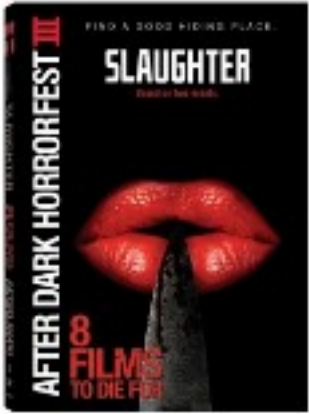
5. "Slaughter"



DVD Rating: 2.0/5.0

Starring: Lucy Holt, Amy Shiels, Craig Robert Young, and Antonia Bernath
Written by: Stewart Hopewell & Tim Long
Directed by: Stewart Hopewell





After Dark Horrorfest III
Photo credit: Lionsgate Home
Video

Synopsis: Looking to escape an abusive relationship, Faith moves in with Lola at her family’s farm. Every night the girls go out, the young sexy Lola brings home an older man. When Faith realizes Lola’s one night stands are disappearing, she fears Lola’s creepy family is killing more than just animals in the slaughter house.

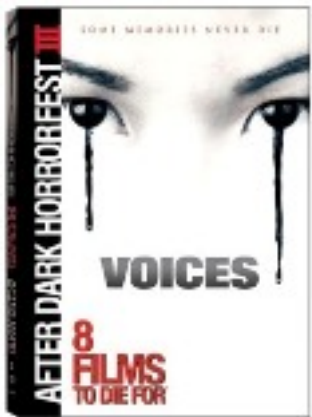
For the 2009 After Dark film with the most interesting “great premise, horrible execution” dynamic, take a look at “Slaughter”. The idea, which I won’t give away here, is a really good one, a twist on the battle of the sexes and the protection of a father in his little girl’s dating life. But the execution is another story, no pun intended. The first 45 minutes drag and the second 45 minutes are absolutely ridiculous. The first half will make you long for something to happen and the second half will simply make you roll your eyes.

6. “Voices”



DVD Rating: **2.0**/5.0

Starring: Yoon Jin-seo, Lee Ki-Woo, and Nae-sang Ahn
Written by: Oh Ki-Hwan
Directed by: Oh Ki-Hwan



After Dark Horrorfest III
Photo credit: Lionsgate Home
Video

Synopsis: After witnessing the violent murders of two family members, a young woman fears that she may be marked for death. With no one to trust and nowhere to flee, she races against time to uncover a deadly secret, in this heart-stopping thriller.

I must admit that my Asian horror tolerance is at an all-time low. And that’s coming from a huge fan of the genre. I still vividly remember the first time I saw “Ringu” and I have spent hours tracking down the next great horror film from overseas. But the genre has grown so stale. It’s just the same tricks over and over again. A few jump scares, a plot that’s impossible to follow, usually some girls in jeopardy, black hair, pale faces. (Yawn.) Honestly, I was expecting to hate “Voices” more than I did. It’s reasonably well-executed and better than a lot of the junk that has come out of the Asian horror scene in the last few years but that still doesn’t get it very far.

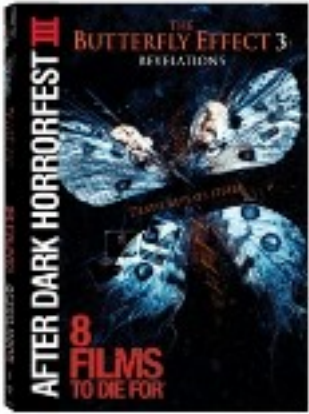
7. “The Butterfly Effect 3: Revelations”



DVD Rating: **1.5**/5.0

Starring: Chris Carmack, Rachel Miner, and Daniel Spink
Written by: Holly Brix
Directed by: Seth Grossman





After Dark Horrorfest III
Photo credit: Lionsgate Home Video

Synopsis: The latest entry in The Butterfly Effect franchise tells the story of Sam who possesses an extraordinary talent: the ability to travel through time. He can use his gift to help police solve cases, but he must never intervene with the past as it could alter the present in horrific ways. When a woman from Sam's past begs him to help her find her sister's killer, Sam breaks his own rule...and all Hell breaks loose.

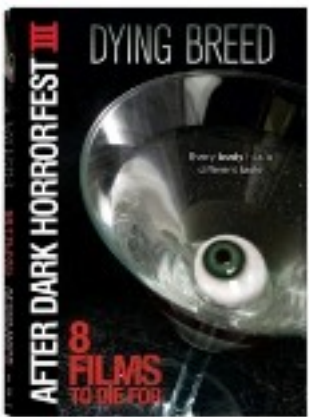
Yes, they have actually made three "Butterfly Effect" movies. This one is more of a mystery and I like the twist in concept but, like "From Within," this one suffers from "boring lead syndrome". Like a lot of the films in this collection, it doesn't feel like a risk. There were no significant gambles this year and a third "Butterfly Effect" movie feels like a prime example of walking the safe line that too many films did in the collection for 2009. I almost wished for a "Lake Dead" just to know I was alive instead of so seriously bored. Okay, I take that back. Maybe a "Dark Floors".

8. "Dying Breed"



DVD Rating: 1.5/5.0

Starring: Nathan Phillips, Leigh Whannell, Bille Brown, Mirrah Foulkes, and Melanie Vallejo
Written by: Michael Boughen, Rod Morris, & Jody Dwyer
Directed by: Jody Dwyer



After Dark Horrorfest III
Photo credit: Lionsgate Home Video

Synopsis: On their quest to find a rare tiger, four adventurers in Tasmania enter an isolated township named Sarah, once a hideout for an infamous cannibal called "The Pieman." The four hunters suddenly become the hunted as they discover that the township still upholds its cannibalistic heritage - and need fresh "stock" to breed.

And this is the ultimate in 2009 After Dark Horrorfest boredom. I literally struggled to care about what was happening in the horribly written "Dying Breed". Only Nathan Phillips stands out at all and that's because he's so bad. He doesn't understand the difference between likable jerk and total a-hole. I just couldn't wait for him to die. I couldn't wait for all of them to die. And yet I still didn't care when they did.



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