

Blu-Ray Review: Classic B-Movie Horror of ‘The Toolbox Murders’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 16, 2010 - 7:47pm

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CHICAGO – If you’re like me, you forgot how totally weird the cult horror classic “The Toolbox Murders” actually is. Perhaps the dull, by-the-numbers Tobe Hooper remake (with the otherwise great Angela Bettis from “May”) warped our minds, but this is a trippy slasher film, a notable entry in the slasher genre now available in glorious B-movie High-Def for the first time.



Blu-Ray Rating: **3.0/5.0**

Reportedly based on a true story (aren’t they all?), “The Toolbox Murders” caused quite a stink in 1978 when it was released. It’s not that graphically violent, but it is easy to see what turned people off in a film that, for almost the entirety of its first act, consists of intercut shots of a power tool and a screaming woman being murdered by said tool. Watching a woman masturbate before being killed by a masked man with a nail gun is not for everyone.

The set-up for “The Toolbox Murders” is as simple as its title. A man enters an apartment complex with a ski mask and a toolbox and goes from apartment to apartment using devices like nail guns, screwdrivers, and drills in various ways. Simply shot like most B-movies but with a truly bizarre, ’70s-inspired trippiness that features a lot of music, “The Toolbox Murders” is far from a great film but it’s memorable in more ways than one.



The Toolbox Murders was released on Blu-ray on January 26th, 2010.

Photo credit: Blue Underground

First, it's remarkable to note how controversial the film was only thirty years ago and how far we've come with much more gore-filled films like "Saw VI" or the remake of "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre" playing in theaters around the world. "The Toolbox Murders" was banned in the U.K. from 1982-2000 and the cover of its Blu-ray release refers to it as "The Original Exploitation Classic!"

Second, it illustrates how memory can warp a horror fan's mind. Most of us remember the bloody first half hour of "The Toolbox Murders" as four women are dispatched in disturbing ways with almost no dialogue and little clothing. It's easily the most powerful stuff in the film and actually builds some dread for what's to come.

What comes after that is ridiculous, largely because it returns the film's biggest weakness - dialogue - to the piece. It's quickly revealed that the killer is the apartment building owner and a second half plotline about kidnapping a young girl to replace his dead daughter? I think most fans forget that part and it's interesting that even something as reportedly graphic and hardcore as "The Toolbox Murders" is really only a slasher film for about thirty minutes. The final half of the film is just strange and not in a horror way but more of a TV movie way.

The first act of "The Toolbox Murders" is creepy, trippy, and brutal enough and the film is important enough to the history of the '70s horror flick that genre fans should probably include it in their collection.

As for the video, the Blu-ray release looks spectacular. The picture isn't overly polished like a lot of '70s films but it looks better than it ever has before. This is an excellent transfer for a film most widely seen on shoddy VHS. The audio is similarly appropriate for the source material - not overwhelming but impressive and certainly more so than previous presentations of the film.

Apparently, the special features have all been imported from a 2002 DVD except for a few galleries. Said features include a commentary with the Producer Tony DiDio, Director of Photography Gary Graver, and Actress Pamelyn Ferdin, "I Got Nailed in The Toolbox Murders: Interview with Star Marianne Walter," two radio spots, a theatrical trailer, and a TV spot.

'The Toolbox Murders' is released by Blue Underground and stars Cameron Mitchell, Pamelyn Ferdin, Wesley Eure, and Tim Donnelly. It was written by Robert Easter & Ann N. Kindberg and directed by Dennis Donnelly. It was released on Blu-ray on January 26th, 2010. It is rated

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