

Blu-Ray Review: 'The Stepfather' Remake Never Justifies Its Existence

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 16, 2010 - 10:25pm

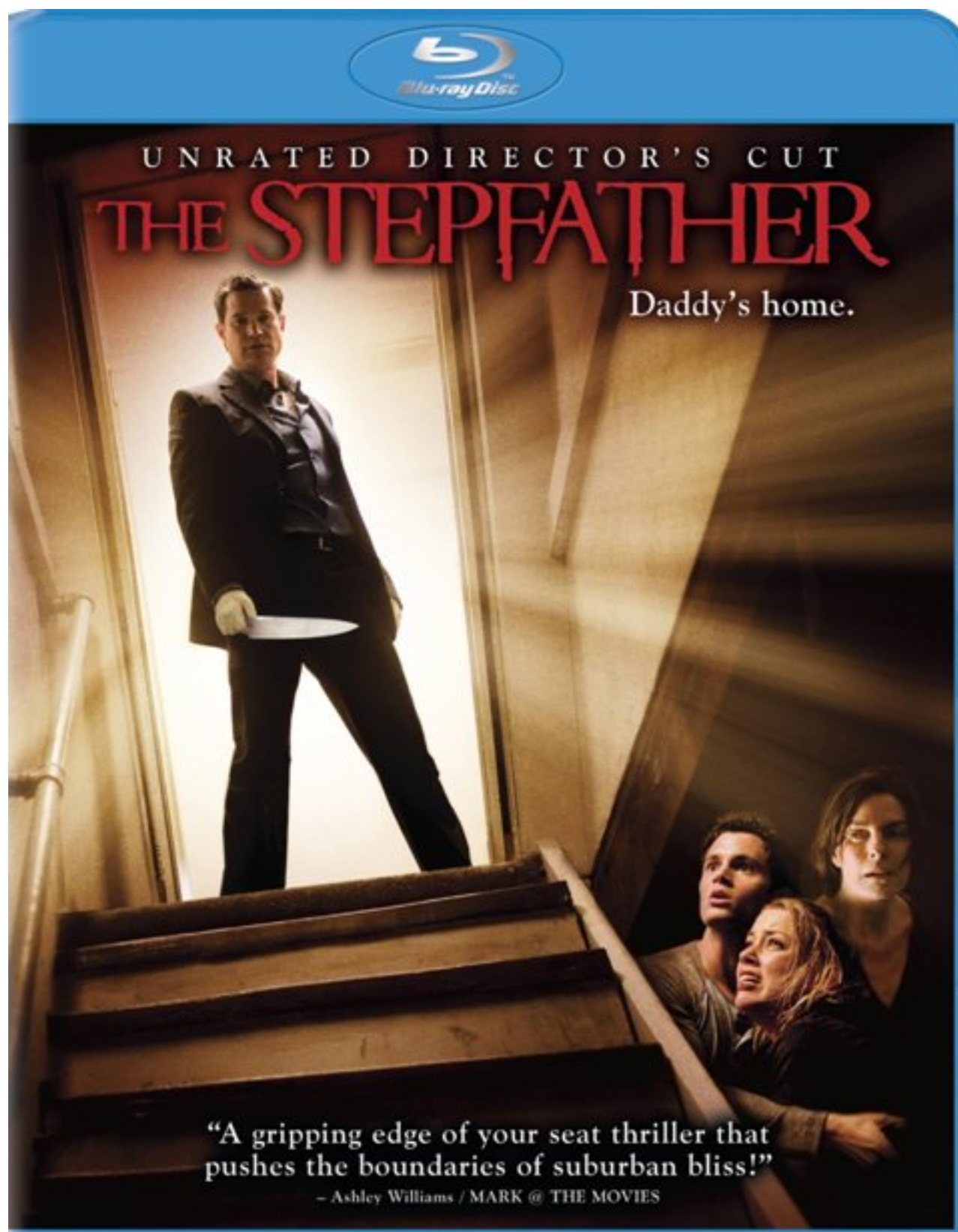
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CHICAGO – The original “The Stepfather” is such a product of its era that I have to admit that I went into the remake wondering what on Earth they could do to bring such an '80s story into the '00s. The answer turns out to be shockingly little. “The Stepfather” isn't that bad. In fact, it's better executed than I expected. It's just a shadow of the original in that it never justifies its existence.



Blu-Ray Rating: **2.0/5.0**

The first “Stepfather,” starring Terry O’Quinn who would go on to fame as John Locke on “Lost,” is clever, well-made, thrilling, and one of the best movies of its kind from its era. O’Quinn is fantastic and Joseph Ruben’s direction wisely plays the film as more of a domestic thriller than a straight-up horror film. The best of these films operate as if this lunatic could be your new husband or your new stepdad. The first film has that kind of power.



The Stepfather was released on Blu-ray and DVD on February 9th, 2010.

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Home Video

The remake starts with brutality. We see a man shaving and sipping his coffee on Christmas morning as it's revealed that a murdered family lies in the living room. Tools of the carnage from the night before lie in the sink. "Silent Night" plays on the soundtrack. Clearly, we have a certified maniac on our hands and the rest of the film will merely be a question of how many innocent bystanders he will kill before the climactic final reel.

Dylan Walsh has perfected buttoned-up creepiness on "Nip/Tuck," so he actually seems like a perfect fit for the lead in "The Stepfather". Ditto Sela Ward, often underrated in previous work and a great casting choice as the woman who falls for a man moments before referred to as a monster by the cops.

Sadly, after smart casting, praise for "The Stepfather" starts to run dry. Without the commentary on changing morals lost by merely turning the lead into an absolute lunatic, "The Stepfather" has no driving force. It's dull and that's not helped by lackluster performances from Penn Badgley ("Gossip Girl") and Amber Heard, who appears to be going for a record for most time by a supporting actress spent in a bikini or panties. Walsh delivers the creepy goods but this remake is ultimately just a by-the-numbers domestic slasher piece. You've seen it before; especially if you've seen the original.

The Blu-ray release of "The Stepfather" includes a commentary by Badgley, Walsh, and director Nelson McCormick, gag reel, "Open House: Making the Film," and "Visualizing the Stunts".

'The Stepfather' is released by Sony Pictures Home Video and stars Dylan Walsh, Sela Ward, Penn Badgley, Amber Heard, and Jon Tenney. It was written by J.S. Cardone and directed by Nelson McCormick. It was released on Blu-ray and DVD on February 9th, 2010. It is available unrated, although this version would easily qualify for an R, possibly even a PG-13.



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By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [14]

Content Director

HollywoodChicago.com

brian@hollywoodchicago.com [13]

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