

‘A Nightmare on Elm Street’ Remake Plays Like a Bad Dream

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 30, 2010 - 2:55pm

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Rating: **1.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Samuel Bayer’s remake of Wes Craven’s “A Nightmare on Elm Street” may be about repressed memories coming back in horrific ways, but it ironically ends up one of the least memorable films of 2010 to date. Not as abrasive as the “Texas Chainsaw Massacre” remakes and not as dumb as “The Amityville Horror,” “A Nightmare on Elm Street” is merely forgettable; something never said about the influential original.

When Platinum Dunes, the production company behind remakes of “The Texas Chainsaw Massacre,” “The Amityville Horror,” “The Hitcher,” and “Friday the 13th” that range from mediocre to awful, announced they were tackling Freddy Krueger and “A Nightmare on Elm Street,” I’ll admit that I was somehow still cautiously optimistic. It’s the way of a horror fan. We’ve sat through so many bad sequels just in the hope that a filmmaker would find what once worked about a character or a concept. And when they hired the great Jackie Earle Haley (“Watchmen”) to play Krueger, I thought that Dunes had a clear chance to improve their critical track record. Clearly, I was dreaming.



A scene from New Line Cinema’s horror film, A Nightmare On Elm Street.

Photo credit: Photo Courtesy of New Line Cinema

Of course, it’s easy to write off a critic who says “see the original” (although the [recently-released Blu-ray](#) [14] of the title proves how well the film has held up over the last quarter-century). It’s what we’re “supposed” to say. But let me be clear: Samuel Bayer’s “A Nightmare on Elm Street” wouldn’t work even if the original never existed. In fact, it would probably be even LESS effective as the iconic imagery of Freddy Krueger and the goodwill of horror fans for the entire series is the only way some may overlook this one’s flaws.

So loosely based on the original that it merely has a “characters based on” credit for Wesley Strick and Eric Heisserer’s script, the new “A Nightmare on Elm Street” picks up with Freddy in full kill mode, taking out a sleep-deprived teen (Kellan Lutz of “The Twilight Saga: New Moon”) in a diner that also happens to be populated with the other faces that will soon meet the sharp end of Krueger’s claw - Kris Fowles (Katie Cassidy), Jesse Braun (Thomas Dekker), Quentin Smith (Kyle Gallner), and Nancy Holbrook (Rooney Mara).

Krueger has entered the dreams of this unlucky quintet to take the lives of the children who accused the real Freddy of child abuse before their parents burned him alive. Haley plays Krueger with the same growling energy he brought Rorschach in “Watchmen” but his performance is so

buried under poorly designed makeup and commonly over-used genre camera and sound effects that one can barely appraise it.



A scene from New Line Cinema's horror film, *A Nightmare On Elm Street*.

Photo credit: Photo Courtesy of New Line Cinema

If Haley disappears under the flawed design of "A Nightmare on Elm Street," one wishes more of the sullen teens he massacres would join him. Dekker and Gallner are somber, uninteresting leading men and Mara shows signs of screen presence, but all of the young cast are let down by a script that gives them no personality at all. Nancy is sullen, Quentin has a crush on her, Kris & Jesse once dated - that's literally about it when it comes to character development.

I know that horror is not typically the playground for well-developed characters, but rarely has it been so difficult to care about a group of beautiful people as it is in "A Nightmare on Elm Street". None of them feel genuine. They might as well be cardboard cut-outs.

Part of the reason for that is that Strick, Heisserer, and Bayer are much more interested in the dream sequences than the characters that are dreaming. They throw every sound and visual trick they can think of into them but they fail to make them register beyond the generic jump cuts and choppy editing. Bayer simply doesn't know how to stage an effective horror scene and his music video background betrays him. I half-expected to see Metallica playing in the background of one of the dreams. At least that would have broken up the monotony.

No scares, no characters, no drama - why bother? Perhaps the film should be judged more like performance art in that it's a film about people who need to stay awake that is more likely to put you to sleep.

'A Nightmare on Elm Street' stars Jackie Earle Haley, Katie Cassidy, Kyle Gallner, Rooney Mara, Thomas Dekker, and Kellan Lutz. It was written by Wesley Strick and Eric Heisserer and directed by Samuel Bayer. It opened on April 30th, 2010. It is rated R.



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