

‘Final Destination 5’ Plays Like 3D Cartoon For Horror Fans

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on August 11, 2011 - 2:06pm

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Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – The “Final Destination” movies have become an increasingly-excessive orgy of gore with a twisted sense of humor – the Grim Reaper isn’t just coming for you, he’s going to have some fun before you go. The first four films in the franchise represented the typical downward spiral common in horror series with each subsequent entry falling a little deeper down the rabbit hole of typical horror genre traps. The newest entry, “Final Destination 5,” opening tomorrow, definitely marks an uptick after the last horrendous installment and it has moments that work (including some of the most unusually-entertaining “quality kills” in the entire series) but it ultimately fails to add anything new to the unexpected “Final Destination” anthology.

The last “Final Destination” was an absolute train wreck, using the new trend of 3D in bafflingly stupid ways and presenting the least likable group of characters in horror that year. It was uninspired, uninteresting, and awful. “Final Destination 5” is significantly better with a more entertaining cast of characters, more wickedly bizarre death scenes, a truly impressive set-piece involving a collapsing bridge, and an ending that plays to fans of the series in a unique, unexpected way.



Final Destination 5

Photo credit: Warner Bros. Pictures

Every “Final Destination” film has built itself around one major set-piece that the lead character was “lucky” enough to foretell in a graphic vision of the gory future. The producers of the series have already featured an airplane explosion (2000’s “Final Destination”), a pile-up on a freeway (2003’s “Final Destination 2”), and tragedies at an amusement park (2006’s “Final Destination 3”) and a speedway (2009’s “The Final Destination”). This time, they turn to a bridge collapse as a group of co-workers are headed on a company retreat.

Sam Lawton (Nicholas D’Agosto) is having a really bad day that’s about to get much, much worse. His cute girlfriend Molly (Emma Bell) just broke up with him before he got on the bus to spend a weekend with her on a company retreat. Co-workers/friends on the bus include close friend Peter (Miles Fisher), his intern/girlfriend Candice (Ellen Wroe), newly-promoted Nathan (Arlen Escarpeta), slimy Isaac Palmer (P.J. Byrne), sexy Olivia (Jacqueline MacInnes Wood), and boss Dennis Lapman (David Koechner). Sam has a vision of most of them dying in graphic ways (Candice gets a sailboat mast through the stomach while Dennis is burned alive) in a ridiculously over-the-top bridge collapse and saves their lives. For now.



Final Destination 5

Photo credit: Warner Bros. Pictures

What if you could see your own death? And what if avoiding it did no good at all? That’s the very-clever hook of this franchise and the reason we’ve had five “Final Destination” movies (and are likely to have at least two more based on recent interviews with the always-great Tony Todd, returning to the franchise after missing the last two and who we’ll be talking to tomorrow...watch for the interview online next week). The general foundation of these films plays on human fears that we have no control over our ultimate shared destiny – death. It’s a classic “gotcha” story – you can save your life and your friends, but it won’t last. Death will come for you.

It’s an inspired concept that has led to some pretty uninspired horror. “Final Destination 5” starts promisingly enough. Sure, the characters feel like the typical cardboard cut-outs we’ve come to expect in big budget horror – the lead, his girlfriend, the hot girl, the best friend, etc. – but the bridge is impressively constructed and kind of riveting to watch unfold. It may be the best “event scene” in the entire franchise. And the first death, involving the most potentially deadly gymnastics practice in history, features a grotesque punchline that should produce screams and laughs in the audience. I was with “Final Destination 5” for its first half-hour.



Final Destination 5

Photo credit: Warner Bros. Pictures

It helps that writer Eric Heiserrer (who was responsible for the far-inferior “A Nightmare on Elm Street” remake and penned the upcoming remake of “The Thing”) has strengthened the psychological aspect of the story in that the poor people who realize they are now marked for death learn that if they can take a life then the scales will be balanced. Imagine that weight on your moral shoulders. You’ll die if you don’t

force someone else to take your place. But it’s still not psychologically explored. The franchise could have gotten a real nice boost in the arm if this plot point had been developed beyond more than just a device.

“Final Destination 5” falls victim to the same trap that kills most modern horror sequels – paper-thin characters with awful dialogue. The cast isn’t horrible here but they’re not given anything to do that approximates normal human behavior. They’re like cartoon characters, Road Runners and Wile E. Coyotes headed toward their eventual fall from the cliff. Some will say that actual characters don’t matter in a film that features a dude getting a wrench through the head but the lack of them leads to the lack of something else – actual scares. The producers have definitely brought some of the fun and ingenuity back to this franchise. Maybe next time they can bring the fear.

“Final Destination 5” stars Nicholas D’Agosto, Emma Bell, Miles Fisher, Ellen Wroe, Arlen Escarpeta, P.J. Byrne, Jacqueline MacInnes Wood, David Koechner, and Tony Todd. It was written by Eric Heiserrer and directed by Steven Quale. It is rated R and opens tomorrow, August 12th, 2011.

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