

## Oversimplified 'Paranormal Activity 4' Insults Your Horror Intelligence Amid Waning Franchise

Submitted by [HollywoodChicago.com](http://www.hollywoodchicago.com) [1] on October 20, 2012 - 7:27pm

- [Adam Fendelman](#) [2]
- [Alisha Boe](#) [3]
- [Ariel Schulman](#) [4]
- [Brady Allen](#) [5]
- [Henry Joost](#) [6]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Hookup: Film](#) [7]
- [Jason Blum](#) [8]
- [Kathryn Newton](#) [9]
- [Katie Featherston](#) [10]
- [Matt Shively](#) [11]
- [Movie Review](#) [12]
- [Oren Peli](#) [13]
- [Paranormal Activity](#) [14]
- [Paranormal Activity 4](#) [15]
- [Tommy Miranda](#) [16]



Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Following the first “Paranormal Activity” in 2007, which is most profitable film of all time based on return on investment, filmmakers Jason Blum, Oren Peli and Henry Joost have made a killing for Paramount Pictures.

But with one movie a year since the second one in 2010, these low-budget films with small casts and no-name actors are showing fatigue and that they are overstaying their generous welcome with Friday’s release of “Paranormal Activity 4”.



Brady Allen stars in “Paranormal Activity 4”.

*Image credit: Paramount Pictures*

The only novel plot device used in the fourth film – though used too often – is the Xbox Kinect from Microsoft. When turned on and used normally, the Kinect just makes your body the game controller by tracking your movements. But while viewing the room through a night-vision camera in green lighting, you apparently see the countless projection-tracking dots.

That’s then used in the film, of course, to pick up paranormal Boogeymen. It’s actually an innovative and clever ghost-hunting tool that provides one ounce of novel filmmaking this time around. Beyond that, though, nothing’s new.

Newcomer Kathryn Newton (from TV’s “Gary Unmarried”) as Alex is at the center this time in a film that mostly uses the exact same formula. She knows something’s wrong with newcomer creepy kid actor Brady Allen (who plays Robbie), but of course, her parents are too busy and



grown up to listen. Robbie befriends Alex’s brother, Wyatt, who is played by the adorable Aiden Lovekamp.



Kathryn Newton stars in “Paranormal Activity 4”.

*Image credit: Paramount Pictures*

Matt Shively (from TV’s “True Jackson, VP”) plays Alex’s boyfriend, Ben. His light-hearted, innocent character is actually enjoyable amid a story that shows very little advancement from previous themes. Ben is dating Alex in that “keep your bedroom door open” kind of way. All the while, Alex is exploited by the “R”-rated film as – it has to be said – as “PG”-rated jail bait.

Now Robbie is forced by the trying-too-hard story line to shack up at Wyatt’s house for a few days because his mysterious mom allegedly gets sick and has to disappear. Robbie has nowhere else to go, so he shows up with a toothbrush, a very valuable antique fork (a plot red herring) and a stuffed animal. After he gets settled in, Robbie’s often seen talking to himself or to malevolent spirits at 3 a.m. after climbing out of Wyatt’s bunk bed.

While the fourth film reminds us of Katie’s (played by Katie Featherston) violent and paranormal murder from the third and her and nephew Hunter’s disappearance, you’ll never guess who mothers Robbie. (*Clue: The name rhymes with Schmatie.*)



Kathryn Newton stars in “Paranormal Activity 4”.

*Image credit: Paramount Pictures*



So, it's no surprise that Robbie brings with him the same paranormal activity we've seen three times before. Alex is the only smart one to recognize it and try to fight it.

The film uses simple setups for every scream: silence, little screen motion and you pan your eyes around. You're looking for something out of the ordinary or ghostly, and then – *bam!* – something's loud or fast or paranormal. You may or may not scream and you may or may not feel a sinking in your stomach, but you laugh at the stupidity or the enjoyment of your own silly reaction even though you knew you'd do it each time.

The shots show timestamps, so more than half the time as the film gets increasingly paranormal, you can unrealistically expect something to happen based on the fact that the spy cams are shown in the film at that exact moment.



Kathryn Newton stars in "Paranormal Activity 4".

*Image credit: Paramount Pictures*

After each scream setup, the film insults and mocks your intelligence. "Paranormal Activity 4" plays to people who are unwilling to think, don't want to or actually can't engage a well-constructed and deep plot that delves beyond surface-level door slams and quick "boo!" scare-and-jump scenes.

We know the people involved with this film know how to do this right. Jason Blum, who has produced all four of these films, reminded us how to make a truly scary film as recently as one week ago with the release of "Sinister" (the [best horror film of 2012](#) [17] so far).

"Paranormal Activity," which released in Sept. 2009 and was made for a mere \$15,000, has grossed more than \$193 million worldwide. While the second film was made for \$3 million, the third for \$5 million and the fourth for \$5 million, each film feels like an unnecessary continuation of the same theme that just presses on to make more money.



Katie Featherston stars in “Paranormal Activity 4”.  
Image credit: Paramount Pictures

While “Paranormal Activity 4” opened in the top spot at the box office on Friday, its gross was much lower than the last two films in the franchise. The film earned an estimated \$15 million on Friday, which includes \$4.5 million from 9 p.m. and midnight showings.

Still, the debut was far off from the \$26.3 million start of “Paranormal Activity 3” and even lower than the \$20.1 million start of “Paranormal Activity 2”. Paramount is expecting \$33.5 million for the opening weekend from “Paranormal Activity 4,” which is a huge decrease from the last movie’s record-setting \$52.6 million.

*“Paranormal Activity 4,” which opened on Oct. 19, 2012, stars Katie Featherston, Kathryn Newton, Matt Shively, Brady Allen, Alisha Boe and Tommy Miranda from producers Jason Blum and Oren Peli, directors Henry Joost and Ariel Schulman and writers Christopher Landon and Chad Feehan. The film, which has a short running time of 88 minutes, is rated “R” for language and some violence and terror.*



[18]

By [ADAM FENDELMAN](#) [19]  
Publisher  
[HollywoodChicago.com](http://HollywoodChicago.com)  
[adam@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:adam@hollywoodchicago.com) [18]

© 2012 Adam Fendelman, HollywoodChicago.com LLC

**Source URL (retrieved on Apr 23 2024 - 10:17am):**

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/20357/oversimplified-paranormal-activity-4-insults-your-horror-intelligence-amid-waning-franchise>

#### Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hollywoodchicagocom>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/adam-fendelman>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/alisha-boe>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/ariel-schulman>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/brady-allen>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/henry-joost>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/hollywoodchicagocom-hookup-film>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/jason-blum>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/kathryn-newton>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/katie-featherston>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/matt-shively>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/oren-peli>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/paranormal-activity>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/paranormal-activity-4>
- [16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/tommy-miranda>
- [17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/20285/the-most-scary-film-of-2012-sinister-is-both-a-voyeurs-heaven-and-hell>



[18] <mailto:adam@hollywoodchicago.com>  
[19] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#ADAM>