

Horror Hits Home in Disturbing ‘In Their Skin’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on November 9, 2012 - 3:16pm

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Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – The set-up for the domestic horror of “In Their Skin” immediately brings to mind excellent thrillers like Michael Haneke’s “Funny Games,” David Moreau & Xavier Palud’s “Them,” and Bryan Bertino’s underrated “The Strangers.” There’s something inherently terrifying about being assaulted in a place you consider safe – your home. When home is no longer protected, what is? Sadly, Jeremy Power Regimbal’s intense drama doesn’t offer anything significant to a horror genre filled with superior choices. Regimbal does the best with what he’s given but it’s Joshua Close’s obvious script and a mediocre ensemble that fail to deliver.

A family – Mary (Selma Blair), Mark (Joshua Close), and Brendon (Quinn Lord) – head to an isolated retreat home after the death of their little girl. Racked with grief already, the trio is surprised to encounter another family – Bobby (James D’Arcy), Jane (Rachel Miner), and Jared (Alex Ferris) – allegedly in a home nearby bringing by spare wood for Mary & Mark. Where exactly are they staying again? How did they find them? What are they doing? Why are they visiting? Ask yourself all of these questions before you invite in strangers, even if they seem as nice as Bobby.



In Their Skin

Photo credit: IFC Films

Of course, nice Bobby becomes spaced-out, uncomfortable, weird Bobby shortly after entering the Hughes abode. He stares off into the distance. And his kid who claims to be nine looks old enough to drive. Mark starts to sense that something is wrong but we always tell

ourselves that the nice-looking people at our door aren't really total psychos, especially when they bring gifts and compliments. Although the way Bobby says "*You're a beautiful lady*" to Mary would set off red flags in even the most trusting person.

Before you know it, Bobby doesn't have any clothes on at the dinner table and things are getting even tenser as personal questions raise obtuse answers. These scenes of demented domesticity, when it becomes even clearer than Bobby & Jane are not mentally stable, are well-staged and directed by Regimbal, who smartly chooses not to cut very often, leaving us with the tension by putting us on one side of the table or the other as conversations turn from awkward to downright scary. Sadly, Hollywood conventions replace tension when Bobby gets his hands on a shotgun.



In Their Skin

Photo credit: IFC Films

Regimbal does his best with the cast but I found at least half of them ineffective. Miner has been an interesting actress in more roles than for which she's given credit but Blair seems miscast despite her ability to mine the emotional depth needed for the part. The men seem a bit too obvious with Close all folded-arms-intensity and D'Arcy practicing for playing Anthony Hopkins in "Hitchcock."

The set-up of "In Their Skin" is designed in a slow burn way to build tension for the inevitable shock but it is more likely to lull viewers to sleep. Mark & Mary just aren't interesting enough for us to care about their chit-chat and after Bobby & Jane arrive in their lives, there's just an intense desire for something to happen. We get it. They're creepy. They're clearly not going to be kind to our hero & heroine. But why do we care? And then Regimbal and Close seem so intent to add weight to the final act that they lose any realism they were striving for in that first hour. When things get bizarrely sexual, it feels desperate.

"In Their Skin" falls in that gap between style and realism, failing at both. Movies like "Them" work because of their relatable horror while movies like "The Strangers" have a style that makes them effective. "In Their Skin" always feels like a movie (largely because of its stilted dialogue) and it's one we've seen before.

"In Their Skin" stars Joshua Close, Selma Blair, James D'Arcy, and Rachel Miner. It was written by Close and directed by Jeremy Power Regimbal. It was released on November 9, 2012.



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