

## Horror Spoof ‘A Haunted House’ is Pretty Horrible

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on January 11, 2013 - 6:52pm

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Rating: **1.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – There is one funny line in “A Haunted House,” the new horror spoof starring Marlon Wayans. It’s “my foot has a cramp, don’t touch it.” The rest of the film is stunningly without humor, relying on a series of flatulence, sex and failed jokes to dauntingly fill the long, long 95 minutes.

This is a satire of the “found video” film genre – think “Paranormal Activity” – which would seem like fertile ground for making fun, but in this movie the subject quickly devolves into achingly stupid and oblivious attempts at humor. There is not one joke that isn’t thrashed to death, and “A Haunted House” simply repeats them in the hope that redundancy is the key to laughs. The actress Essence Atkins, playing the lady of the haunted house, should get a special award for the scapegoating she endures, as she is put through so many ringers that it almost seems sexist. In short, the film is devoid of any value as a satire or a comedy. Although 2013 is only 11 days old, “A Haunted House” could hold up as the worst film of the year.

Malcolm (Marlon Wayans) and Kisha (Essence Atkins) move into their dream house. To stylistically fit into the “Paranormal Activity” realm, it turns out that Malcolm is somewhat of a video nerd, and sets up cameras all around the house. This starts to capture weird happenings, mostly affecting Kisha. She seems possessed, bothered and bewildered by it all, and instead of getting the hell out of the house, Malcolm stands his ground.



Never Fear: Kisha (Essence Atkins) and Malcolm (Marlon Wayans) React to ‘A Haunted House’  
*Photo credit: Open Road Films*

This gives him an opportunity to bring in a series of wacky fixers for the problem including Chip the Psychic (Nick Swardson), Father Williams (Cedric the Entertainer), Dan the Security Man (David Koechner) plus best buddies Steve (Andrew Daly) and Rosa (Marlene Forte). Meanwhile, Kisha is imbued with a devil spirit, but more importantly to Malcolm – and apparently everyone else – is not forthcoming in her marital duties.

In essence, the “Paranormal Activity” movies and everything else they seem to be spoofing in this film are satires within themselves, so satirizing the satires is a recipe for the big bomb. It’s as if the script – co-written by Wayans and Rick Alvarez – dares us not to like the film, and then succeeds. Everything about the take-offs are pretty obvious (video feeds of the bedroom, ala “Paranormal,” which provide views of the sleeping couple) and are done much more mordantly at the source. The various comics actors who come in (Cedric the Entertainer, Nick Swardson, Andrew Daly) add virtually no laughs to the proceedings and should check if their memberships have been revoked at the Friar’s Club. It literally seems like the made the whole thing up on the spot, and did it in one take.

One of the amazing elements of film, almost jaw dropping in its audacity, is the treatment of actress Essence Atkins. She has to take the brunt of all the demonizing in the house, because apparently Marlon Wayans couldn’t be bothered. Thus she is sexually frigid, callously annoying, excessively gassy, willing to have carnal knowledge with a ghost, tossed about the house as she is possessed and is the scapegoat virtually for every haunted affliction within the house. Given that her best friend Rosa is also portrayed as a horny beast, there is a sixth grade sensibility when it comes to the treatment of women in the film – they are not used for anything but abusive punch lines, which gets old with the rapidity of the Road Runner.

There is no cohesiveness to whatever plot Wayans and Alvarez were trying to stitch together, but only a series of episodes that mirror the current horror movie film scene, designed to allow the various comic characters to interact. Cedric the Entertainer portrays a priest that apparently can use exorcism to smote the haunting, but his rap is one of a series of foul-mouthed asides that have little to do with his character’s eventual mission. Nick Swardson must have blackmail dirt on some producers in the industry, because he’s never funny in anything, yet keeps getting hired. There is a furniture dropping scene stolen directly from the Paranormal series, and it ultimately symbolizes the thud of each bit that these characters are trying to sweat out.



Exorcise: Father Williams (Cedric the Entertainer) in ‘A Haunted House’

Photo credit: Open Road Films

Going back to the only funny line in the film, it was only mentioned because it had a set-up, it was unexpected and it was presented in such a way as to elicit actual laughs...as a real joke should be. After over an hour of the film – it’s near the end – it seems like the proverbial fart in the windstorm, which is the type of joke that populates the other 99% of the movie.

January is the cruelest month for film releases, as all the horror dreck that didn’t make the cut for Halloween is thrown into the first 31 days, and now the industry has added the comedies that make fun of the same bad horror films. Given all the irony, THAT is good satire.

*“A Haunted House” opens everywhere on January 11th. Featuring Marlon Wayans, Essence Atkins, David Koechner, Nick Swardson, Marlene Forte and Cedric the Entertainer. Written by Marlon Wayans and Rick Alvarez. Directed by Michael Tiddes. Rated “R”*



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