

Performances Carry Update of Horror Classic ‘Carrie’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 17, 2013 - 12:52pm

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Director Kimberly Peirce (“Boys Don’t Cry”) doesn’t convey the dread or atmosphere of Stephen King’s “Carrie” to a degree that elevates it to the source material’s true potential but she does handle performance in a way that’s rare in the genre, making this remake one of the best horror films of the season. It won’t soon supplant the De Palma version but it brings King’s story to another generation, finding the relatable truth in the story of a girl pushed too far by religion, adolescence, bullying, and society. If your threshold of remake relevance is that it must exceed the original creatively then don’t bother with this “Carrie.” It doesn’t have the personality of De Palma’s vision. However, if you’re not automatically attuned to smash remakes for their very existence, Peirce’s update works on its own terms, and can serve as a modern update of a timeless tale with great performances.

Carrie White (Chloe Grace Moretz) is a shy, awkward girl, the kind that most don’t really even notice at school. Peirce and writers Lawrence D. Cohen and Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa wisely avoid making this Carrie overly outcast, realizing perhaps that they don’t have the same alien-like presence as De Palma did in the original with Sissy Spacek. This Carrie is certainly unpopular but it’s as much for the fact that she wears clothes handmade by her mother (Julianne Moore) as it is for her looks or actual behavior. She’s more ignored than ostracized, even as gym teacher Ms. DeJardian (Judy Greer) tries to break her out of her shell.



Carrie

Photo credit: Sony Pictures

Carrie's profile at her high school becomes much larger than she wants when she gets her period in the shower after gym class, freaking out over the blood between her legs. Her mother never told her about what was going to happen to her, leaving her frightened and running to classmates with hands covered in blood. As teen girls sometimes do, they use this horrible moment to mock Carrie, throwing tampons on her. Alpha girl Chris (Portia Doubleday) even goes as far as to film the moment, posting it on YouTube for further ridicule.

Carrie's classmate Sue Snell (Gabriella Wilde) starts to feel guilty about the bullying of Carrie and refuses to stand up with Chris when she tries to fight being suspended from Prom privileges, leaving Chris the outcast. She's the one on the outside of Prom, looking in, especially when Sue convinces her boyfriend Tommy (Ansel Elgort) to take Carrie as a goodwill gesture. Chris plans revenge as Carrie's intensifying telekinetic powers make her the wrong girl to bully.

Moretz balances Carrie's awkwardness with the story of a girl held back by an abusive mother. There's hope in Moretz's performance, a glint of the girl who could have been the most popular girl at school with better upbringing, and who still could find normalcy if she could escape her upbringing. Moore is mesmerizing in the few scenes she's in, perfectly capturing the kind of tortured soul who has considered her daughter an act against God for almost two decades and has essentially mistreated her for her very existence. Supporting performances from Greer, Doubleday, Wilde, and Elgort are much better than typical horror fare, indicating a real director working the script.



Carrie

Photo credit: Sony Pictures

However, Peirce doesn't quite have the style to give "Carrie" the edge it needed outside of its characters. Elements like dread, tension, and actual scares are too few in the final product, and I wish Peirce had embraced a few more of the Gothic style choices she does in the scenes with Moore and Moretz in their home throughout the film. Those scenes of children trapped in closets with violent religious pictures on the wall have an energy that's simply lacking from the high school sequences, which clearly didn't interest Peirce as much as Carrie's home life.

Ultimately, too much of the film feels flat to think that this "Carrie" will last like the De Palma has held up over the decades. And yet every time I was ready to dismiss it, Moretz, Moore, or Doubleday would make a smart, character-based decision. We need more honest performances in genre that has been overwhelmed by camera tricks and storytelling twists. It won't transcend its target audience but horror fans shouldn't ignore "Carrie."

"Carrie" stars Chloe Grace Moretz, Julianne Moore, Portia Doubleday, Gabriella Wilde, Ansel Elgort, and Judy Greer. It was directed by Kimberly Peirce. It opens on Friday, October 18, 2013, and is rated R.



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