Humdrum Documentation of Bigfoot in Found-Footage Horror ‘Exists’

Submitted by NickHC [1] on October 22, 2014 - 6:26pm

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Rating: **1.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Director Eduardo Sánchez has found one bizarre way to commemorate the rogue nature of his horror film “The Blair Witch Project” for its 15-year-anniversary - by crafting an analogously lesser movie with the very rulebook he defied in 1999. In turn, his new Bigfoot found footage film “Exists” becomes a minimal horror project for the GoPro camera era that doesn’t have much of a life of its own outside of its “Blair Witch Project” context.

The text from the very beginning of the “Exists” clues audiences into the number of recorded sightings regarding Bigfoot, a statistic that could be as fudged as when “Blair Witch Project” actor Joshua Leonard was reported as “missing, presumed dead” on his IMDb page. Sanchez has a generic batch of attractive and camera-savvy twenty-somethings (Dora Madison Burge, Denise Williamson, Roger Edwards, Samuel Davis, Chris Osborn) encounter this woods creature pretty quickly in the movie, when they accidentally clip it with its car while traveling to stay at a cabin in the woods. Everyone assumes that they’ve hit a deer or some sort, but camera tech geek Brian (Osborn) expects that it is something more; he had heard from his uncle (of whose abandoned cabin they’re going to crash) that there’s something else out there in the woods, and now he wants to film it.



Exists
Photo credit: Lionsgate

As the rest of the group gallivants around the rundown cabin grounds, using GoPro cameras to capture their X-Treme shenanigans at a nearby lake, Brian sets up cameras around the sight to record any strange activity. Soon enough, Bigfoot does as he/she/it is controversially

hoped to - appears - and then begins to terrorize the cabin folk. The group decides that they can’t stay on the premises for another night, but their efforts to flee are canceled when they see that Bigfoot has trashed their car. Even worse, they can’t get a stable cell phone signal to call for help. (A survival tip for all of you out there on the internet: Text messages use less battery and require a less consistent signal than an actual call.) Hot on their trail, Bigfoot proves to be a formidable force that runs really fast and doesn’t stick to strictly nocturnal menacing, causing the group to remain helpless as the creature rampages.

Taken without the Sánchez background, “Exists” is an agile yet plainly non-scary horror movie that assumes an automatic nature fairly early into its showcase, and only budges from the expected in subtle ways. The body count doesn’t stack with a rhythm, the idea of daytime doesn’t provide the characters a sense of security, and the conclusion is one that wouldn’t sell in a studio, in spite of its emotional flimsiness.



Exists
Photo credit: Lionsgate

“Exists” does boast one impressive moment amongst its found footage frivolity (which yes, sometimes featuring conceits regarding characters and holding on or aiming their cameras). The film’s derivative experience is accelerated briefly by a different type of crash that is shown in the first-person. It’s a moment more jarring than the intended horror of a pop-up B-Foot, and the movie’s most memorable contribution to the now-overpopulated field of faux-clever found footage projects.

Aside from the specific choice of found footage, and its plot of a headstrong filmmaker suicidally aiming to capture a monster on camera, Sánchez responds directly to his “Blair Witch Project” legacy by featuring a force that functions distinctly opposite of the wrenching presence of the ambiguous Blair Witch. In a horror era where the found footage event is only fooling itself by trying to create creative nonfiction, Sánchez humorlessly embraces a figure that already endures in pop culture folklore, but without the palpable unsettling boogieman psychology for the audience to project their unsettled fears onto - the fear that matters most. The choice of a horror hulk reinforces the rest of “Exists’” environment, where the terror is not in visceral helplessness as so searingly concentrated in “Blair Witch Project,” but in the threat of physical harm - an ordinary horror element that Sanchez mindfully challenged in his 1999 film, but now succumbs to, with little purpose.

“Exists” arrives to VOD and select theaters on October 24, 2014. Featuring Dora Madison Burge, Denise Williamson, Samuel Davis, Roger Edwards, Chris Osborn, and Sasquatch. Written by Jamie Nash. Directed by Eduardo Sánchez. Rated “R”

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