

DVD Review: 'Fear Itself' Has a Few Highlights, But More Lowlights

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 28, 2009 - 4:02pm

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CHICAGO – I am an unabashed junkie of anthology horror shows and will gladly debate with you why “The Twilight Zone” is the best show of all time before we get to discussing “The Outer Limits,” “Amazing Stories,” and “Tales From the Crypt.” Naturally, I was a big fan of Showtime’s “Masters of Horror” and was intrigued when a lot of that series’ major players jumped to NBC for “Fear Itself”. The show was a ratings failure and got very little buzz and the first season DVD makes it clear why. Even for an anthology show fan, this is a tough sell.



DVD Rating: **2.0/5.0**

“Fear Itself” features thirteen episodes that aired on NBC during the summer of 2008. Like “Masters of Horror” (both shows were produced by the legendary Mick Garris), each episode was directed by a different horror writer and director. And like “MOH” the quality jumps wildly from episode to episode but the batting average for “Fear Itself” is significantly lower. If you rent single discs or find a friend with a copy of the set, there are definitely a few episodes worth seeing but, overall, it’s a massive disappointment.



Fear Itself was released on DVD on September 15th, 2009.

Photo credit: Lionsgate Home Video

The highlights of the set include "Eater" (directed by the great Stuart Gordon), "In Sickness & In Health" (John Landis), "Spooked" (Brad Anderson), and "Skin and Bones" (Larry Fessenden).

Easily the best of the set, "Eater" also happens to be the first episode. The director of "Re-Animator" brings his unique style and copious ability to the story of a rookie cop (the great Elizabeth Moss of "Mad Men") as she spends the night in an isolated precinct guarding a serial killer who eats his victims. Creepy, funny, and unusual in a very Gordon-esque way, "Eater" is the only episode of the set that I would call a must-see.

Landis' ("An American Werewolf in London") episode stars James Roday of "Psych" and has such a good set-up that the pay-off can't possibly match it. On her wedding day, a bride is handed a note from a stranger that reads "The person you are marrying is a serial killer." The twist ending is somehow both predictable and ridiculous but Roday is good and Landis knows how to pace a horror movie like the best of them.

One of the best young directors of any genre, Brad Anderson ("Transsiberian," "The Machinist") delivers with "Spooked," a story about a private eye (Eric Roberts) forced to confront his demons in a haunted house. Finally, the great Doug Jones ("Pan's Labyrinth") steals every second of the creepy "Skin and Bones".

The other nine episodes of "Fear Itself" fluctuate from just disappointing (John Dahl's "Chance") to downright awful (Breck Eisner's "The Sacrifice"). Other directors in the set include Mary Harron ("American Psycho"), Ronny Yu ("Freddy vs. Jason"), Darren Lynn Bousman ("Saw IV"), Ernest Dickerson ("Demon Knight"), Rob Schmidt ("Wrong Turn"), Rupert Wainwright ("The Fog"), and Eduardo Rodriguez ("Daughter").

The 4-disc DVD set for "Fear Itself" comes in a shoddy, plastic case in which two DVDs are stacked on one another (although it does have an oddly-disturbing cover that looks mildly offensive if you look at it quickly and don't realize that's the skeleton's knee he's grabbing there). Unintentionally funny covers aside, everything about the set screams afterthought, as if the studio has an obligation to release it but aren't really excited about doing so. Surprisingly, each episode does come with a "making of" featurette called "Recipe For Fear".

'Fear Itself' is released by Lionsgate Home Video. The show was released on DVD on September 15nd, 2009. It is not rated.

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