

## No New Frights in Store for 'Happy Death Day'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on October 13, 2017 - 7:22pm

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Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – “Happy Death Day” has a “Groundhog Day” gimmick, but that’s about it, offering essentially an ‘80’s style slasher flick with the hope that with a little cosmetic window dressing will help it appeal to an audience in 2017... Live, Die, Repeat. That’s all this film offers with precious few improvements to justify its existence.

The story, such as it is, involves a self obsessed sorority sister named Tree (Jessica Rothe). She acts the way sorority sisters always do in movies like this, meaning she’s a bitch with a capital B, mean to her roommate, sleeps with her married professor, rude to her own father, and seems to live her life aiming for “Mean Girls” type perfection. She begins the day waking up in the dorm room of a college boy (Israel Broussard) she met after a few too many drinks the night before, and ends her day being brutally murdered by someone in a plastic baby mask. It also just happens to be her birthday, so there’s a stereotypical college house party thrown in, and some of the most awkward “dancing” in a slasher movie since Crispin Glover cut a rug in “Friday The 13th: The Final Chapter.”



Same As it Ever Was: Jessica Rothe in 'Happy Death Day'

Photo credit: Universal Pictures

Jessica Rothe isn't quite the final girl you'd expect to build a whole movie around. She's pretty and blandly charismatic, but she's more likely to be an early victim in a slasher movie like this, and not the one you'd expect the audience to root for. In the beginning she's so bitchy to everybody the audience may actually be rooting for her killer.

Each day starts the same way, and ends with her kicking the bucket in a variety of painful ways, but mostly there is just variations on the kitchen knife slaying. Eventually she figures out she's doomed to repeat the painful cycle until she can find the identity of her killer, and sets about to solve her own murder through a process of elimination.

The repeated slashings are just that, too repetitive. The film throws in a few wrinkles, since the repeated deaths begin to take an actual toll on her physical body. There are a few obvious red herrings as well, but these twists are half-heartedly executed and then immediately forgotten. Tree does go through a bit of a personal arc as she transitions from scared victim to dogged detective and ultimately to personal enlightenment through repeated disembowelments. But the film can't come close to its near perfect inspiration.



Make a Wish for 'Happy Death Day'

Photo credit: Universal Pictures

I happen to have a certain weakness for slasher movies. They're the fast food of horror- predictable, easily digestible, and then forgettable. And this is like an unimaginative approximation which offers a pale copy that doesn't quite get the job done. The PG-13 rating doesn't help things either since this is bizarrely bloodless. And while the "Groundhog Day" premise offers a hook to draw in an audience, the film does almost nothing with it. We've seen it all before, and done better than this.

*"Happy Death Day" opens everywhere on October 13th. Featuring Jessica Rothe, Israel Broussard, Ruby Modine, Charles Aitken and Laura Clifton. Written by Scott Lobdell. Directed by Christopher Landon. Rated "PG-13"*



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