

## Jeff Kirkendall's Thoughts For The Month Column

Thoughts, Opinions, Reviews, Commentary & More!

Hello and Welcome! My name is Jeff Kirkendall and I'm an independent filmmaker and actor from the Upstate New York area. This is the section of the Very Scary Productions website where I write about topics related to independent filmmaking, digital video production, acting, movies in general, horror movies in particular, my own indie movies, as well as anything and everything related or in between.

I decided to create this commentary page because I find that I often come across things that either interest me, excite me, intrigue me, or maybe just bug me. Any topic related to movies and cinema is fair game, from the most mainstream to the most controversial. For example I'll often read about movie projects that I have a strong interest in or opinion on, for one reason or another. This page gives me a forum to discuss these things. It's all about discussion and furthering understanding of our pop culture. Anyone who has feedback concerning what I have to say here, feel free to contact me (see the contact link at <http://www.veryscaryproductions.com/>).

I'd also like to point out that the following is just my opinion, and everyone is free to agree or disagree with what I have to say. Enjoy, and to all the Indies out there: Keep on Filming!

SUBJECT: Movie Review: "**H2**" - **Rob Zombie's Halloween II** - September 2009

I've found all the horror movies that musician-filmmaker Rob Zombie has made to date to be significant. That is to say, significant enough to write about. Such is the case because I generally only choose to write about movies I either like immensely, dislike immensely, or find to have notable elements worth discussing. In other words they have to prominently stand out in one way or another. And so far with Rob Zombie's films, it has been a clean sweep for me. They've all been pictures I've had a strong dislike for, to say the least. \* However those who've read my previous reviews know that I've also consistently pointed out how much I admire Mr. Zombie for staying true to his own visions and getting the movies he wants up on the screen intact. I believe his artistic integrity has to at least be respected, even if one doesn't care for his particular style. Which brings us to his latest effort, the "re-imagining" of John Carpenter's classic horror sequel **Halloween II**...

Simply put, this movie is not a remake of **Halloween II**, because I don't believe Rob Zombie was at all concerned how his film would compare to the original. Rather **H2** is Rob Zombie's idea of what a **Halloween** sequel should be, and the killer in his movie is his idea of whom-what Michael Myers should be. Put another way, **H2** was made with no regard whatsoever for those who have a preconceived notion about the franchise and its central characters. The attitude is for those who like this new story great, and for those who don't it's too bad. This is again keeping in line with Rob Zombie as a unique, uncompromising artist.

In my opinion Rob Zombie's remake of the original **Halloween** (see review link below) was atrocious. He basically took away everything which made John Carpenter's film great, and replaced it with unneeded exposition, unlikable characters, and a white trash storyline. In **H2** he continues this in-your-face style while adding some surreal elements

and pushing the bloody mayhem to new, absurdly extreme levels. His Michael Myers doesn't dispatch people in creepy, inventive ways, but rather knifes and/or beats them to death until nothing remains but a bloody pulp. \*\* Victims include a nude stripper, a sleazy nightclub manager, some rednecks, and other assorted unlikable characters. And the kill scenes are so over-the-top and extended, they border on ridiculousness (while never quite crossing that line). At the same time his Laurie Strode (Scout Taylor-Compton) struggles with terrible visions of Michael, and the dawning realization of her true relationship to him. Her internal torment is another major portion of the story, and if one can identify with her, one will most likely see a lot of depth in this movie. If not, the film will probably play as an overly violent, empty experience.

Overall I disliked this movie less than any of the director's previous efforts. In fact I thought it had a few good moments. For example a sequence which mirrored the events in the original *Halloween II* was both creepy and shocking and generally well done. I also thought the aforementioned surreal dream imagery was at least interesting to watch, if a little thin on substance. However these elements aren't nearly enough to compel me to recommend the movie. I suppose it all comes down to my falling squarely into the camp of *Halloween* fans who do have strong notions about how a *Halloween* movie should play out and who Michael Myers should be. And although this "re-imagining" was a step up for the director, I still couldn't relate to a grungy, white-trash Laurie, an egocentric, money-grubbing Loomis, and a supporting cast of foul-mouthed victims.

Like his remake of the original *Halloween*, this film is most likely going to yield a split decision in terms of its reception by horror fans. For many fans of the original series it will no doubt feel like a second hard slap in the face; whereas for those who like Rob Zombie's work, it will be yet another affirmation of how talented he really is.

\* See the June 2003 TFTM Column for a review of Rob Zombie's *House of 1000 Corpses*, the September 2005 Thoughts For The Month Column for a review of *The Devil's Rejects*, and the September 2007 TFTM for a review of *Halloween (2007)*.

\*\* Given the increased brutality and over-the-top violence level of this film, one wonders if Mr. Zombie held back on the nude scenes (and overall nudity) a bit this time around in order to attain an R-rating from the MPAA? It wouldn't be surprising if there were more nude shots-scenes involving the stripper in the night club on the unrated DVD that will inevitably be released.