

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 – *The Thing (2011)* - November 2011

In this prequel to John Carpenter's 1982 movie of the same name, a group of Norwegian scientists discover an alien life form frozen in a huge block of ice in the middle of the Antarctic. They excavate it and plan to intensively study the remarkable find. However while the group is jovially celebrating their new discovery, the ice block melts sufficiently to allow the mysterious organism to escape its imprisonment. What happens next is remarkably similar to the mayhem in Carpenter's film, as the group try to deal with a deadly creature capable of replicating any host (human or otherwise) it comes into contact with. Violence and bloodshed quickly ensue as people begin to be picked off one at a time with the remaining survivors become distrustful of one another.

While I was glad to learn this film was not a remake (Carpenter's version was itself a remake of 1951's *The Thing from Another World*), I still wasn't expecting a lot. However I'm happy to say I was pleasantly surprised by how solid *The Thing (2011)* was. While being a lot like Carpenter's movie, this new version stands well on its own. The story is suspenseful, the acting is good, and the visual effects generally work well. This last point is especially noteworthy here: It's safe to say Rob Bottin's creature effects work in the 1982 version of *The Thing* is placed on a high pedestal by most horror fans; therefore any subsequent version is going to be judged in comparison to that work. In fact that was the main reason for my low expectations of this new film. Put simply, I figured this would be an empty CGI movie. However the effects on display in *The Thing (2011)*, while not being particularly groundbreaking, are a nice combination of on-set prosthetics supplemented by only a smattering of CGI. And that's how CGI works best, when it's used to enhance but not replace practical effects. The creature in all its gruesome incarnations feels like a real part of the surroundings and not something added in afterwards. And in this particular picture that believability goes a long way.

If there was one aspect of the movie I wasn't particularly thrilled with it would be a sequence involving an alien spacecraft that felt somehow out of sync with the rest of the film. Though it works from a plot perspective, this sequence is a bit jarring and I believe undercuts the

claustrophobic feel of the isolated artic base. However this minor quibble aside ***The Thing (2011)***, which ends right where John Carpenter's 1982 classic begins, is an enjoyable horror film which fans should definitely check out.