

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: ***Freddy vs. Jason*** – Why it worked - September 2003

As I write this, the long-anticipated horror extravaganza ***Freddy vs. Jason*** has opened in theaters across the country and brought in big revenues. The movie came in #1 at the box office in the first two weekends of its release. Being a big ***Nightmare On Elm Street*** fan, and also someone who enjoys the ***Friday The 13th*** films, I'm very happy about this. What I'm most excited about however, is not just that the movie did well, but that it was very, very good.

First and foremost, the writers of this film should be commended for coming up with an ingenious plot which seamlessly mixes the back stories of each franchise. A big concern for me - and for many others I imagine - was how Freddy and Jason would exist together in the same universe. Those familiar with the two franchises know that Freddy exists in a surrealistic dream world, while Jason inhabits the back woods of the Crystal Lake campgrounds. (For more discussion of differences between these franchises, see my *December 2002 TFTM* column - ***Freddy vs. Jason*** - Will it work?) Well let me just say that this worry was alleviated right from the get-go.

PLOT

In this movie we learn that the adults in Springwood finally stopped Freddy through the use of an experimental dream suppression drug called Hypnocil (a plot element from ***A Nightmare On Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors***) and by pretending like he never existed. Put simply, those who knew about him were quarantined and medicated, and all records of him and his murders were eliminated. Thus none of the current youth population in Springwood know about him, and therefore can't dream about him. Freddy has become powerless. This is where Jason comes into the story. Pretending to be his mother *, Freddy wakes Jason from a long slumber and sends him to Elm Street to begin the

carnage again. Freddy is blamed for the murders, and as the fear spreads he regains his power. But when Jason keeps on killing, Freddy then has to get rid of him. Mr. Krueger can't have any competition for his "children". The two eventually collide with Freddy determined to dispose of the hockey-masked killer and be top dog once again.

The first great thing about this movie is that both series and their trademark elements are represented well. Early in the film we see Freddy in the boiler room with his trademark blades in a scene reminiscent of the first *Nightmare* movie. We see scenes in Springwood at 1428 Elm Street (Nancy Thompson's old house/Freddy's home) and dream sequences with many familiar *Nightmare* elements. None of these scenes are exact copies of the originals, but they are close enough to give a fan like myself fond memories of the earlier films.** This also holds true for the ***Friday the 13th*** style scenes. This franchise has always combined the two key elements of nudity/sex and gory death scenes. Early in the movie we see a young lovely skinny-dipping and then fleeing from Jason. This is followed later on by some other shots involving sex, skin and carnage. I'll have to admit I grinned at these sequences, because they were such blatant exploitation that they were funny. (The crowd I saw the movie with on my first viewing started laughing and clapping during the aforementioned skinny-dipping scene. It was just that much fun.) For ***Friday the 13th*** fans and exploitation fans, these parts of the movie shouldn't disappoint. I should also note that the exploitation scenes were definitely welcome considering the fact that most studio horror movies today seem to hold back on such elements.

Besides this movie being fun on an exploitation level, another important aspect of the film is the fact that it really gives us an insight into the motivations of each franchise character, while offering a complex, intriguing, and exciting story. Freddy is seen to be someone who has always been evil, and kills because he enjoys it. Jason on the other hand is portrayed as a figure that kills because that's all he knows how to do. Some back-story scenes give us a glimpse of how he was mistreated before he drowned, and in this light, we feel some sympathy for him. This character depth only strengthens and compliments the fast-paced action in the movie. I won't go into many specifics so as not to ruin it for people, but suffice it to say once Jason heads to Elm Street and Freddy starts to make his comeback, things really heat up. There are many standout scenes of carnage before the main fight in the last half of the film. The best one is probably when Jason shows up at a rave that is taking place in the middle of a cornfield. This is just an incredible scene. Gore fans will not be disappointed.

Another plus with this movie is that the performances are generally very good. The teen characters are developed well enough so that we can identify with them, which helps make the proceedings compelling. (I felt especially sad at the death of one of these youngsters.) Our lead heroine (like many Elm Street heroines before her) turns out to be courageous and resourceful. Robert Englund gives a great performance (as usual) as Freddy, keeping him nasty and sadistic throughout, while still managing to spout a few lines that had people rolling in the aisles. (Trust me, the humor works in this movie). And finally, Ken Kirzinger does a good job playing Jason here. ***

All these elements put together make ***Freddy vs. Jason*** a great movie. This is a film where you catch new things with each viewing. (I've seen it several times.) And also, anyone just wanting to see these two fight will not be disappointed. When Freddy and Jason finally do tangle, it can only be described as spectacular. ***Freddy vs. Jason*** is a horror film not to be missed.

* Although the actress who plays Ms. Voorhees in this movie is good and looks like Jason's mother, it's too bad they couldn't have gotten Betsy Palmer. It would've been a great gift for horror fans like me.

** Some short clips from the previous ***Nightmare on Elm Street*** films are also used well in this movie.

*** Although Ken Kirzinger did a great job in this film, it's still a shame that Kane Hodder didn't get to portray the character he has made his own over four ***Friday The 13th*** movies. (See the notes of my *December 2002 TFTM* column for more on this).