

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: ***Darkness Falls*** - The movie that could've been - February 2003

In this TFTM column I'd like to talk about the movie ***Darkness Falls***, as I believe that the film warrants an in-depth discussion. The plot deals with the malevolent spirit of a woman named Matilda Dixon, who has come back to terrorize residents of a town where she was wrongfully hung 150 years earlier. Formerly a good-hearted "tooth fairy" who was kind to all the children and would reward them when they lost a tooth, she is now their worst nightmare. This thriller* is what I would call a throwback to earlier times. While I did enjoy the film, I couldn't help thinking while I was watching it how much it reminded me of other movies I had seen. Although I often make such comparisons after viewing films, ***Darkness Falls*** really felt like a combination of pieces of previous horror movies. The first movies that came to mind were ***A Nightmare On Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors*** and ***Wes Craven's New Nightmare***. The reason for this is that in ***Darkness Falls*** a young boy is staying at a psychiatric institution because he's having terrible nightmares and fears that a monster (in this case a witch) is going to kill him. A man who was terrorized by the witch as a child comes to the facility to try to help him, which is similar to the scenario in *Nightmare 3* where Nancy Thompson from the first *Elm Street* film arrives at a sleep disorder clinic to help some traumatized teens. In ***Wes Craven's New Nightmare*** actress Heather Langenkamp's son is staying at a similar psychiatric facility for the same reasons. Other movies that come to mind when viewing this film are John Carpenter's ***The Fog***, and ***The Blair Witch Project***. Most of the reviews I've read have made comparisons to these types of films and have also said that the movie is filled with horror clichés such as someone returning to their childhood town to face a monster from the past. While I believe this is all true, I also can't help thinking what an entertaining movie this was. The combination of narration and old photographs that start the movie and give us the story of Matilda Dixon (known as the "Tooth Fairy") is

interesting and creepy. The opening scene of Matilda's vengeful spirit terrorizing a young boy has some genuinely scary moments. The best part about the movie however, is how Matilda is only seen in fleeting glimpses until the finale. She is a truly terrifying presence throughout, and when she is finally revealed, it is not a disappointment. And while her back-story about being the tooth fairy did seem to become just an afterthought once the movie got rolling, it still wasn't a big enough flaw to sink the picture. The thought that really stuck in my mind after viewing ***Darkness Falls*** however, is that this is a picture that came out about 20 years too late. Had this movie been released in the early eighties, I believe it would be considered a horror classic today. (Of course it's hard to say if they would have been able to generate the top-notch special effects back then). As it is, ***Darkness Falls*** is still an entertaining (but derivative) little romp with a few interesting ideas and creepy moments.

* Can anybody tell me why the word "thriller" is used so much nowadays? This meaningless term is slapped on everything from horror movies to adult dramas. My guess - as far as horror films go - is that many producers and studios feel that the "horror" label will scare away some potential viewers. I say that if the movie really is a horror film, it should be called just that.