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Editor's note: Rob's review of You're Next originally ran during this year's SXSW Film Festival, but we're re-posting it now as the film opens in theatrical release.

It's become pretty fashionable these days for people to retroactively bash movies that enjoyed honest and deserved praise upon release. Wes Craven's *Scream* has received such a backlash in recent years, as both a lesser movie and a less influential one, and it's fairly inexplicable. Sure it has some issues, but the movie remains a fun, scary and smart take on

the slasher genre that has rarely (if ever) been duplicated.

But it also came out seventeen years ago.

You're Next aims to enjoy the same prestige by giving the genre a real kick in the ass with thrills, chills and a fresh take on it all, but while it misses the mark in some important areas it comes far closer than most. And bottom line? It's a fun and bloody good time at the movies.

Paul and Avery Davison (Rob Moran and Barbara Crampton) are celebrating their wedding anniversary in their new, remote home, and it's going to be a family affair. All four of their grown children are joining them for the weekend and bringing their own significant others. It's a full house, but what none of them know is that it's actually a bit fuller than they expected.

Someone else has plans to crash the party in a big and violent way, and soon the family is under attack from outside and within. They start dropping like slaughtered flies, but there's something the killers don't know too. One of the guests has a very particular set of skills; skills she's acquired over a rather unique childhood. Skills that make her a nightmare for people like them...

Erin (Sharni Vinson) is the film's secret weapon as possibly the best 'final girl' to hit slashers since Sidney Prescott. She's smart, capable and plenty easy on the eyes, and she's an absolute joy to watch. She's there with her boyfriend, Crispian (A.J. Bowen), who's the quiet middle brother in the family, and she's the wild card about to show the bad guys a very bad day.

The remaining Davison family members and guests are a mishmash of privilege and anti-establishment posturing and include prissy daughter Aimee (Amy Seimetz), favored brother Drake (Joe Swanberg) and Aimee's artist boyfriend (Ti West) among them. They offer a fun pool of victims with Swanberg in particular stealing almost every scene.

But they also represent the film's biggest downfall and empty promise in that they, along with the enemy, are utter morons. Simon Barrett's script has been heralded as smart since the film's premiere, but Erin aside, every other character here is no smarter than any character in hundreds of other horror films. They wander off alone, they refuse to fight back and they behave illogically. One instance even sees them discover one of their own has been killed in the house after barricading the doors and windows... only to relax afterward and not mention for the next thirty minutes that it probably means a killer is in there with them.

And one family member's plan to run at top speed out the front door? Oh my.

The script is riddled with issues like these enough to cause eye-rolls and head shakes and nausea throughout the second act in particular. Thankfully though, Barrett and his performers are also damn funny people. There are as many laughs here, possibly more, than were found in Kevin Williamson's first *Scream* script, and they're part of the reason the movie is better than the idiotic characters that inhabit it.

To be fair, some of the laughs will only strike folks aware of the cast's other careers, but even those unfamiliar with the indie scene will find and love the gags scattered and splattered throughout. As mentioned above, Swanberg has some choice material and delivery here, but Bowen is no slouch. His third-act speech, while tonally off-putting, is hilarious.

Director Adam Wingard displays a far more mature yet energetic grasp here than he managed with his previous horror film *A Horrible Way to Die*, and the result is a movie that may start slow (with an extremely underwhelming opening scene) but picks up speed and rarely stops before the fantastically choreographed finale. Multiple cheer-worthy moments litter the final thirty minutes, and the already solid score by Mads Heldtberg jumps into overdrive matching the action every step of the way.

You're Next is far from the second coming that some have labeled it, but it's still an incredibly entertaining mix of big laughs and bigger kills. Genre fans will love it, but even those unused to such sadistic bodycounts will survive (and probably enjoy) the heavy blood flow and handful of jump scares thanks to a far from serious tone and strong sense of humor.

The Upside: Very funny; one of the best 'final girls' in years; score is strong and energetic

The Downside: Every single character aside from Erin is a typical horror film idiot; opening double-homicide scene is incredibly weak

On the Side: *You're Next* originally premiered at TIFF 2011.



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