

'The Last Exorcism' leaves room for improvement



The Last Exorcism

Rated PG-13

2.5 bagels out of 5

By Howie Nave

As a fan of horror movies, I have to give credit upfront to director Daniel Stamm ("A Necessary Death") for delivering a movie in this genre with a PG-13 rating. Forget about language usually a horror flick with a gore factor of 7 (out of 10) easily warrants a bump up to an R rating.

With that said, any movie title having the word, "Last" in it means the studio is going to be giving us more depending on the box office receipts of the first one. There is no "last" in Hollywood, remember? Cher, Barbra Streisand and The Eagles have had several farewell tours only to pop back up on the radar screen again when they ran out of money or needed to remind the public they were still living. OK, back to the exorcism at hand.



"The Last Exorcism" is full of plenty of cliches.

I've always liked the concept of a movie within a movie. In this case a documentary being filmed by a preacher showing he can rid the devil from a girl (it's always a young lady that gets possessed have you noticed?). We're introduced to the Rev. Cotton Marcus (played by Patrick Fabian) who is your typical showman of a preacher who is so good even he can't seem to believe it. He has his congregation believing him so thoroughly (and blindly) that Marcus actually wants to prove that he isn't as sincere as they believe he is. Maybe he was trying to redeem himself to God on Earth so he could be allowed access into heaven?

So he gets his to prove how fabricated he is when a request comes his way involving an exorcism. This, by the way is where the title of the movie gets mentioned because this is going to be ... "The Last Exorcism" he ever does. Marcus wants to remove the wool from the people he had been pulling over their eyes for so long that he gets a golden opportunity with this request.

OK here is where the clichés start to kick in. First, the exorcism is to take place in the back woods of Louisiana (where else?) with his documentary film crew in tow. Second, we're introduced to a teenage girl named Nell Sweetzer (Ashley Bell) who hasn't recovered fully from the death of her mother. Her father, (Louis Herthum) has been home schooling her and summons the reverend because he believes his daughter has been

killing the animals on the farm so obviously it must be the work of the devil.

I'm actually on the same page as Reverend Marcus thinking that folks who live out in the swamplands have a little bit too much time on their hands.

The final cliché kicks in when Nell starts going into complete, "creep mode" (but fortunately we're spared any pea soup spewing out of her). The camera work will obviously remind you of another movie within a movie concept: "The Blair Witch Project." As I recalled I almost vomited in the theater as that film crew was running through the forest with very limited lighting. Here at least the crew vomits in one place without having to do the exercise part (OK make that exorcise) but the lighting is just as limited. What helps the film is the use of no "name actors" because had there been some huge bankable star in the leading role it would have been more fun to critique. I was hoping that Jennifer Aniston would have had the lead here and that the preacher involved would not have been trying to drive the devil out of her but try in vain to exorcise the bad decision-making as to why she chooses the scripts for the movies she makes.

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