

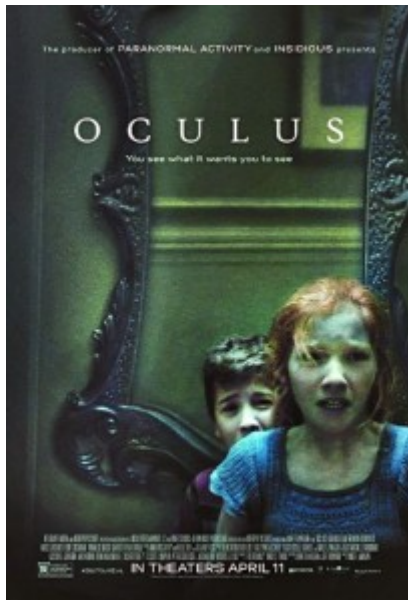
# 'Oculus' – more suspense than horror



By Jeremy Miller

I felt I was due for a nice horror flick and caught 20 seconds of the trailer for "Oculus" and said why not?

Come to find out, Mike Flanagan (writer/director) remade his own flick of similar name with a bigger budget and this was the result. That alone generates my affinity for a film just because I love when filmmakers revamp their own projects.



Starring Karen Gillan, Brenton Thwaites, Katee Sackhoff, and Rory Cochrane the film focuses on the once function Russell family. Kaylie (Gillan) and Tim (Thwaites) are the seemingly perfect children of an even more seemingly perfect marriage between Marie (Sackhoff) and Alan (Cochrane). Along with Alan's new job came a new house, new beginnings and new furniture. Included in their remodel came a creepy old mirror that most obviously doesn't belong anywhere

near your home.

Did we learn nothing from Alexandre Aja?

Anyways, the film bounces between the present time and the

kids' upbringing 10-plus years ago. In present time Kaylie is an auctioneer and has a discomfoting crush on this creepy mirror. The mirror sells, but she pulls a move to keep it in her possession during a short transitional period. Her brother, Tim, is newly released from a psychiatric hospital simultaneously and the two siblings reunite. Kaylie almost immediately dives in to her meticulously calculated plot to not only destroy the mirror, but prove its supernatural capabilities.

Flashback to the past and we discover that at some point along the way Tim killed his father who earlier killed his wife and their mother. Tim has been convinced and convinced himself that there were psychological explanations for all supernatural occurrences leading up to the blood bath, but Kaylie begs to differ. She's adamant that the mirror has powers and sets out to clear the family name and show the world that the mirror was in fact responsible. She sets up a nice little rack of gear composed of computers and cameras to document the whole thing. She preps the room for all the "tricks" she anticipates the mirror to play on them. She then goes ahead and gives the audience a nice little breakdown of all the people the mirror has driven to insanity.

The thing mostly causes hallucinations mostly. It gets people to brutally murder themselves and those around them, and it's capable of planting all kinds of thoughts in your head.

So once we know what the thing is capable of, the flick bounces back and forth from present time to the past, giving us little bits of each keeping tension high. Well, here's the thing. Was this a horror movie? Nah, I don't think so. Psychological thriller sure, but not horror.

There was some gore, creepy ghost stuff, suspense and what not, but it was scary in a traditional sense. This one gets to your head, not your stomach.

I thought they nailed the suspense and it wasn't 100 percent predictable. They could have done a better job with some of the special effects, as sometimes I felt they were way underplayed and not in a hipster kind of way, more of a "this is borderline Lifetime worthy" kind of way.

I did really dig the story; it's unique and kept me guessing and I thought it was pretty inventive with the mind tricks and hallucinations bits. It definitely forced discomfort, which was perfect. The jump factor was present, but not overbearing or tacky like the more recent developments of the "paranormal" franchise. Overall, pretty good little flick.

*South Lake Tahoe resident Jeremy Miller has more movie reviews online.*