

'Annabelle' – little redeeming about movie

By Jeremy Miller

After a severely dry summer financially, Hollywood, sadly, still failed to open October with a successful horror flick. With the genius of James Wan ("Saw", "Insidious", "The Conjuring") backing the film I most certainly expected something more than what I got.

Being somewhat of a precursor to the blowout "The Conjuring", "Annabelle" follows John (Ward Horton) and Mia (Annabelle Wallis) who are newly married. While finishing medical school, John buys his expecting wife a doll as a gift to complete her already overly creepy collection. A short time later their home is invaded by two people who resemble members of the Manson family who are satanic cultists. The woman cultist is gunned down by police while holding the doll recently gifted to Mia. The woman's dark spirit possesses the doll and all the cliché possession flick stuff follows thereafter.

Our main characters are accompanied by two rather weak characters, a priest (Tony Amendola), and a bookstore owner (Alfre Woodard) who has little to no real presence in the flick at all. After the attack the couple eventually relocates to try and move on with their lives.



The Miller Meter: 1 out of 5 stars

Sure enough the weird visions and paranormal occurrences move with them. With no more options, the couple turns to the church for help and the little crew wage war against the spirits possessing the doll.



I rate this movie so low for several reasons. The biggest being a total lack of story. The movie only had an hour and a half runtime, but the thing felt like an eternity. The first hour of building characters and backstory was a total bust. They showed a tragic event that starts it all, which is great, but then followed it with 40 minutes of emotional back and forth between the newlyweds that's so pointless and hollow it nearly drove me out of the theater.

My next qualm is that pretty much nothing happened. Doll gets possessed, family gets scared, stuff gets weird, someone dies, spirit moves on, queue "The Conjuring". I didn't need this movie to exist and that's a fundamental flaw when it comes to an audience. I felt like I was watching "Titanic", but the version where the boat didn't crash ... an experience that felt like three hours of nothing more than a couple trying way too hard to make it work.



My blame falls on an unseasoned writer/director combo. We've got a rather reputable cinematographer, John Leonetti, who's only directed a handful of TV episodes, a straight to DVD flick, and "Mortal Kombat: Annihilation". Though the latter is an absolute classic, it's not enough to give someone the knowhow or skill to put together a well-rounded horror movie. Behind the script we have Gary Dauberman whose experience is limited to scripting three B-rated, limited release horror flicks with next to nothing budgets.

Now, I'm not saying that people don't deserve a shot in the big leagues by any means, but a warm up round is a wise move. I wouldn't consider the first horror movie of an already droughty season a smart warm up round. The camera work was bland at best and I am almost positive I jumped more watching "Insidious" for the ninth time knowing exactly what was coming and when. Acting was pretty poor, but I don't blame the talent I blame the script. You could've put A-listers in those slots and magic would not have happened. I give it a one because there were a few scenes that were almost really awesome, but fell short and I just took it upon myself to divert to my own imagination to keep myself going until the end. It's never a good sign when every three minutes I am checking my watch in combination with calculating how long the trailers were so I get an accurate estimation of how much more I had to endure.

South Lake Tahoe resident Jeremy Miller has more movie reviews [online](#).