

StudioCanal

Story Coverage

TITLE: ANCHORITE
AUTHOR: Jamie Killen
READER: Oscar Gervet
DATE READ: 11/16/23
DRAFT:
GENRE: Supernatural Period Horror
Subbed To : Sam Shipp
Subbed By : Serina Curtis

Evacuation scores (Excellent / Good / Fair / Poor)

PREMISE: Fair

PLOT: Fair

CHARACTERS: Fair

DIALOGUE: Fair

Recommendation (Recommend / Consider / Pass)

STORY: Pass

WRITER: Pass

LOGLINE: After answering a distress call following an air raid in WWII London, an all-female ambulance crew find themselves under attack from a mysterious creature previously buried under the depths of their city.

COMMENTS: The backdrop of 1941 London during WWII is an interesting context but feels completely unexploited. The blend of real historical events with supernatural horror elements had the potential to be a uniquely engaging premise, but this story could take place at any other time with little to no consequence to the script and its characters. For a horror movie set in WWII, we do not witness or explore the horrors of war at all. And while the story ends on the unrecognized sacrifices and heroism of women during the war, this feels superficial and not properly set up throughout the movie.

SYNOPSIS:

In 1941 London, during an air raid, WALTER DAVIES, an Air Raid Patrol warden in his mid-50s, is cheerfully performing his duties despite the surrounding destruction... until he is attacked and violently pulled into a cellar by a mysterious creature. We hear the sounds of his flesh being ripped apart.

An all-female ambulance team — FLORA (mid-40s), ROSA (mid-20s with braided black hair), CECILY (mid-20s blonde), GWEN (19), and ADA (early 20s, Black American) —

argue with the police at Station 32, saying the police should investigate the Aldgate area where many people have been reported missing. While Ada's policeman boyfriend SIMON (mid-20s white) agrees with them, the police blame the bombs and the war and refuse to dedicate resources to those missing people. Still, the women are unconvinced and venture to investigate those disappearances.

There, they discover a chamber with a stone altar and a painting of the Virgin Mary. They wonder what they found. Outside, they find an abandoned ambulance, and inside the vehicle, they discover a DEAD MAN with his belly open and a missing liver. Rosa soon introduces the idea of a "demon" lurking around while Cecily sees a bloody handprint and hears desperate cries for help.

Gwen steps alone into a dark alley, only to be startled by something unseen. She soon discovered a DEAD MAN's corpse with his heart missing. Gwen, in panic, warns Cecily that the perpetrator is nearby. Cecily sees the shadowy figure, presumably THE ANCHORITE, over a DYING MAN.

They call the police, and SIMON and OFFICER BARTON arrive but are soon attacked and gruesomely killed by the Anchorite. The creature is seen striding over the wreckage and dropping something in front of Ada, Simon, and Flora... it's revealed to be Officer Barton's severed head!

The creature goes after Rosa, but Gwen sets it on fire to save her, indicating its vulnerability to fire. But the Anchorite continues to attack the group before dragging a woman named GINGER into a storm drain. The group tries to navigate and survive the creature's relentless pursuit, but Gwen ultimately gets captured by the Anchorite and taken to a crypt, the creature's lair. There, Gwen wakes up only to find herself attached next to Ginger and another woman, UNA, who are also captives.

DETECTIVES PERKINS and MACGREGOR meet Rosa, Ada, Cecily, and Flora, who tell them to stay quiet and that they need help. But, as always, they are a step behind and a minute too slow. They noisily argue that the group of women are war spies wanting to lure the police officers out, assassinate them, undermine the detectives, all that to spread fear... But the detectives are soon interrupted and violently killed by the Anchorite while Rosa, Ada, Cecily, and Flora manage to escape.

Back in its crypt, the Anchorite's whole body is revealed for the first time. It's a grotesque angel-like being with a distorted body. It starts a gruesome ritual, chanting in Latin before decapitating Una and Ginger in front of Gwen and feeding her the victims' organs and blood. Meanwhile, Rosa, Ada, Cecily, and Flora venture into the crypt with a rifle to rescue Gwen. They manage to distract it during its ritual but struggle to fight the Anchorite, which is much stronger and faster than them.

Still, they drag it outside and trap it in the ambulance. Flora sacrifices herself by driving straight into a bomb, which explodes and obliterates her and the Anchorite. The surviving Gwen, Rosa, Ada, and Cecily deal with the aftermath of their harrowing experience. Despite their bravery and sacrifices, their battle and Flora's heroism go unrecognized by the public and authorities, which puts all the emphasis on Detectives

Perkins and MacGregor. Still, in the end, the all-female ambulance team goes back to work, saving lives.

THOUGHTS:

The backdrop of 1941 London during WWII is an interesting context but feels completely unexploited. The blend of real historical events with supernatural horror elements had the potential to be a uniquely engaging premise, but this story could take place at any other time with little to no consequence to the script and its characters. For a horror movie set in WWII, we do not witness or explore the horrors of war at all. And while the story ends on the unrecognized sacrifices and heroism of women during the war, this feels superficial and not properly set up throughout the movie.

The script interestingly features an all-female ambulance team as the protagonists, but each character feels like a simplistic archetype, and their relationships are superficial. Secondary characters are mere stereotypes; the two detectives, in particular, are comical one-dimensional characters and seem out of place in what aims to be a dramatic R-rated horror film.

The script effectively builds tension and suspense through its horror elements in the first act, and the third act has an impactful climax. However, the second act feels repetitive and unoriginal, with the creature going after the different leads and them escaping, getting captured, and/or witnessing the gruesome death of secondary characters. Many characters feel like plot devices, only present for the Anchorite to kill gruesomely.

Lastly, while impactful, the ending leaves some narrative threads unresolved, especially concerning the trauma and psychological/emotional state of the surviving characters, which no one even believes.

COMPS:

THE DESCENT

Budget: \$4,344,672

Domestic Opening weekend: \$8,911,330

Gross (US & Canada): \$26,024,456

Gross (World): \$57,051,053

Director: Neil Marshall

Writer: Neil Marshall

Production Companies: Celador Films, Northmen Productions

Distribution Company: Pathé Distribution

SILENT HILL

Budget:

Domestic Opening weekend: \$20,152,598

Gross (US & Canada): \$46,982,632

Gross (World): \$100,605,135

Director: Christophe Gans

Writer: Roger Avary

Production Companies: Silent Hill DCP Inc., Davis Films, Konami

Distribution Company: Metropolitan