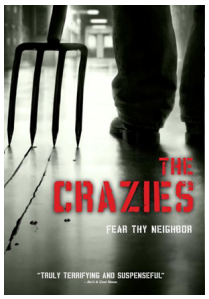
Whether or not you think remaking George A. Romero’s THE CRAZIES was a good idea, Anchor Bay’s DVD and Blu-ray of the result demonstrates that there was a lotta love for Romero among its creators. An audio commentary by director Breck Eisner and a dedicated featurette make it clear that the filmmaking team aimed to be respectful of the original even as they took a somewhat different point of view on the material.



In the opening minutes of his talk track, Eisner says that when he came on board the project, he wanted to steer the script away from the dual civilian/military emphasis of Romero’s film and Scott Kosar’s original redux draft to a “more human story” keyed into the former. The movie (rewritten by Ray Wright and previously reviewed here) thus loses some of the complexity of Romero’s narrative, and it also (as Eisner admits) is lacking one of its most shocking moments, involving Lynn Lowry’s character and her dad—though Lowry was brought in for a cameo. THE CRAZIES 2010 still succeeds as a tense, well-acted, straightforward action-chiller in which a small Iowa town’s married sheriff and doctor (Timothy Olyphant and Radha Mitchell as David and Judy Dutten) are faced with their neighbors succumbing to homicidal madness thanks to a military biotoxin being released into the water supply. Then the Army shows up to quarantine the area, and things just get worse.

As the Duttens, David’s deputy Russell (Joe Anderson) and surviving teen Becca (Danielle Panabaker) attempt to flee to safety, they traverse wide-open spaces that, per Eisner, were intended to create a visual sense that there’s nowhere for them to hide. That comes across very well in the discs’ 2.40:1 transfers, which are sharp and richly colored, with active, edgy soundtracks (Dolby Digital 5.1 on both discs, plus PCM 5.1 on the Blu-ray). Also making a fine impression is Eisner himself in his commentary, with his thoughtful observations on remaking Romero giving way to a comprehensive discussion of every side of the filmmaking process, from casting to locations to the depiction of the military (not surprisingly, the company didn’t even bother contacting the Department of Defense for cooperation, and the Apache and Huey

choppers seen in the movie were loaners from local collectors!). Pointing out certain scenes that were originally intended to be more complex—yet are nonetheless among the movie’s most effective—he covers topics both genre-centric (explaining the difference between this “infected” saga and a zombie film, and noting that John Carpenter’s THE THING was also an inspiration) and creative (disclosing the secret of “the French reverse”).

It’s a terrific track, and almost renders the “Behind the Scenes With Breck Eisner” featurette superfluous. A good deal of what the director says on camera here is repetitive from the commentary, but there are sufficient interview snippets from his collaborators and on-set clips to make it worth a watch. Eisner also waxes admiringly, along with assorted other commentators, on his CRAZIES predecessor and the first film’s social commentary in “The George A. Romero Template,” while “Paranormal Pandemics” is less about the reality of lethal viruses and more an intriguing look at makeup FX artist Robert Hall’s development of the sickly prosthetics.

Another segment gives us a front-row seat as Hall and his team turn actor Brett Rickaby into one of the contaminated hunters, with plenty of up-close detail that would be pretty revolting if the sores, engorged veins etc. weren’t fake. The package is rounded out by a couple of atmospheric motion comics based on the feature; before-and-after visual FX shots; a well-stocked behind-the-scenes photo collection; plus storyboards, trailers and TV spots—everything you need for a completely fulfilling supplemental experience.

MOVIE: 💀💀💀💀

DVD PACKAGE: 💀💀💀💀

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