

## “FADING OF THE CRIES” (DVD Review)

Written by Jeremy Webster

Wednesday, 18 January 2012 10:48

---



In general, there are really two types of bad film. The first is the empty cash grab—a film that has a minimum of care and craft in its creation, because the filmmakers see it as a quickie profit device and nothing more. The second type is the “noblest intentions” sort. Its creators were passionate about the project, felt they had a strong, compelling vision and were more than likely convinced that they really had something that an audience would find interesting and engaging. Be they ambitious, enthusiastic amateurs or myopic, egocentric auteurs, the final result is a film that is, for general audiences, unwatchable rubbish.

FADING OF THE CRIES (out on DVD from Lionsgate) is, sadly, a perfect recent example of the second type.



This debut feature by writer/director Brian A. Metcalf essentially boils down to a young woman named Sarah (Hallee Hirsh), who, after finding a magic amulet in her house, comes under assault by an army of zombies controlled by a necromancer named Mathias (Brad Dourif). With her mother and 14-year-old sister trapped in their home, Sarah finds herself suddenly under the protection of Jacob (Jordan Matthews), a sword-wielding, toothpick-thin guy in a trenchcoat and the purplest jeans this side of old-school HULK comics. Together they traverse a seemingly endless series of CG environments full of ghouls and bad digital FX to eventually find themselves in a showdown with, naturally, Mathias.

As the central action hero, Jacob looks like a skinny emo teen in a cosplay MATRIX getup. Metcalf has supplied his hero with a magic sword that looks to be 4 feet long, yet he seems to only use it in that knife-fighting style where the weapon is held upside down and the blade runs along the user's forearm. I can't comment as to whether this style of sword combat is effective, or even exists, as martial arts is not my area of expertise, but I can say that, as presented in

## “FADING OF THE CRIES” (DVD Review)

Written by Jeremy Webster

Wednesday, 18 January 2012 10:48

---

the film, it's pretty boring to watch. Why give your hero a 4-foot blade and not let him reach out sometimes for the really great visuals?

Metcalf seems to have held notions of incorporating stylized environments and elements throughout the film via CGI. Think of the virtual environments of *SIN CITY* or *300*, and you'll understand—a computer-generated hyperreality for the characters to interact in. I applaud the guy's ambition if that was his aim, but he certainly didn't have anywhere near the resources to pull it off convincingly. Fight sequences are also marred with gobs upon gobs of digital wankery, with character motion-blur, faked “quaky-cam” when characters strike each other and virtual gobs of unconvincing digital blood spurting all over equally digital floors. It's weirdly like watching real people trying to interact in a video game with far outmoded tech.

Don't look to the writing or acting to save this movie, either. Metcalf's overriding theme is the importance of family—Sarah comes to appreciate hers, despite their flaws, through the zombie invasion; Jacob is who he is because his family was slaughtered; the uncle who owned the house prior to Sarah's family (played by Thomas Ian Nicholas, whom viewers might remember as Kevin Myers in the *AMERICAN PIE* series) started the whole mess by trying to learn how to resurrect his wife and child with Mathias' amulet; and even Mathias himself seems to be motivated in his evildoing by a desire to resurrect his own wife and child, who were apparently killed by townspeople long ago. Metcalf doesn't supply his viewers with enough in the way of positive emotional input on all these relations via flashbacks or scenes of emotional resonance, though, and the inept handling of this central theme simply adds another injury to an already unbearably crippled film.

The acting is planklike, with peaks into scenery-chewing throughout the film, but Metcalf's writing was certainly no help to his cast. It pains me to see Dourif, who, after fantastic work in Peter Jackson's *LORD OF THE RINGS* and HBO's *DEADWOOD*, apparently still needs a regular paycheck enough to accept a role in a film such as this. Metcalf's dialogue for Mathias is mostly ludicrous, and it isn't fun to watch such a talent hamming his way through it.

And yet, those with a keen eye will notice remarkable attempts at detail and artistry throughout. While the eye might reject and recoil from the obviously fake backdrops, sky FX and combat visuals, the realization that Metcalf was really trying, and probably trying hard, seems staggering. Humbling. Visuals like the shiny digital dust overlay in the film's central house are, yes, just as unconvincing as all the rest of the digital detritus Metcalf is intent we wade through, but...for the love of all that's holy in cinema and the bargain bin, it's digital dust! Metcalf seems to have vividly known what he wanted, even if the resulting product didn't pan out.

## “FADING OF THE CRIES” (DVD Review)

Written by Jeremy Webster

Wednesday, 18 January 2012 10:48

---

The DVD’s bonus content consists of the film’s trailer and a 15-minute “Behind the Scenes” featurette that largely consists of Dourif and Matthews saying nice things about Metcalf and the script, as well as a lot of shots of the actors doing their thing in greenscreen environments. It’s a bizarre viewing experience, as you know the interviews are overly gracious and fawning, but when they show you two actors running hand-in-hand on treadmills in a green room, and explain that that’s how they pulled off a scene of our heroes running through catacombs under the town, one can’t help but feel a bit insulted: “You mean they really weren’t in that obviously CG environment they were running through?”

FADING OF THE CRIES may be a good pick for the bad-film enthusiast who loves this sort of cinema for what could be called its unintentional qualities, a fate I have to admit I believe the first type of bad film mentioned above deserves. As FADING stands as the second type, it can be seen in a more reverent, perhaps even mournful, light. Metcalf clearly was really trying here—there’s just too much attempt at an intricately detailed onscreen world to write it off as empty exploitation. Misguided enthusiasm is probably a far better classification for this one, and let us hope that FADING OF THE CRIES is his period of cinematic growing pains.

MOVIE: 

DVD PACKAGE: 