

## “KIDNAPPED” (Film Review)

Written by Samuel Zimmerman  
Wednesday, 15 December 2010 11:26

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Horror history in the first decade of the 21st century has already been reflected on as a time of torture cinema as a reaction to the war on terror and all it wrought in the U.S. But in the last five years or so, a more interesting and successful (in terms of quality, expression of universal fears and possible reaction to a post-9/11 world) global screen trend has addressed the home invasion. America has most notably contributed *THE STRANGERS* (and even *THE COLLECTOR*, worth mentioning for its marriage of this theme with torture/traps), France hit hard with *INSIDE* and *ILS (THEM)*, the UK offers the upcoming *CHERRY TREE LANE* from *THE COTTAGE*'s Paul Andrew Williams and, this year, Spain put forth the must-see *KIDNAPPED*.

*KIDNAPPED* (a.k.a. *SECUESTRADOS*, playing in New York City as part of Lincoln Center's [Spanish Cinema Now](#) series, and set for wider U.S. release next year from IFC Films) is a movie that forces one to re-examine past uses of the word “harrowing,” just to see if they truly match up to the standard this one sets. It's a simple story concerning a family of three—Jaime (Fernando Cayo), Marta (Ana Wagener) and their daughter Isa (Manuela Velles)—on the first day they settle into their new home, and the three masked men who violently barge in with the worst intentions.



As with most films of such a basic narrative structure, *KIDNAPPED* boils down to performance and storytelling, and both are exceptional here. What will likely come up most readily when discussing the movie will be director Miguel Ángel Vivas' work with cinematographer Pedro J. Marquez, as they have crafted a film with an notably minimal amount of shots and cuts.

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Steeped in beautifully choreographed long takes, KIDNAPPED becomes gut-wrenchingly visceral, a brutal experience entrenched in reality. Without an invasive score to jolt us every time a shock moment happens, Vivas is able to add authenticity to his surprises, moments of true fright that are all the more effective in a well-presented theatrical screening.

As the break-in goes on, the clear leader of the three criminals takes Jaime on a trip, visiting ATMs with each family member's various bank cards and leaving the two women alone with the underlings. Vivas cranks the tension and genuine terror up even higher with two instances of split-screen, and it's probably the best use of that stylistic tool in recent memory. The first juxtaposes a relatively tranquil driving scene with the chaos that erupts in the home while the two men are gone, and the second is a frantic and nerve-wracking sequence in which each side veers out of control as you're forced to watch both. It's a simple yet exciting bit of sensory overload.

While the villains of the piece are relatively archetypal (the leader, the hothead, the reluctant), Jaime, Marta and Isa are the heart of KIDNAPPED, a relatable family whose ordeal is nothing short of heartbreaking. And Cayo (Belén Rueda's husband in THE ORPHANAGE), Wagener and Velles should be commended all the more for their work amidst the elaborate, often intimate and confrontational takes, laying their struggle bare before the audience's eyes.

KIDNAPPED isn't an easy watch. Its carnage (the blood and gore FX are seamless and stunning throughout) and nihilistic nature will turn some off; there isn't much reprieve, and many will find the film mean-spirited and unrelenting. Speaking for myself, it's been a long time since I looked through my fingers at what was up on the screen. KIDNAPPED truly is an unforgettable blend of sheer ferocity and genuine terror at what will happen next.



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