Saw hit theaters on Friday, Oct. 29. The film is directed by James Wan and stars Leigh Whannell, Cary Elwes, Danny Glover, and Monica Potter.

‘Saw’ slashes horror flick competition

By Allen Huang & David Maccar

What if you woke up in a strange industrial bathroom with no idea how you got there and your leg was secured shackled to a large pipe? Across the room, is a stranger who is in the same predicament as you. Between the two of you there is a dead body that apparently expired due to a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head.

That is the situation that viewers are introduced to in the first scene of Saw, James Wan’s directorial debut. The film was promoted as a Halloween horror flick, but it is much more than that. Definitely isn’t the typical serial killer movie or the typical slasher film. Instead it is a strange, intelligent hybrid of the two.

The premise surrounds a mysterious string of murders. The thing is, they aren’t really murders. The “killer,” using various methods, puts his victims in situations where they end up killing themselves trying to escape from his elaborate, life-death puzzles. The film begins in a linear method as the two residents of the bloody bathroom, Dr. Lawrence Gordon, played by Cary Elwes (The Princess Bride) and Adam (Leigh Whannell) try to figure out how to get out. Tapes left by their captor and a tape player in the grasp of the dead man on the floor set the rules and the stakes of the game. After this, most of the film is told in flashbacks as the two men try to figure out why they are there and how they can get out.

Saw plays the gross-out card at times, not through excessive gore, but through innovative camera work and implied horrors. It is unique because it plays on common fears such as a gruesome death, darkness and clown puppets, as well as on the viewer’s own shortcomings. The killer chooses his victims, as well as the situations that he puts them in, based on character flaws. His goal is to force his victims to appreciate the characteristics they have or cut out, and leave one character dead or alive. This facet forces the audience to examine its own shortcomings and allows viewers to identify with the characters.

Upon leaving the theater, certain things become less impressive the more you think about them. There are various plot twists, which raise some continuity questions, and the constant flashbacks become a bit confusing upon reflection. The fact that Elwes’ British accent comes out in some of his dialogue breaks the illusion a bit and, most disappointingly, was the lack of attention and character development given to Detective David Tapp (Danny Glover) who could have played a more significant role in the plot than the law-dog serial killer hunter who goes a little crazy. While in the darkness of the theater, the atmosphere for this suspense riddled horror/mystery movie is engrossing and downright disturbing. It is an innovative step forward for the horror film genre, which has been identified with, that is like a breath of fresh air, relieving of fear and suspense for both horror fans and movie fans alike.

DVD proves to be the ‘Dawn’ of a new era of fear

By Joe Haubrich

Yet another zombie flick was unleashed on America, giving audiences a fresh picture to sink their teeth into. Those who were bowed in theaters by Zack Snyder’s remake of George A. Romero’s horror classic, Dawn of the Dead, have waited six months to add the re-envisioned and upgraded zombie thriller to their DVD collection. The new Dawn of the Dead was a smash hit that knocked the mighty The Passion of the Christ out of its number one position atop the box office after months of domination. Most will agree that the wait was worthwhile once they see the tons of extra footage loaded in the special edition, “Unrated Director’s Cut.”

History shows that it is not always either a bright or lucrative idea to remake a well-loved classic, like Romero’s Dawn of the Dead, which became the blueprint for all zombie movies since its release. However, Snyder’s gift to the horror scene blows this theory out of the water. Viewers hardly notice that this movie is the work of a first-time director and the movie is sure to please those who felt sore at the thought of a remake. The film has what every American audience loves in a horror movie: blood, gore, violence, suspense, sex, explosions, morbid humor and more gore.

The new Dawn of the Dead is a retelling of the old film to a new generation. There are many similarities and viewers should look for cameos appearances of actors from the original. This adaptation of Dawn of the Dead is about a mysterious plague that is turning people into zombies. A viral outbreak has caused those affected to hunt for human flesh. Once bitten by a zombie, the victim of the bite becomes a zombie and joins the masses in search of living meat. A band of survivors take refuge at the Crossroads Mall in Wisconsin. The group of strangers includes a nurse (Sarah Polley), a tough cop (Ving Rhames), a good guy (Jake Weber), a street-smart man (Mekhi Phifer) and his pregnant wife, mall security guards and others. They defend the mall against the army of blood-thirsty zombies, thinking they can remain there for a long time because of their easy access to food, clothes, television, radios and other necessary supplies. When the group realizes that there is no escape on the way and members begin to show signs of infection, they must plan their escape.

While the movie borrows many aspects from its predecessor, it also borrows from its British counterpart 28 Days Later. Equally as shocking, it was based on the spread of an infection through biting and introduced the world to “smart” zombies. Gone are the days of the mindless waves who were built straight with their arms outstretched.

The DVD features on this project are well worth both the “Unrated Director’s Cut” title and the extra $20 price tag. The extras include director commentary, nine additional minutes of footage, deleted scenes and much more. On this limited edition you will find “The Lost Tape,” a terrifying look at the last days of footage shot on a camcorder by Andy, a minor, yet pivotal character. You’ll also find “Special Bulletin: We Interrupt This Program!” a compilation of news footage that shows the zombie onslaught throughout the rest of the world with commentary from a new anchorwoman.

Even if you hate zombie movies, or if you have distaste for remakes because of the nostalgia and legend of the original, you may find Dawn of the Dead entertaining. This is not a good pick for the squeamish however. While it may not be of Romero’s style, the modern take on the film of the Dead might one day be considered a horror classic itself.