FREDDY AND JASON THROW DOWN ON DVD

It’s the glove against the machete in the ultimate deathmatch

By Vincent Civitillo
Managing Editor

New Line Cinema owes a great debt to Freddy Krueger.

Back in the 1980s, when the studio was first trying to get on its feet, the phenomenal success of the Nightmare on Elm Street series kept it out of bankruptcy long enough to hit it big in the late ’90s as one of the major hitters before its popularity exploded in the last few years with the Lord of the Rings trilogy.

And so, eventually graceful, as long as New Line Cinema is still around to entertain movie-goers, the razor-gloved son of 100 maniacs will always be around to haunt our dreams.

The latest Krueger outing, Freddy vs. Jason, directed by Ronny Yu (Head of Chuckie), oddly enough takes place not too long after Jason Goes to Hell: The Final Friday, where he was last seen pulling Jason’s mask into the ground.

Freddy is trapped in Hell, and as it’s been years since he’s gotten to haunt anyone, nobody up on Elm Street is afraid of him enough to conjure up the fedora-wearing psycho in their dreams.

Enter Jason Voorhees, the hockey-masked unstoppable juggernaut from the Friday the 13th series. Freddy is able to enter Jason’s dreams and trick him into rising up to slay a few people on Elm Street long enough to get them remembering Freddy. But like kids fighting over the same toy in kindergarten, Jason refuses to step down when Freddy is able to return to action and the final battle between evil and evil ensues.

An interesting thing happened to slashers movies over the last decade or two.

As the movies became unexpectedly popular and sequels were made, the villains stopped being scary.

Now normally this would just mean that writers would stop penning tales about Freddy and Jason and call it a night, but because of the incredible popularity of the franchises, they couldn’t.

As a result, the two villains became stale because a series based around a villain required new heroes to be introduced in each film whose only purpose was to be killed. After a while, something no one expected happened; slasher movies got funny.

Characters like Freddy and Chucky became wise-guys, killing people in ironic or outright funny ways and playing to the horror clichés that took away their fright-might in order to better entertain.

Freddy vs. Jason is a prime example of this, as no one will likely find it scary, but many jokes are planted around the movie for the purpose of pure entertainment.

At the end of the night, audiences will have laughed, jumped and been dazzled by the downright crazy end fight sequence, but unless they can’t stand the sight of blood, they won’t go to bed worried about nightmares.

Luckily for the DVD release, nobody does home video better than New Line, and they’ve shown it once again in this transfer.

Presented on the same disc, in both wide and fullscreen, the video sports deep blacks and colors along with impressive bright and clear daytime hues as well, uncommon for horror discs. The Dolby Digital 5.1 EX Surround mix is equally stunning, with great bass and discrete sound channeling, especially during the final battle.

However, the special features section leaves something to be desired.

Mostly made up of promotional materials, the only extras of any value are one documentary and the audio commentary. Others are included, like deleted scenes and an alternate ending, but they’re barely worth a first viewing.

Those who consider themselves fans of these films (or even just this one) will find themselves entertained with this release, which features a transfer and surround mix that truly does the two slashers justice. However, extra feature-enthusiasts, casual fans and first-timers will likely want to settle with a rental.

Best Freddy Movies:
1. (pt. 1) A Nightmare on Elm Street
2. (pt. 7) Wes Craven’s New Nightmare
3. (pt. 3) Dream Warriors

Best Jason Movies
1. (pt. 10) Jason X
2. (pt. 1) Friday the 13th
3. (pt. 6) Jason Lives!

Worst Freddy Movies:
1. (pt. 2) Freddy’s Revenge
2. (pt. 6) Freddy’s Dead
3. (pt. 5) The Dream Child

Worst Jason Movies
1. (pt. 9) Jason Goes to Hell
2. (pt. 7) The New Blood
3. (pt. 5) A New Beginning

By David Maccar
News Editor

The newest offering from Anne Rice is another installment of her famous Vampire Chronicles, entitled Blood Canticle, that has the potential to both please and upset longtime fans of the series.

Those faithful to the Chronicles will be happy to see that Rice’s legendary antithero, the Vampire Lestat, has returned as the sole narrator of the tale for the first time since 1995’s Memehah The Devil.

Those same fans might also be upset to see mini-chapters of three or four pages that detail Lestat’s personal fantasies of performing works of good around the world and one that even details an audience with the Pope in his Vatican bedroom, where he and Lestat discuss the merits of goodness. The devilishly wonderful Lestat of the past is depicted in this volume as a whining vampire full of regret and uncertainty. He laments over his strange desire to be a saint as he kills drug dealers and creates a new vampire from Mona, Quinn and Blackwood’s longtime love from Rice’s last book, Blackwood Farm.

In a messy hodgepodge that is, at times, painfully drawn out over the book’s relatively sparse 306 pages, Rice attempts to draw together the story lines from many of her past books, including the mysterious Mayfair family from her Witching Hour books as well as the supernatural creatures of her own invention called Taltos, whose story began in Lasher. The interaction of these varied and diverse characters is interesting for longtime fans, but to the casual reader, Canticle might come off as a poorly done horror story that throws in three or four classic monsters in a desperate attempt to win an audience.

Rice asks her readers to accept the existence of vampires, Taltos, witches, ghosts, people with superhuman powers of the mind, a mysterious medical center that does secret experiments and a secret island community of Taltos that was overtaken by drug runners as well as a new, more morally sensitive Lestat all in one novel. It’s a bit hard to swallow.

In a desperate attempt to create something fresh and different, Rice has sabotaged herself by abandoning the characters and the shadowy mystique that has drawn readers to her books since 1976’s Interview With The Vampire.

The tone of Canticle is glossy and often sad as the prose evokes a feeling in readers that Rice is scraping the bottom of her story reserve. This disingenuous mix of a novel would be better left to hard-core fans who are well accustomed to trudging through pages of laborious descriptions of fashion and interior decorating, as well as hairstyles. Rice has painted a beautiful picture completely devoid of life and intrigue.

Vampire book bleeds fun out of reading

Blood Canticle, the latest novel from author Ann Rice, follows up her famous vampire chronicles but falls short as it proves to be a boring read.

By Mary Stephens

The interactivity continues as New Line leaves something to be desired.

Those who enjoy the potentials of interactive novels might be disappointed in this release, which features a transfer and surround mix that truly does the two slashers justice. However, extra feature-enthusiasts, casual fans and first-timers will likely want to settle with a rental.