

MOVIES

Don't expect 'Scream 3' to measure up to the original

In *Scream*, director Wes Craven was credited with reinventing the horror genre. In *Scream 3*, he seems intent on reinventing *Scream*.

He doesn't. All the familiar elements are in *Scream 3*. That cast of survivors from the first two *Scream* outings returns, it has excellent production values and the usual quota of shock scenes, although the gore factor is disturbingly low. This time around the much put-upon Sidney Prescott is again targeted by a maniac with the pale melting mask and black cloak. Now, however, she lives in secluded northern California where she works for a crisis hotline.

Imagine her surprise when the killer calls her. That sends her packing to Hollywood where the production of *Stab 3: Return to Woodsboro*, the mythical reflection of *Scream 3*, is being filmed. She links up with Dewey Riley, the Barney Fife-styled cop in the two previous *Screams*, who now is serving as a technical advisor on *Stab 3*.

Dewey had called Sydney when cast members began turning up with multiple puncture wounds. Sidney and Dewey join forces with a hard-boiled homicide detective to track down the killer.

Craven lets us know in the first few minutes that this is not going to be an easy ride. Cotton Weaver, Sidney's savior in the last film and now the host of his own TV talk show called *100% Cotton*, is quickly dispatched along with his girlfriend. It's Craven's way of saying expect the unexpected. He keeps hammering that this is the third part of a trilogy and in the final chapter, anyone can get killed — even the star.

So who is the killer? Could it possibly be Sidney herself, driven over the edge by the ghost of her mysterious dead mother who keeps reappearing? Or is it someone out of central casting? Just keep in mind, as is pointed out in the film, trilogies end where they begin.

The problem is that when the killer's identity is finally revealed, you'll say, 'Yeah, OK.'

Indeed, there is a tired feel to this whole film. *Scream* shone with its clever dialogue and the incisive manner in which Craven set traps for the audience by second guessing what we were thinking. Missing the plot right in front of us and twisting clichés to make them fresh. He left us reeling.

Here he leaves us yawning. There are far too many jumpstarts shocks of someone popping out of the background. For a while spend an awful lot of time floating down dark hallways with the killer steps behind. And as for that big knife, every time the killer raises it it makes a swooshing sound that would set Wayne and Garth drooling.



No need to 'Scream' again: Left to right, Parker Posey, Courtney Cox Arquette and David Arquette star in Wes Craven's third stab at scaring movie audiences in the Dimension Films release.

Only veteran actor Lance Henriksen, who excels in these type of films, is short-changed with far too small a role.

There are occasional sparks in the dialogue like when the bimbo actress whines that the shower scene she has to do has been a cliché since it was first used in *Vertigo*. Try *Psycho*. Only once does the film attain any sense of eeriness, which occurs when Sidney walks onto the still and darkened set recreating her house in Woodsboro, where the "actual" murders occurred.

But too much of the film is contrived and tired. The lock picking scene is truly ludicrous. And just how many times can you creak somebody the head and still not hurt him/her?

The most insightful line about this film was actually delivered in *Scream 2* when a character noted that sequels are never as good as the original. While *Scream 3* is a definite step up from *Scream 2*, it's time to retire the franchise.

But that may not be, as Craven literally has left the door open for *Scream 4*.

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COMING ATTRACTIONS

Scheduled to open Friday, Feb. 11

THE BEACH
A young American sets off on an exotic adventure in Thailand, only to discover that the modern-day paradise hides some disturbing secrets. Stars Leonardo DiCaprio and Robert Carlyle.



Tiger and Company: Winnie, the Pooh, Tiger and friends return to the big screen in "The Tigress and Company."

THE WHOLE HOLE YARDS
Nicholas "Oz" Oseransky is a nice dentist living in suburban Montreal. His new neighbor Jimmy "The Tulip" Tudeski is a hit man in hiding. Oz and Jimmy find themselves with something in common, someone's trying to kill them. Stars Matthew Perry, Bruce Willis and Rosanna Arquette.

SHOW DAY
Chevy Chase, Chris Elliott, Pam Grier and Iggy Pop star in this family comedy about possibilities, friendship and young love. A lovelorn teenager declares his affection for the girl of his dreams, a downworld employee defies his tyrannical employer, a 10-year-old tackles the scariest villain of his life and plastic action dolls suddenly come to life. Or do they? Anything can happen on a snowy day.

Scheduled to open Friday, Feb. 18

THE WHOLE HOLE YARDS
Nicholas "Oz" Oseransky is a nice dentist living in suburban Montreal. His new neighbor Jimmy "The Tulip" Tudeski is a hit man in hiding. Oz and Jimmy find themselves with something in common, someone's trying to kill them and they have to find a way to work together to avoid untimely ends. Stars Matthew Perry, Bruce Willis, Rosanna Arquette and Kevin Pollack.

THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH (PG-13)
POKEMON: THE FIRST MOVIE (G)
END OF DAYS (R)

'Isn't She Great' — Bette and cast have some good moments

BY JON KATZ
SPECIAL WRITER

There will be comparisons between 'Isn't She Great' and 'Man on the Moon.' Both are biopics. And that's where the comparison should end.

Jim Carrey's homage to comic enigma Andy Kaufman was a performance-and-a-half. The only enigma about the story of shock-schlock author Jacqueline Susann is why Bette Midler and Universal felt that anyone would be interested.

Not that the woman who perpetrated the publication of "Valley of the Dolls," "The Love Machine" and "One is Not Enough" didn't lead a life worth telling. She was, in her time, the best-selling novelist of all time. She changed the way books are mass-marketed and contributed as much to mid-'60s pop culture as her books. All this while battling breast cancer, denying the severity of her autistic son's condition and keeping both a secret from the public.

Today's moviegoers, however, don't care any more about Jackie Susann than they do about, well, go-go boots.

"All I know about are aging stars, hopeful hookers and people popping pills and nobody writes books about that," says Midler as Susann. The light goes



Author's story: Bette Midler and Nathan Lane star in 'Isn't She Great.'

on over manager-husband Irving Mansfield's (Nathan Lane) head, and the rest is history. The failed actress stammered her way into her prized spotlight by putting personality above ability.

No ability? Plainly that wasn't so. She may not have been able to put an English sentence together on paper, but she certainly knew what to say. "It's like overhearing gossip in the ladies room," is one reader's review of "Dolls." "It's like 'Gone With the Wind,' only filthier" gushes Irving.

But "Isn't She Great" is pretty much Bette being Bette, and we must take it on their word that she and Jackie walked and deliv-

ered rim shot punchlines the same way. The screenplay by Paul Rudnick ("In & Out") gets into a standard rhythm early on and never strays from the sitcom pattern. Susann talks to God by way of a tree in Central Park, bullying him like everyone else ("C'mon, get on the phone and make me famous").

Nathan Lane does his one puppy-dog expression throughout, but David Hyde Pierce ("Frasier") scores as the prudish Connecticut Yankee book editor who grows to care for Jackie if not for her material. Stockard Channing has good moments as the boozey best friend, the Vera to Midler's Mame. Her best moment is a silent one, walking into the hospital room and seeing Jackie on her deathbed. John Cusack is wasted as the book publisher.

If you lived through the 60s, however, you'll enjoy a terrific impression of Truman Capote by Sam Street: a faithful recreation of those wild op-art clothes and colors, right down to the writers in the publishing house, and note that singer Steve Lawrence is played by Steve & Eydie's son David.

But basically it's a "who cares" bio that will earn a brief blip on the big screen and a one-way ticket to videoville.