

## 'Annabelle: Creation' manages to illicit a few scares

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun  
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**Rating: «« out of 4 stars**

**Running Time: 109 min.**

Annabelle is an evil and decidedly creepy-looking porcelain plaything that first received attention for its brief but memorable turn in *The Conjuring*. The bit stood out so much that the toy received its own film in 2014. While the press (myself included) were less enamored with the spin-off, it was successful enough to spawn this week's follow-up,

*Annabelle: Creation*

. As expected, this prequel/sequel is far from a classic. Still, those who enjoy a chill or two may find a few of their hairs standing on end.

Set in the 1950s, the story involves doll-maker Samuel Mullins (Anthony LaPaglia) and his wife Esther (Miranda Otto), who manufacture the titular creation at their remote home and then experience a great personal tragedy. Some time later, the staff and residents of a closing orphanage are invited to take refuge with the couple. Led by Sister Charlotte (Stephanie Sigman), the kids begin experiencing strange phenomena, with most events revolving around the youngest new arrivals, Polio-stricken Janice (Talitha Bateman) and her friend Linda (Lulu Wilson).

The kids are sweet and likable and the adults empathetic enough to engage in the story, although the screenplay is simply an excuse to allow numerous sequences with the doll terrorizing the leads. Those with any familiarity with these types of movies will know exactly what to expect. Of course, it doesn't help that there are many moments where the leads lack

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any sort of common sense, seemingly walking into trouble rather than turning around. Then again, packing up and leaving at the first sign of strangeness makes for a very short horror movie.

And that's a good thing, because the scare sequences stand as the highlights. Director David F. Sandberg (*Lights Out*) has honed his skills from his previous outing, using long takes that hold on a beat or two longer than expected. Somehow, the odd length and stillness works and helps add tension to the otherwise familiar scare tactics. There's a tendency to keep Annabelle out of frame and shoot characters in tight spaces peering through grates and obstructions. These eerie bits, often featuring a character staring at a static object for a lengthy period, do create unease when employed.

There's also an extremely creepy scene with a child trapped with Annabelle. After being covered with a sheet, the doll rises and walks ever-so-slowly towards the youth, with the sheet gradually falling off. There's another moment with two characters at night talking under a sheet and lit from underneath with a flashlight. A menacing figure approaches and viewers only hear sounds and see obscured movement through the fabric. These scenes play on viewer imagination and work extraordinarily well.

However, as the movie continues to its climax, events begin to become exaggerated and sillier. The story also doesn't do as much with the supporting kids as it should to really emphasize the threat (although the group do face off against a nasty creation in a nearby barn). And there are some intended jolts involving a young, possessed character that don't come across as terrifying... the small party isn't truly menacing, lessening the impact of these scenes.

Still, the finale does tie things up and connect events with the other films, which should please fans of the series. And *Annabelle: Creation* is better than the previous entry (as well as the director's last flick, *Lights Out*). It feels closer in tone to the *Conjuring* films even if it cribs many of its scares. In the end, this effort isn't going to go down in horror movie history, but if you're just looking for a couple of jumps, you could do worse.

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