

Insidious: The Last Key produces the odd jolt but feels worn

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

Running Time: 103 min.

In many series, there eventually comes a time when it feels like things become so familiar that they cease to be exciting or engaging. *Insidious: The Last Key* is the fourth title in the very successful franchise. Last many series, the first was a very effective scare picture, but each subsequent chapter has become less effective at providing hair-raising chills. This effort provides a couple of interesting ideas and one or two effective jolts, but it's all beginning to feel a bit worn out.

The feature focuses on parapsychologist Dr. Elise Rainier (Lin Shaye) and her paranormal team of investigators Specs (Leigh Whannell) and Tucker (Angus Sampson). This time out, they're called to investigate supernatural events at a house next to a penitentiary. As revealed through exposition and flashbacks, the location was the childhood home of Rainier, where she first began to develop her skills. It was also the location of a demon who tormented her. Wary to return home but determined to help the new owner (Kirk Acevedo) and face her own fears, the doctor comes face to face with a lanky being credited as KeyFace. She also encounters long lost members of her family.

Viewers will get more of what they've come to expect from the series. That is, many shots of silhouetted figures racing across the screen behind the characters accompanied by the loudest musical stings imaginable. It almost feels like they're cranking the noise up louder and louder to combat the familiarity of the jolts. Still, to be fair a couple of them do work and there is a suspenseful sequence involving a pile of suitcases that does generate some tension. Also

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admirable is the attempt at a plot twist that pushes the story in a different direction.

Unfortunately, the additions and expanded back story also end up emphasizing how implausible these events really are. The family reunion results in some bizarre behavior and awkwardly written exchanges between characters. It's not a good sign when encounters with a supernatural being feel more believable than the human interactions. And there are still plenty of silly reactions to some pretty crazy events that take viewers out of the film.

As expected, there are always tropes that one sees in these types of movies. The paranormal team carry all sorts of equipment, but it's rare that we see them enter any haunted or dangerous locale with more than a single, dim flashlight. There's also a stab at humor from Specs and Tucker. One gag involving entry into an air tunnel is funny, but most of it plays way too broadly to be effective. It also doesn't help that the pair are made to flirt awkwardly with college-age girls; it's especially icky given that the ladies are their boss Rainier's nieces.

The film is reasonably well made and does earn a jolt or two here and there, but it's hardly in the same league as the original. By the time it starts setting up another sequel promising to bring back elements from the first movie, it's pretty clear that the events and characters have run their course. *Insidious: The Last Key* isn't intended to be the final feature in this series, but one certainly feels like now might be the right time to check out and give the property a rest.

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