

Mediocre Horror: *A Quiet Place Part II* Rant/Review

By Aurelio De Leon, Jr.

Picture this. It's a post-apocalyptic world where vicious sound sensitive monsters have dominated the planet and you've lost your child and your partner. You just want to live the rest of your miserable days mourning in relative safety at the train depot hideout you've carved out for yourself. Then suddenly, in the distance you see three reckless survivors invading your makeshift home, playing high pitched frequencies through a radio, firing a shotgun, setting off your traps, followed by the shrill and annoying sound of a prepubescent boy screaming in pain. Then if that wasn't enough, imagine that these survivors with all the audacity in the world, demand that you take care of them and their loud-ass baby because suddenly it's your obligation even though they chose to have one in this particular apocalypse. If you can picture all that, you can see in a nutshell a majority of the problems with *A Quiet Place Part II*. I'll say it plainly, this film is not good, it is merely mediocre at best and exhibits the most intense cases of plot conveniences and contrivances that contribute to the deficit in modern horror thrillers. (Spoilers ahead?)

For me, horror and thrillers operate best when they have solid characters and good tension that often can work in unison; and I believe that good tension relies on the good characters performing to the best of their ability and making the best possible decisions, even if those decisions don't always go according to plan. Unfortunately, much like the first film, *A Quiet Place Part II* has neither of these elements, so when people say that it's a good movie or it's so tense, it just baffles me. These characters continue to make some of the worst decisions possible which completely nullifies any tension in the scenes. It takes you out of the moment to watch a character make a decision that no person in their right mind would make and instead make a decision that only serves to place the characters in unnecessary danger to push the plot forward.

For any film to work, it needs a compelling plot, good characters and good dialogue, but with most of the dialogue gutted in lieu of a gimmicky sound premise, you better hope those characters and plot pull their weight. Spoiler, they don't. Like I said earlier, the characters make some of the worst decisions and I would be remiss if I didn't go ahead and point some of those out. The film goes out of its way to show you all these clever approaches that characters try in order to reduce their noise output but one in particular is the lack of shoes which was already shown to be ineffective with the whole 'random nail coming from nowhere' fiasco from the first film. Even Cillian Murphy's character is shown to be wearing shoes, demonstrating that you can just as effectively survive without being vulnerable and barefoot. Another instance is the boy coming out of the shelter for no other reason other than to provide danger and conflict as he clumsily noses around the depot. He is old enough to know better. There is no logical reason why he does this other than bad writing. Even simple things like the way the sister wakes up her brother by suddenly grabbing his mouth is so contrived for tension. No one would wake up someone like that in a sound apocalypse! Why take the risk when a simple nudge would suffice? Why does every person have to put their finger to their lips in this movie; it's pretty much a joke

at this point. No shit we should be quiet, I think we all understand that by now! And whatever moral take you have regarding the baby, there's no doubt that having a baby in these circumstances is a dumb decision especially when it puts your already grown children in constant danger. These parents were already shown to be inept at keeping their children alive in the last film, so is it really smart to have this baby while constantly looking for oxygen tanks on top of that? Furthermore, why would a mostly deaf girl decide that it's a good idea to traverse this landscape alone on a whim without consulting anyone, knowing she can't properly defend herself? Maybe so she can be idiotic like their father who also died needlessly? But of course she gets saved by Murphy's character (who is guilt-tripped by the mother to do so) right before she gets a well-deserved death. How convenient.

Because the film establishes so many plot contrivances and deus ex machina moments, there are no stakes in the film, no fear that anyone in the film will die from a mistake they make unless they have to for a forced plot reason. No stakes in the characters equals zero tension for me and for a film that tries to take itself so seriously, it's full of these long drawn out stare down action shots that just feel cringey and out of place when something tense should be happening. Imagine if the baby and brother were in danger by legitimate means and they were stuck in the chamber. The only way for the brother to survive is to use the baby's last bit of oxygen and the mother can't quite make it to save the baby in time. Can you imagine the weight that scene would hold? The stakes would be real, the tension higher than ever, the consequences would feel heavy. It would make that plotline go somewhere and all the more tragic but ultimately it would be effective and complex storytelling of a brother choosing his life over the baby's. But of course none of that happens because this is a cookie cutter apocalypse where our characters can live while making the dumbest choices. The mother shoots her revolver above ground and distracts the alien and instead of rushing the noise and her directly, like we've seen every other time, this one decides to wait dramatically for Blunt to be doused in water before it approaches.

Whatever competent filmmaking, camerawork and direction are present, is far overshadowed by this film's shortcomings. The film looks very well made and even has a few cool frames and shots with the daughter and Murphy silhouetted against a foggy street, reminiscent of a better story in this genre in *The Last of Us*. But none of this makes up for the lack of likeable or competent characters mixed in with the bad and predictable storytelling. Many people seem to like this film across the board and that's fine, but I just can't get behind what everyone appears to praise Krasinski for. It's not the worst film by any stretch, especially for a rookie director, it just wasn't up to my standards for a good horror thriller. It had an opportunity to improve its weaker qualities in this sequel, but it just gave us more of the same and if that's fine with you then you'll probably like this film as much as the first. I, on the other hand, would not recommend this movie, but then again who's gonna listen to one amateur reviewer going against the grain of what's popular? See it, don't see it, it doesn't matter I suppose.

Really...the aliens can't swim and they landed on a water planet? And can't these characters just live next to a waterfall or river already? Alright, I'll stop, rant over.