



Film Reviews of “The Critic”

TRILOGY OF TERROR:

A Trilogy of Doom

Banging the Drum on All Hallow's Eve

by j lucas walker

‘The horror, the horror.’ ~ Col. Kurtz

Children of Men directed by Alfonso Cuarón (2006) *****

The Road directed by John Hillcoat (2009) ***1/2

Collapse directed by Chris Smith (2009) ****

For those of us who do, why is it that we filmgoers like to tarry to the cinematic jugular when it comes to the thrill and the horror? Is it the snuggled comfort of knowing that we will never actually fall victim to the boogeyman or whatever tangled web awaits us? Or are we secretly preparing ourselves for something more, training our minds for the ultimate test of combat with the unknowing?

Three films make up this trilogy, this trilogy of terror. They will not give in to cuddled giddiness or last second escapes from the snatches of the boogeyman. Nor will we untangle ourselves from this horror very easily; at least not without some pertinent and much labored thought processes spurring one on to think about some things. For any brave soul taking on this taxing trilogy, and with All Hallow's Eve fast on the approach, fear is good.

The three films in question include two features with a grim take on the future, *Children of Men*, *The Road*, and a documentary called *Collapse*. Taking one film at a time, all are quite unique with different themes, plot lines and characters. There are also monsters in each and every one of them, be it an armed storm trooper black bagging the head of an individual who is deemed a dissident, cannibals going after human prey or oil company execs that just don't have a clue and never gave a care. But taken as a

trilogy, as a whole, there is an overriding message that could be framed in the silhouette of a great hourglass. The sands are flowing fast and yes, Father Time appears to be madly on the run.

When I first saw *Children of Men*, it left me not with an anxiety and despair, but strange comfort. The film was so direct in its accounts of a near future society that was so bleak, chaotic and hopeless, yet so strangely familiar, that this vision had to be embraced for what it presented. The comfort is that this film 'gets it' and poses one very important question: what are we going to do about it?

Director Alfonso Cuarón's interpretation and many embellishments from the book were just a hair short of brilliant. His themes of governed totalitarianism, a definitive caste separation between rich and poor, and a jaded youth in disconnected overdrive are framed in a way that make the lights trip your brain fantastic. Ebbing hope is an underlying theme, but will not present itself before the watcher has earned it, wading through many levels of brutality, sadness and terror. This caustic tale offers up a horror so real that you simply will not forget the images seared into your memory; because they offer nothing fantastic or out of the ordinary, but only the dread of future possibilities.

The Road, based on Cormac McCarthy's book, gave no quarter for the reader nor will it the filmgoer. The subject matter, characters and plot lines are so hopeless and bleaker than bleak, and who would want any part of it—and if you do, for crying out loud find yourself a place to weep. A father and son journey through an ugly dystopian wilderness with only themselves to worry about. Among the ruins and landscapes brimming with near empty tins of scraps, stalkers and thieves, everything is gone; and writer Cormac means everything, all gone, the end.

This is a study of a father and how he attempts to provide hope for a young boy swirling in a world gone wrong; a world that provides no chances or hope of making it. The light is in the human relationship. Take away from it what you will... a joyless film experience because it drapes you in a bad dream that you can't wake up from, soaks you in sweaty bed sheets that you can't remove yourself from. It is inescapable horror.

Whether you believe or not what Michael Ruppert has to say in this very handsome documentary film, *Collapse*, it will still simply knock your socks off. This is a one man show and its subject happens to be a carrier of abundant data that is dispersed through articulate, master storytelling. Because you see, Ruppert is what in the old days used to be referred to as a town crier, albeit one with his own opinion. Nowadays he is tagged a whistleblower, and boogymen don't like whistleblowers. His warnings are thorough and complete in their rendering. Like it or not pay close attention. Think of the documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*. Then think of viewing it with a your body fever at 105 in a building that is already ablaze. This is *Collapse*.

While the other two films open up to a setting of an already dismal future, this documentary will tell you why we may be headed there. Director *Chris Smith* handles the camera work beautifully and with much invention during the interview sessions. He has also placed the setting and backdrop of the film in a dank brick under-dwelling that sets the tone for a type of bunker mentality. The rest of it is filled with raw, archival footage, detailed formulas, spreadsheets and animation to help portray and add some insight to the subject matter at hand.

Michael Ruppert opens the film with a message, ‘What we need is not an Abraham Lincoln, but a Thomas Jefferson’, and goes on to explain what his interpretations of ‘peak oil’ will mean to all of us. The picture he paints is not pretty and his opinions can easily be dismissed. Maybe he’s a kook. Obviously, he has led a somewhat troubled life and gives some background on himself during the filming. The horror of *Collapse* is that, freak or not, he believes every word that you will hear and his passion is in his message and it is unquestioned. And that is pretty scary... happy Hallow’s Eve.

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