

### "Ginger Snaps II: Unleashed" Starring Emily Perkins Lion's Gate Entertainment

There should be a rule that states, "Direct-to-video horror movie sequels are doomed to fail." But even though the bargain bins at the local Wal-Mart are filled with cast-off sequels to "Wishmaster and the Skulls," it may be a good thing such a rule is not in effect.

If the rule was put into place, it would have only been broken with the release of "Ginger Snaps II: Unleashed," the sequel to 2000's Canadian werewolf thriller. The original "Ginger Snaps" was made on a meager budget but was a tongue-in-cheek horror movie equipped with bloody effects and a dark sense of humor. The recently released sequel is a flashy, high-octane follow-up that surpasses the original in almost every way.

The ending of "Ginger Snaps" found Brigitte (Emily Perkins) on the killing end of a knife plunged into her sister's heart. Ginger (Katharine Isabelle), Brigitte's sister, had been bitten by a werewolf, and promptly transformed into a full-fledged beast of the night. With no alternative left, Brigitte was forced to end her sister's curse the only way she knew - by killing her.

"Ginger Snaps II" picks up with Brigitte on the run from her past. Now infected with the curse herself, Brigitte must counteract every night's gradual change with a dose of monk's hood, a plant with the power to halt her transformation when taken intravenously.

The problem is, another werewolf is on her trail, hoping to mate.

After being attacked by the werewolf, Brigitte is picked up by the local authorities and mistakenly put into a drug rehabilitation center thanks to the empty syringes found near her. Trapped without her tonic, Brigitte finds herself feeling the pull of the curse stronger with each passing day.

From the first scene, fans of the "Ginger Snaps" will realize they have a whole new creature on their hands. The original's quaint directing style, which utilized a decidable lack of complicated camera tricks, has been replaced with a flashy editing style and long-sweeping camera arcs.

All the camera tricks in the world can't protect a film from bad acting, though. It's a good thing "Ginger Snaps II" features an adequate array of actors and actresses. Perkins easily carries the film's weight on her shoulders.

Unfortunately, the film's producers felt the need to replace the character's moody attire (think MTV's Daria) with sexier clothing, complete with

midriff-baring tops. While this is not necessarily a bad thing, it is completely out of character for the werewolf on the loose. Fortunately, Perkins downplays this choice smoothly by adding age and maturity to her character unforeseen in the previous movie.

What sets "Ginger Snaps II" apart from the previous installment is the complete lack of suspense in the movie. While the original movie takes place in a suburb that reeked of normalcy, the majority of the action in the sequel takes place at a clinic where everybody has a secret.

From the orderly who trades fixes of patients' addictions in exchange for a pleasure to the unusual and eerie quirk of patients themselves, everybody has a hidden agenda. The film is a bleak and uncompromising horror flick that rises above the mediocrity of its predecessor.

It easily improves upon the original's special effects. The transformation prosthetics are detailed and more realistic. The final werewolf is wisely hidden in the shadows for most of the movie. Instead of presenting cinematic eye candy, the director utilizes lighting and mood to create growing terror. The wolf actually looks like a wolf in this movie as compared to the original's hairless rat.

The DVD contains several deleted scenes, including one that is highly entertaining. Brigitte's awakening in the clinic, the first person she confronts is the "mischievous Ghost," a patient. When Brigitte asks where she is, the doctor replies that she has stumbled into an organic vesting factory and doctors will soon be harvesting Brigitte's feet.

"Ginger Snaps II" meets every expectation set by the original film and even manages to surpass the original in some ways. With its detailed and mature ideas, "Ginger Snaps II" is not for everybody. Fans of intelligent horror should pass up the opportunity to watch this surprising good sequel.

-Robert S.



- If you see it on the video shelves, walk away as fast as you can.
- Only watch it to please your friend.
- Good for Saturday afternoon.
- Pick up a copy when you have a chance and film it.
- You should have bought this one.

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