

Review: Final 'Scream' takes a stab at horror greatness

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What an endlessly funny and surprisingly satisfying movie this is! *Scream* has become more of a personality than a movie trilogy. Fans of the series have by now become extremely comfortable with its characters and pop-culturally influenced humor ("Pop culture has become the politics of the 21st century!").

But while the first *Scream* films owed much to the slasher movies of the late 70's and the 80's, this 'final' chapter takes more from its own series. No less than three

scenes in *Scream 3* directly mirror classic moments from the other

Scream films, but that by no means implies that the token homages are missing. Two great moments will please avid Hitchcock fans and even Jay and Silent Bob of "Clerks" and "Dogma" fame make a hilarious cameo.

The film opens typically, if audaciously, with a short exposition and a grisly murder, but this time the victim is a major character, igniting a fear in the audience that anything can happen to anyone this time around.

Sydney (Neve Campbell) has locked herself away in a quiet Monterey home where she is a crisis counselor for women. Dewey (David Arquette) and Gale Weathers (Courtney Cox Arquette) are reunited on the set of *Stab 3* (Try to follow me here) the movie within a movie of the events surrounding the murders from the first two *Scream* films.

New faces include the brilliant Parker Posey (*Waiting for Guffman*), playing Gale Weathers in *Stab 3*, and Jenny McCarthy who plays Sydney's dead best friend Tatum (who inexplicably didn't die in *Stab*) from the original *Scream*. The complexity of the plot is part of what makes the film so fun, but if you have not seen the first two *Scream* films, it would be a huge mistake to see this one.

They all figure out that the killer is offing people in the order that they die in the script

of *Stab 3*, but unfortunately there are three different versions of it for fear that the ending would be exposed on the internet (an actual problem encountered in the filming of *Scream 2*). Also add to the mix that pictures of Sydney's dead mother are left with the bodies. As Randy (Jamie Kennedy) explains to us via posthumous video tape, in a true trilogy an event from the past that no one knew about at the beginning of the series will come out of nowhere and explain everything, just like in *Return of the Jedi* and the *Godfather III*.

It is through that video that one realizes how much Randy's character is missed, and the scene is almost touching in a strange way.

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Parker Posey however, comfortably

fills the shoes of Randy, and keeps the great comic flare in the film. The constant banter between her and the real Gale Weathers is comic gold.

In fact, most of the film is hilarious, even in the gory moments. The killer throws one character out a window towards the pool; we expect to hear a splash, but instead we hear a thud as he hits the concrete—all the action stops so that viewers have time to laugh and catch their breath.

Ads claim that this *Scream* is the scariest, but I must say that honor still belongs to the first. It is, however, the funniest, and does have what is quite possibly the best scene in the trilogy, one involving five cell phones, a fax machine and a power outage.

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Significantly better than the more cynical second film, it still has its flaws putting it a notch (albeit a small one) below the original. The opening scene, normally the scariest in the films, is not on par with the Drew Barrymore and Jada Pinkett-Smith murders in the first two. Also, the ending is a bit disappointing but brisk enough to be entertaining, and even then is made up for in a terrific epilogue.

By killing off a lead character at the outset, the tone is always a bit unsettling. In the second one, you knew Sydney couldn't be

killed, but "in the third one, all bets are off."

Ehren Kruger ("Arlington Road") wrote the script, and my initial fears of his not keeping with Kevin Williamson's characterizations melted away in the first 15 minutes. The screenplay is juicy and complex, a claim very few 'Part 3s' can make (except maybe Wes Craven's own *Dream Warriors*, the third and best *Nightmare on Elm Street* film).

Scream 3 is a real treat for *Scream* fans, and brings a satisfying close to the horror trilogy. Grade: A-



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