

Jason Born: "Friday the 13th" and "Under the Sea 3D"

Written by Mike Schulz

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FRIDAY THE 13TH

When the original *Friday the 13th* debuted, I was living in Crystal Lake, Illinois, and just a month shy of 12 years old. So you can only imagine how jazzed I was when I saw director Marcus Nispel's *Friday the 13th* reboot this past weekend, and the movie not only opened with its victims-to-be hanging out at Crystal Lake (as the series' inspiration demands), but with a title card reading "June 13, 1980" - my 12th birthday!

But wait - it gets better! The movie begins, as it must, with its obviously imperiled teenagers drinking around a campfire, and at one point, one of the kids asks, "Don't we have any Heineken?" His buddy replies, "Fuck that shit! *Pabst* fuckin' *Blue Ribbon!*", and as any dyed-in-the-wool David Lynch fan can tell you, that's an almost verbatim repeat of a conversation between Kyle MacLachlan and Dennis Hopper in *Blue Velvet*.

A Crystal-Lake-on-June-13th horror flick that referenced *Lynch*

? It was like the whole movie was designed specifically for me!

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That, unfortunately, was where my fun ended.

Admittedly, there are a few jolts in this updating of the unkillable franchise, but only because the soundtrack never stops blasting at you - even the sound of a character randomly bumping into a chair produces an auditorium-shaking clamor - and you're never truly scared here because you can never get your bearings; most of the potential shocks are diluted by darkly lit, shakily filmed, closeup-heavy shots during which you struggle just to figure out what the hell's going on.

Considering the movie's inept acting and repellent crassness (

Friday the 13th's

biggest gross-out comes when a teen drinks beer out of his sneaker), it's often just as well that we can't see what's happening. But that doesn't make listening to the dialogue any more endurable; I realize we're supposed to cheer when the traumatized teen sends Jason (presumably, incorrectly) to his maker with, "Say hi to Mommy -

in hell

!!!", but this was old and laughable stuff even on the eve of my 12th birthday.

That's the crucial disappointment: This *Friday the 13th* is more technically proficient than the original, but, nearly 29 years later, not one iota smarter. (While the new movie opens with that 1980 prelude, the bulk of it takes place in the present.) It's kind of charming, I guess, to see the series still equating teen sex and drug use with death; the movie's first victim is killed after accidentally urinating on a marijuana plant, two more die after a sweaty workout in a pup tent, and one poor sap is dismembered seconds after lighting a joint and paging through a

Hustler

. But Jason still routinely defies the time-space continuum by seeming to be in several locales simultaneously, and the characters still behave with almost masochistic dumbness - it's like all those

Scream

movies never

happened

.

And the way the film employs its two performers of color is *really* infuriating, as the one token black guy and the one token Asian guy are the only "heroes" not allowed their own romantic outlets, and spend their screen time, mouths agape, staring at the Caucasian hotties surrounding them. You could call this a satire on the retrograde attitudes of the '80s, yet there's nothing here to suggest the filmmakers are

aware

of what they're doing.

Friday the 13th

has been designed as nothing but a dumb good time, but this kind of willful ignorance is worse

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than dumb; it's depressingly regressive.



UNDER THE SEA 3D

Looking over his recent filmography, I was startled, and more than a little saddened, to realize I haven't truly enjoyed Jim Carrey's work since 2004's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. So it's a pleasure to report that, in the Putnam Museum & IMAX Theatre's new, 45-minute nature doc

Under the Sea 3D,

Carrey makes an absolutely sensational vocal tour guide. Earnest and funny and narrating the on-screen amazements with a timbre that brings to mind your favorite camp counselor telling ghost stories ("this creature looks like a shag carpet ... until it *mo-o-o-oves*

..."), Carrey is pitched just right for the movie's grade-school demographic, and lends director Harold Hall's underwater adventure an added layer of bubbly enjoyment.

The whole *movie* is bubbly. Wisely employing its 3D presentation for visual clarity rather than mere pop-out "Boo!" moments (though there are several of those, too), *Under the Sea 3D*

offers a bunch of visual astonishments to gaze upon - I was especially amazed by the leafy sea dragon, which has the sad, imploring eyes of a bloodhound - and a continually wondrous parade of snakes, snapping fish, and other alternately friendly and ferocious bottom-dwellers (including a particularly ravenous one that my friend nicknamed Bastard Crab). If the delirious audience reaction at my screening was any indication, children are gonna positively eat this film up, and there are also plenty of perks just for the grown-ups. Trust me, you haven't giggled until you've watched an aquatic mating ritual performed to Doris Day's rendition of "Perhaps, Perhaps, Perhaps."

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For reviews of Confessions of a Shopaholic and The International, see " [Immaterial Girl](#) ."