

Markham Movie Scene

# Nightmares doesn't live up to its advanced billing



In Nightmares, Emilio Estevez plays a video game addict who reaches the 13th level of a mysterious game with disastrous results.

By IAN BAILEY. The most irritating thing about most bad movies is the huge gulf between the film itself and what is usually advertised by studios hoping to drag box office dollars out of their investment before it is killed by bad word of mouth. One example of this is Nightmares.

The film has been advertised as "terrifying" and "this years sleeper", yet it is neither. Nightmares is not frightening because it is badly made. It is not a "sleeper", because it proclaims the title rather than earns it.

**Sleepers** are quiet, multifaceted films that open slowly and build in acclaim based on a growing mass of satisfied viewers recommending the film. In 1979 Breaking Away was such a film. An Officer and a Gentleman was also a sleeper. Yet in Nightmares there is little to recommend.

The film's Director, Joseph Sargent (who directed The Taking of Pehlani One Two Three and MacArthur), lacks a tight enough control of his material to squeeze terror out of the brief duration of each episode.

Another problem is that the four stories lack an overseeing rationale to tie them together.

Unlike the brilliant 1946 horror anthology The Dead of Night (it was bound together by a man's perception of a group of people at a party as he had seen them in a dream); or even the belated Steven Spielberg/John Landis production of The Twilight Zone (which was tied together by the themes created by the show and Burgess Meredith as narrator) nothing ties Nightmares together. The film is introduced by a silly montage and each tale is piled on top of the other like a series of commercials. The stories are:

**Terror** - A woman runs out of cigarettes and goes to the local convenience store despite the fact that there is a knife-wielding psychopath running amok in the neighborhood. There is a neat 10-second sequence near the conclusion, but the conventional build-up, which apes Alfred Hitchcock's style, makes it hardly worth the wait.

**Bishop of Battle** - A video game nut, played by Emilio Estevez (Martin Sheen's son using his father's original surname), manages to reach the fabled 13th level of a popular video game. He finds that winning involves killing real versions of the

game's characters. Despite a conventional script Estevez gives a good, driven performance as the addict, ringing true amid a sea of cliches.

**The Benediction** - A priest suffering a crisis of faith finds himself locked in a battle against a driverless, hell-driven pick-up truck. This silly story creaks under the weight of its overearnest, vague, religious symbolism.

**Night of the Rat** - An average suburban home is plagued by a rat the size of a baby hippopotamus. As silly as it sounds.

All of the preceding is presented

with the skill of a made-for-TV movie. The sequences are quick and clipped, the photography is fuzzy (so much so that most of the promotional stills look as though they were shot through the side of a dirty aquarium), the direction is pedestrian; in short the entire film is bound to the low threshold of originality and presentation that haunts most of commercial TV.

You would be better off to stay at home and watch an old Twilight Zone episode.

Nightmares is playing at Thornhill Cinema this weekend will be:

Nightmares in Cinema 1; Mr. Mom in Cinema 2 and a double bill of Porky's 1 and 2 in Cinema 3. At Markville, the latest Rodney Dangerfield film Easy Money is held over in Cinema 4. New films coming this week include Revenge of the Ninja (Cinema 1); War Games (Cinema 2) and Hercules (Cinema 3).

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