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Infection's Bad Symptoms

By JEANNETTE CATSOULIS

The pseudo-documentary horror movie, with its hand-held trembly-cam and tipsy point of view, is enjoying a resurgence almost a decade after the advent of [“The Blair Witch Project.”](#) In a little more than a year we’ve seen [“Diary of the Dead,”](#) [“Cloverfield”](#) and the low-budget charmer [“The Signal.”](#) Now [“Quarantine”](#) wants to remind us that the most terrifying threat we face could be brewing not in the Middle East but in the apartment next door.

Our likable surrogate is Angela (Jennifer Carpenter), a gung-ho television reporter who, along with her unflappable cameraman, Scott (Steve Harris), is shadowing firefighters for a special on night workers. Responding to a 911 call from a downtown apartment building, they arrive to find a salivating hag and a gaggle of anxious residents. With Scott’s camera running, a merely weird situation rapidly escalates into bloody mayhem as a mysterious “infection” spreads and the authorities seal the building. It’s a credit to the director, John Erick Dowdle, that the movie’s least credible occurrence is the speed of government response.

The template is familiar, but “Quarantine” delivers the heebie-jeebies with solid acting and perfectly calibrated shocks. Cleverly working his claustrophobic setting (and the adapted script from the Spanish movie [“\[REC\]”](#)), Mr. Dowdle keeps the action tight and the injuries nasty.

“I don’t see a lot of horror films,” Ms. Carpenter admits in the press notes. “It takes a certain kind of stomach.” That’s right: an empty one.

“Quarantine” is rated R (Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian). Face eating, brain drilling and rodent squishing.

QUARANTINE

Opened on Friday nationwide.

Directed by John Erick Dowdle; written by John Erick Dowdle and Drew Dowdle, based on the film [“\[REC\]”](#) by Jaume Balagueró, Luiso A. Berdejo and Paco Plaza; director of photography, Ken Seng; edited by Elliot Greenberg; production designer, Jon Gary Steele; produced by Doug Davison, Roy Lee and Sergio Agüero; released by Screen Gems. Running time: 1 hour 26 minutes.

WITH: Jennifer Carpenter (Angela Vidal), Jay Hernandez (Jake), Columbus Short (Danny Wilensky), Greg Germann (Lawrence), Steve Harris (Scott Percival), Dania Ramirez (Sadie), Rade Sherbedgia (Yuri Ivanov) and Johnathon Schaech (George Fletcher).