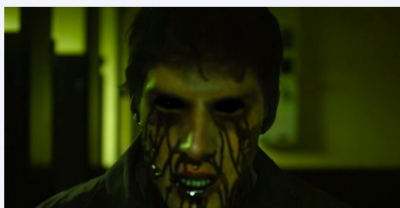


Peelers (2016) Review

by Michael Klug on October 15, 2016



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OVERVIEW

ITEM REVIEWED Peelers

AUTHOR Michael Klug

SYNOPSIS A small town strip club owner must defend her bar, her strippers and her life when violent infected patrons show up on the final closing night and all hell breaks loose.

RELEASE DATE 2016

WRITER Lisa Devita
Seve Schelenz

DIRECTOR Seve Schelenz

STAR CAST Wren Walker
Caz Odin Darko
Madison J. Loos

What's your reaction?



FULL REVIEW

Peelers is a horror/comedy, pseudo-zombie film, landing more in the infected arena of films like *The Crazies* or *28 Days Later* – but it's without a doubt, about a group of trapped people who must survive an outbreak which turns its victims into slobbering, nearly unstoppable monsters who just want to kill and kill and kill.

Meaning, the subject matter is right up my alley.

I love zombie (or zombie-ish) films and once again – having these bloody events happening to a mis-matched group of people with various histories, secrets and clashing personalities – all the better.

That being said, *Peelers* isn't the best thing since sliced-zombie flesh (or infected flesh – pardon me), but it is a whole heckuva lot of fun and surprisingly contains some very good performances.

Blue Jean (Wren Walker) is the widowed owner/operator of a small mining town strip-club. The bartenders, bouncers, dancers and clientele are truly family. Blue Jean is a former cop, but still all bad-ass. It's the final night for the club, as Blue Jean has sold the property off to a money-hungry schmo – in the hopes that she can start fresh with her trouble-making son Logan. But in the nearby mine, four workers have uncovered what they believe to be "black gold", but this oil is more akin to the nasty alien stuff of *The X-Files* lore; rather than the goodies which the Clampt family uprooted their lives for. The miners go to the club to celebrate, but inevitably get sick; spreading the illness to club staff and customers. Eventually, it's down to a select few survivors, with Blue Jean in charge.

I was really rather shocked at how this film played out. The opening credits are shown over slow motion and close-up shots of various breasts, and so I didn't figure I'd be seeing something with much substance. But once the story begins and we get to know Blue Jean (kudos for her detailed characterization and rich history), I was pleased to settle in for something for more than [ahem] skin-deep schlock and exploitation. That's not to say it all worked. There are a few too many one-liners, and an extended "getting to know you, getting to know all about you" section – that the film started to slightly drag. I knew who I was going to follow and love pretty quickly, so I was ready to jump into the pending insanity.



While there were lots of great supporting actors (Caz Odin Darko as Blue Jean's long-time bouncer Remy) and some not-so-great performances (Madison J. Loos as Blue Jean's son Logan), there's no doubt that the film is Wren Walker's. She got an ease with line delivery and all of her non-verbal reactions – notably while flirting with the four miners (Blue Jean's good at her job) are organic and authentic. Walker's got a history on the stage, and you get the feeling that she probably dug pretty deep to understand Blue Jean – and to give her the respect she deserves. Sure, she operates a stripper club, but she cares about her staff and her family. Walker brings that feeling and respect for her character to the table. On top of all of this, Walker's a beauty and carries herself physically in a way which confirms Blue Jean's colorful past and no-nonsense way of looking at life. Other than the special effects (mentioned below), Walker's nuanced and kick-ass performance is the highlight of a film about strippers, boobs and infected monsters. Who'd-a-thunk it?

And I was impressed with details. I'll say it again (anyone keeping score here?), but the devil is in the details, and I always feel that a well-written script can be determined by little clues/hints/foreshadowing which comes into play later. In addition to Blue Jean being a retired cop, she was also a highly-awarded baseball player back in her hey-day, and in the dressing room, her old baseball bat is prominently displayed. You just know that it's going to come into play at some point. It's a fine line when filmmakers use such techniques. Sometimes it feels like they're trying too hard and simply hitting you over the head with things you need to remember for later. But in *Peelers*, the film's overall tone is perfect for you to see the bat and appreciate that it's coming back – without having one of those, "Lordy, that's just too obvious" moments.



And you've gotta love the script's usage of the old *Escape from New York* "Snake Plisken – I heard you were dead" trope. Blue Jean doesn't like to be called a certain nickname, and it comes up frequently, much in the same way Kurt Russell's "living" character did. It's a nice touch, and sets the script apart from so many other lazy exercises. Things like these fun bits (again, the details!) make a big difference in how a film is received.

The special effects makeup work in *Peelers* could give any other elements of the film a run for their money – when battling for first place. There is plenty of over-the-top gore and dripping black-eyed monsters for days. The film doesn't disappoint in this arena, in fact – it excels. Decapitations, dis-embowelings, black vomit and gunshots galore, make the film a cheer-out-loud gore spectacle.

In the end, the film's not perfect. There are some logic issues (we have one long shot in the beginning of the film; advertising the layout of the club – so when things happen later, you may remember, "but isn't that like two steps away?") and pacing issues early on (again, get to the goods – you've already established things perfectly), but the lead actress attaches herself to the role and takes the well-written details of the character's life and makes it work.

And God help me, it actually has some sentimental sweetness in the end. It's nicely done, and you may have even heard a small "Awwwww" from some random critic in the back row at Shriekfest (where the film had its Los Angeles premiere). Who knows who that could have been. Ahem...

It's a worthwhile film if you like boobs (plenty of them) juicy and well-done gore (plenty of that too) and a powerful, effective lead performance.

Peelers has had an impressive run on the festival circuit (still ongoing), but no wider release information is currently available.



RATING



BOTTOM LINE

It's a worthwhile film if you like boobs (plenty of them) juicy and well-done gore (plenty of that too) and a powerful, effective lead performance.

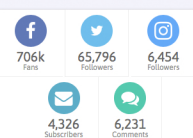
TOTAL SCORE

USER SCORE

Extreme, Gore, Horror Comedy, Horror Reviews, Monsters, Possession, Splatter, Survival Horror, Virus, Zombies

2016 Caz Odin Darko Lisa Devita
Madison J. Loos Peelers Seve Schelenz
Shriekfest Wren Walker

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