

'Cape Fear' sure to terrify and thrill audiences

De Niro turns in brilliant performance

★★★ 1/2

FILM: *Cape Fear* is currently showing at Cinema World. Rated R.

... don't bother, ... well to rent, ... worth the time, ... must see

There's a thrill when a movie fan is about to see a picture made by a master filmmaker. *Cape Fear* is such a movie. Directed by one of cinema's premier directors, Martin Scorsese, *Cape Fear* doesn't disappoint.

It is a remake of the terrifying J. Lee Thompson movie of 1962. The earlier version starred Robert Mitchum and Gregory Peck, and the newest version incorporates them too, if only in small roles.

Robert De Niro plays a man who has just been released from a long prison term after being convicted of aggravated sexual assault.

His first move is to travel to the small Florida town where his former defense attorney, played by Nick Nolte, resides. De Niro is seeking revenge because Nolte withheld information in his case that could have gotten him off.

It works as a companion piece to the first film, but is so much more than that. Because of the time period, the Thompson version was only allowed

to allude to issues that are brought to the forefront of this film. At the center of this version, then, is a psycho-sexual thriller.

Max Cady (De Niro) is always leering lasciviously at Nolte's 16-year-old daughter. And when he does, the camera does. This is more than unsettling. It's sick and evil. As the audience, we are brought into this depraved world — willing or not. Suspense, in this way, is built throughout the movie.

De Niro's Cady is more overtly sinister than Mitchum's was. And the family, which was a collection of victims in the 1962 version, has some qualities that bring them down to earth in Scorsese's vision.

Nolte is a workaholic on the verge of an inter-office affair with a young law clerk. Meanwhile, he's neglecting the needs of his wife, played by Jessica Lange. Their high school-aged daughter is going into adulthood without the benefit of her parent's guidance. This leads to a bizarre and frightening encounter between Lewis and De Niro.

Cady poses as her drama teacher. He calls himself the big bad wolf and seduces her to the

point where she is totally submissive to his advances. But he's not finished with the torment, so he stops. His glares and sickening innuendos are disturbing to watch. But fear and loathing are what this film is all about.

Juliette Lewis is perfectly cast as the blossoming girl who

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becomes Cady's focus, and ultimately, the film's. She is naive but not stupid. And Cady is on the verge of ruining her young life.

This movie proves once again that De Niro is not only one of the most versatile actors in the world, but also one of the most brilliant.

He doesn't simply make such dissimilar characters in movies

known. He explores what lies under the surface of things we do know.

In what is a shrewd and daring move, the original score by one of the greatest film music composers is retained.

The late Bernard Herrmann created a frightening and brutal soundtrack for the 1962 version of *Cape Fear*. It is his score (as adapted by Elmer Bernstein) that is utilized in the updated film. I can hardly think of a better score being created. It's moody, atmospheric and utilized to perfection.

Scorsese doesn't rely on the music to make a scary scene work, however. Indeed, when the family is being stalked, the score is often not even used. It is during the expositional scenes that Herrmann's music is used to build the tension.

Although not a perfect film, Scorsese and a great cast, headed by De Niro and Lewis, create an atmosphere that is immediate and rife with fear. In a year that has seen too many thrillers with cats jumping from shadows to scare the audience, it's refreshing to be scared by something real.

By Lucas J. Gutman
Emerald Contributor

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