

■ Movie review

'Ring 2' director lacks original ideas in weak but twisty horror sequel

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PULSE EDITOR

When "The Ring" opened in 2002, it came as welcome respite from the hell of crappy ghost movies with idiotic twist endings that "The Sixth Sense" unleashed on America. Unfortunately, the film ended up unleashing a hell of its own in the form of Japanese horror film remakes, i.e. crappy ghost movies with idiotic twist endings.

But while the original will probably take its place as one of the few good horror films of the new millennium, the sequel might miss out on the honor roll.

Apparently taking the high road and hiring Hideo Nakata, the director of the original Japanese "Ringu" series, may not have been the wisest aesthetic choice, as "The Ring Two" hardly matches its predecessor. Taking place shortly after the original, the film follows Rachel Keller and her young son Aidan (Naomi Watts and David Dorfman) as they recover from the events in the original, moving to Astoria (the Hollywood of Oregon, I swear) and starting a new life. In fact, the film seems very insistent upon the fact that they are starting a new life, so much so that the characters say as much on numerous occasions. This is only the beginning of

the script problems that plague the film throughout its running time.

The main plot thrust has the dreaded Samara and her cursed videotapes showing up, with Samara apparently intent on possessing little Aidan. Cue the standard child-possessed-by-demons plot points, with just enough twists to keep things diverting long enough for the audience to forget about it and not realize how little sense much of the story makes. It's a shame to see such a promising horror franchise get bogged down in the most basic clichés. (You know you're in trouble when someone says "I know this sounds crazy, but..." and someone replies, "There has to be a rational explanation for all of this.")

Whereas the first film was sparse and managed to move itself beyond some of the usual horror trappings, the sequel gets lazy and falls back on them, depending on ideas from its predecessor. The film also wastes the first film's inherent creepiness found in the Pacific Northwest locations. Despite some beautiful shots, they seem to belong to a different movie.

The special effects are no great feats either, with some blandly fake

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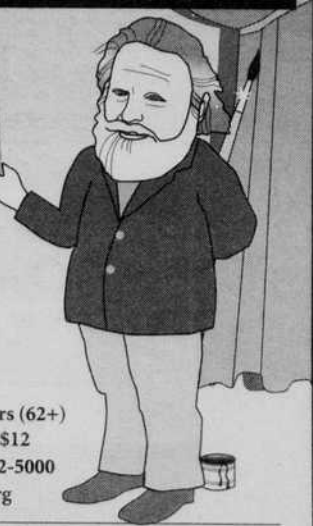
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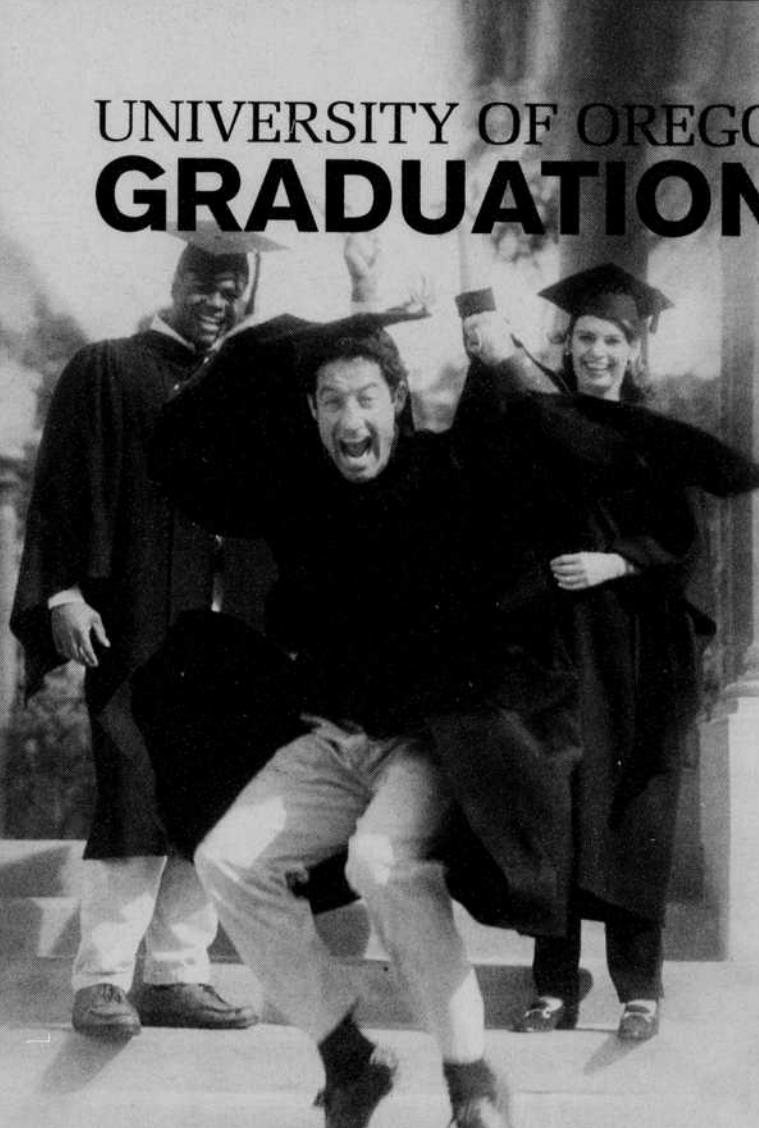
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