



Robert Carlyle makes a break for it in *28 Weeks Later*

Dead Again

Six months after four weeks after the outbreak

28 WEEKS LATER: Directed by Juan Carlos Fresnadillo. Written by Fresnadillo, Rowan Joffe, Jesús Olmo and Enrique López Lavigne. Cinematography, Enrique Chediak. Music, John Murphy. Starring Catherine McCormack and Robert Carlyle. Fox Atomic, 2007. R. 99 minutes. ★☆☆☆☆

Somewhat embarrassingly, 2002's *28 Days Later* is best known for an ending found only on the DVD. The film, which imagines the aftermath of a virus that turns London into a zombie metropolis, deserves credit for combining two primeval fears — catching a cold and the walking dead — in a fresh and unexpected way. But the theatrical ending, in which the hero survives a deathblow, is pure and utter shite, reducing the film's overall credibility considerably and leading to alternate endings on the DVD. What works in *28 Days Later* can be attributed to Danny Boyle, a once-masterful director (*Trainspotting*) who can still craft a decent genre film. Given that Boyle's involvement with the new *28 Weeks Later* was limited to an executive producer credit, my emotions lay somewhere between indifference and bitterness at the thought of viewing the sequel.

After a truly terrifying opening sequence in which a tranquil farm is overrun with flesh-eaters in the early days of the outbreak, *28 Weeks Later* slides forward into the present. It's now 24 weeks after the infection. All of Britain's mutants have starved to death, an inconvenient byproduct of zombie-ism. (The implication is that zombies can't even feed themselves properly, which brought to mind those wonderful TV ads in which cavemen react to their tarnished image. Are zombie protests not far off?) At any rate, an American-led NATO force is repopulating Britain, giving new dimension to the term "horror film," especially since London during the outbreak of *28 Days* makes Baghdad look like

Sunnybrook Farm. Over the loudspeaker, we hear the following announcement: "The United States is responsible for your safety." Gulp.

Given special attention is survivor Don's (Robert Carlyle) reunion with his children, but Don has a dirty secret. He wasn't exactly a hero when his beloved Alice (Catherine McCormack) ran smack into a pack of zombies. The film, using flashbacks and jerky camera movements, implies we haven't seen the last of Alice. And so it happens that, realizing they don't have mum's picture, Don's kids return to the ancestral manse, where they find a good deal more than her photo. What follows is a series of terrifically bad decisions germane to the horror genre, including going down when you should go up, going out when you should stay in and other things of that nature. Also consistent with the genre are a number of impossible events, such as the way Don's kids escape on moped from NATO-secured London. Or the way Don manages to navigate London like a cabbie with decades of driving experience.

You know the outbreak is coming. The only question is how it will begin. Unfortunately, when it comes, *28 Weeks Later* loses its footing completely, relying on montages of zombie thrill-kills and handheld camera takes of the ensuing bloodbath. The film goes from merely ridiculous to completely stupid to totally offensive in about six minutes. There are plenty of heavy-handed allusions to one of Don's children's genetic resistance to the virus, but for now we'll have to wait. I smell a franchise — that is, over the stench of rotting flesh. We can only hope that those responsible for *28 Weeks Later* hear the cries of the terrorized people in the street: Stay dead. Please.

EW

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