Get Out (Jordan Peele - Director, 2017): Comments

I must be honest.

Had *Get Out* not been assigned viewing I would have stopped watching after the first five minutes. The depiction of a random, violent abduction of a terrified individual does not count as entertainment in my opinion which is why I am not particularly a fan of the horror genre. Also, had it not been assigned, I would have given up in the final half hour or so as I felt that, although it was driven by very some good acting down the highway of an intriguing premise and through the engaging execution of excellent filmography, it was directed recklessly over the cliff of plausible logic and into the depths of outright silliness.

This, of course, is my personal opinion and I think it started at the point after Chris and Rose arrive at her parent's place in which Chris, after not getting that his girlfriend is in on it despite her telling him as much (I remember muttering to myself: is this guy stupid?) is shown to be strapped to a chair and was being shown the video which, as far as I can, there is no logical reason for it to be shown to him ("It's plot exposition. It has to go somewhere" - Lady Holiday in *The Great Muppet Caper*; Jim Henson - Director, 1981). That was the first clue that the film was falling apart.

The second was the décor and situation: from this moment onwards, I was reminded of a constant string of B-Grade movies (so named because they were the "B-Side" of a double-feature - I did not know that before this course - wow, I learnt something!). The television setup immediately reminded me of the James Woods / Debbie Harry disaster film *Videodrome* (David Cronenberg - Director, 1983) - the "disaster" epitaph is my own addition; the film, oddly enough scores a 7.3 out of 10 in viewer ratings - it's very likely that the film has reached cult status.

In *Videodrome* people are controlled via television and, with the hypnosis sessions which preceded this scene in *Get Out*, I was led to believe that this may be the path they were going down; that some sort of television indoctrination would be the next step in the process. Instead, in the aforementioned fashion of Diana Rigg, they completely spilled the beans. And who should be doing the bean spilling? None other than Richard Herd ("Who?" you ask. "Yes, precisely"), perhaps the most infamous B actor since Ronald Reagan ("I haven't felt this awful since we saw that Ronald Reagan film" - Shirley in *Airplane!*[1]; Jim Abrahams, David Zucker, Jerry Zucker - Directors, 1980)

---

[1] The original shooting script has the line as "I haven't felt this awful since we saw that Lina Wertmuller film," however Ronald Reagan is used in the final movie.

This isn't to say that Richard Herd is a bad actor; quite the contrary - he is one of those actors seen in a million things and, because of constant work has honed his craft well but, unfortunately, apart from *All the President's Men* and possibly *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* there is nothing of true quality in his resume (and I don't even remember seeing him in either of those - I'm guessing bit parts - but I acknowledge it has been a while since I saw either film). Because of this, and I'll admit that it's a personal reflex, any film in which he appears brands itself as B-Grade in my experience - a product of my expectations of the actor. But I believe that he is of the same caliber of actor as Roddy McDowell - performers who would rather perform than wait for the "perfect role" - remember that Roddy McDowell spent much of his early career in an ape suit in the original *Planet of the Apes* movie and TV franchise (Biography, 2019).

But I digress. We discussed this scene muchly in our group in class and, after hashing over a couple of scenarios, determined that there was no valid reason to put this in from a storyline perspective. Furthermore, the issue came up of why Rose would even bother to seduce all of the men in the pictures, including Chris, when her brother simply goes out and abducts those people as shown in the opening sequence? And given that you're going to perform a very invasive procedure on someone who is going to "figure it out anyway" (when he's inside Stephen Root's head) why would you clue them in and make them think about escaping (which, of course, Chris does)?

I already highlighted the absurdity of a brain transplant in class (Tay, 2017) so I won't dwell too much on that, particularly as a diligent researcher would be able to find a counter-argument. I do, however, want to look at the resultant idea - if the procedure had gone through then Chris would have been an observer consciousness in his own body which would be controlled by Stephen Root's character, Jim Hudson. This smacks of the 1999 semi-surreal comedy / drama *Being John Malkovich* (Spike Jonze - Director) where John Cusack's Craig Schwartz, ironically a puppeteer, is condemned to be a similar sort of impotent observer for the rest of his life.

Our group also discussed the racial aspect of the film - the final life of the person "transformed" would be a sort of imprisonment, like Schwartz. But Jim Hudson makes it quite clear that there's no valid reason that the victims need be black ("I could give two shits about race. I don't care if you're black, brown, green, purple... whatever. People are people. What I want is deeper: Your eye, man. I want those things you see through.") so from that point of view race is a McGuffin; perhaps because of the accolades for Jordan Peele, we're expecting it to be poignant but it's really not that big of a deal. Is this reminiscent of black slavery in the US? Perhaps. Is this slavery or is it imprisonment? Are the two really the same thing in this context? After all, being a slave is to be forced to so something you don't necessarily want to do and these "observer consciousnesses" have no say over the control of their bodies. Furthermore, they are imprisoned - there is no way out.

Stephen Root is a couple of steps above Richard Herd in reputability as an actor, in my opinion, and to see his talents one need only compare his Milton in *Office Space* (Mike Judge - Director, 1999) to his

Jimmy James in the TV show *Newsradio* (1995-1999). And he doesn't disappoint in *Get Out*, either; one feels for his character abandoned with the top of his head missing, left to be incinerated.

Alternate endings aside the film ghosts another movie in its finale. Despite which ending one chooses it still spirals into a bloodbath reminiscent of Sam Peckinpah's *Straw Dogs* (1971) right down to a shotgun being involved and making for colorful artistic expression. And the final film version ends with Chris and his buddy simply abandoning a crime scene. That doesn't make Rod much of a government agent; yes, he's only TSA but he should still know better.

The film does have certain redeeming qualities - as I said, just because the storyline is filled with plot holes, that doesn't detract from the acting. Furthermore, the music - a single violin note that often hangs in the background, provides a suspenseful atmosphere, in my experience a hallmark of the horror genre. The farmhouse, when Chris and Rose arrive, shot from Walter/Roman's waistline, is bleached and the voices muted with that hanging note - we know something is amiss.

Would I see it again? Maybe, to try and find some semblance of credibility but more likely to try and find more things to heckle.

References:

Patchett, T. (2019). The Great Muppet Caper Movie Script. Retrieved from
https://www.scripts.com/script.php?id=the_great_muppet_caper_9306&p=6

Biography. (2019). Roddy McDowall Biography. Retrieved from https://www.biography.com/people/roddy-mcdowall-9542057

Abrahams, J., Zucker, D., & Zucker, J. (1980). AIRPLANE!. Retrieved from
http://www.dailyscript.com/scripts/Airplane_script.htm

Tay, A. (2017). Brain transplants - are they possible? Retrieved from
https://neuroscience.stanford.edu/news/brain-transplants-are-they-possible (republished from:
http://www.neuwritewest.org/blog/brain-transplants-are-they-possible)

Peele, J. (2017). Screenplay: Get Out. Retrieved from http://www.universalpicturesawards.com/site-content/uploads/2017/09/GET-OUT.pdf

Filmography:

The Great Muppet Caper (Jim Henson - Director, 1983) IMDb: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0082474

Videodrome (David Cronenberg - Director, 1983) IMDb: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0086541

Airplane! (Jim Abrahams, David Zucker, Jerry Zucker - Directors, 1980) IMDb: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0080339

Being John Malkovich (Spike Jonze - Director, 1999) IMDb: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120601

Office Space (Mike Judge - Director, 1999) IMDb: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0151804

Newsradio (TV Series: 1995-1999) IMDb: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0112095