



The Main Feature

Season 31 - Issue 5 (screening 11.11.10)

Paranormal Activity

USA 86 minutes Certificate 15

UK release date 25 November 2009

Oren Peli was a one man band on this film – he was the screenwriter, director, cinematographer and editor!

Cast

Katie Featherstone	Herself
Micha Sloat	Himself
Mark Fredrichs	Psychic
Amber Armstrong	Amber

Paranormal Activity was made for less than \$15,000 (£9,500) but raked in more than \$7 million (£4.4 million) in a single weekend in September 2009 at the US box office. (As at January of this year the film's American gross was over \$100 million.)

Already dubbed "the scariest movie ever made" it was only showing that weekend at 160 cinemas but was the fifth most popular film of that weekend.

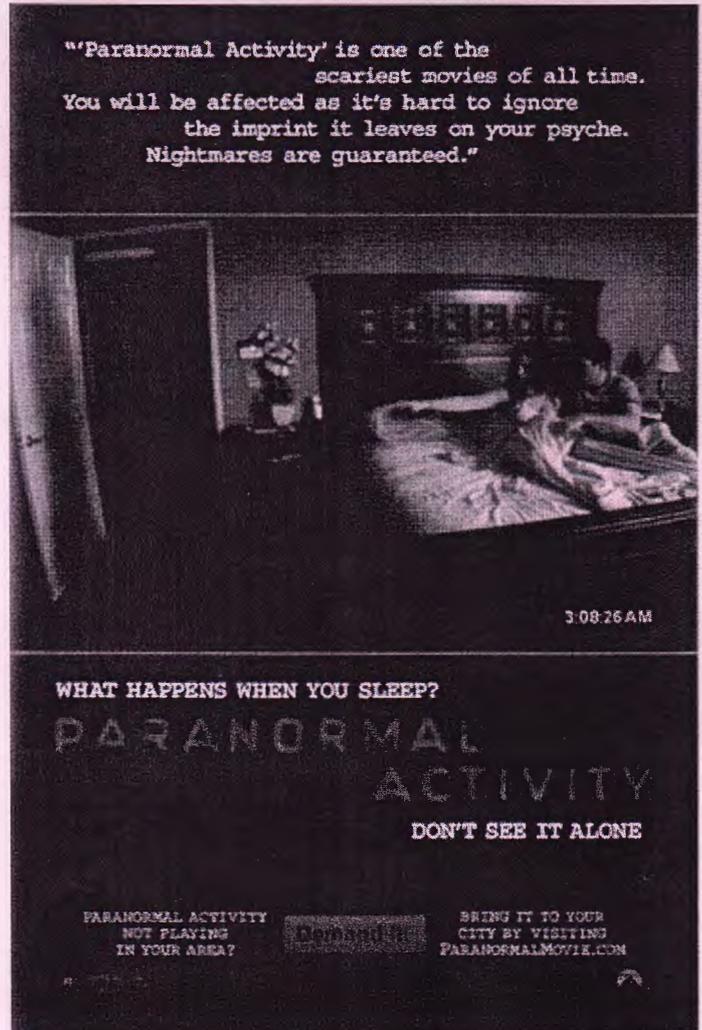
Paul Dergarabedian, box-office analyst for Hollywood.com, said: "You almost do a double take when you look at that theatre count for a movie in the top five. That's amazing. That's unprecedented."

Paranormal stars a cast of unknowns and is shot in documentary style, showing a young man recording strange goings-on and apparitions in the house he shares with his girlfriend in San Diego.

It was made by the Israeli-born director Oren Peli and shot in his own house. A software programmer by trade, the tech-savvy Peli got the initial inklings of what would become the film when he bought his first house after years of flat life.

"When I moved into my house, it was the first time I lived in a detached family home as opposed to an apartment, and it's in a very quiet, suburban neighborhood," Peli told Cinematical, "So you become very conscious of every little sound you hear because you don't have any neighbors above the walls, basically you're not supposed to hear anything. When you do hear little creaks and knocks and stuff like that, you wonder what's going on. I'm sure most of it was natural sounds of the house settling, but every once in a while you would hear things that would be weird and you couldn't figure out where they are."

Its first airing was at Screampfest LA in October that year, where the first inklings of what would become a tidal wave were clear. Audiences reacted exactly as Peli hoped - terrified, clutching at each other for



support and excitedly jabbering about their experiences as they left the cinema.

An assistant at Creative Arts Agency was at one screening and that company, one of the most powerful in Hollywood, snapped up Peli and started sending DVDs of the film in its early form around Hollywood.

The next step was convincing DreamWorks production chief Adam Goodman to see it. "It's what you don't see that scares you," Was his reaction. "What's really scary in the movie is a door closing half an inch." The positive buzz surged up the chain of command until one very important part of the DreamWorks team got a look. His name? Steven Spielberg...

Though he'd been responsible for such scare tactics as *Poltergeist* and *Gremlins*, Spielberg wasn't sure that *Paranormal Activity* was right for DreamWorks. And then he saw it.

What happened after that has been described as everything from a truly disturbing little coincidence to a load of hogwash dreamt up to keep the movie's legend rolling along.

"I heard the story more than a year and half ago, so I think it's true," Peli has said. "Nobody back then even knew about the movie, so I don't see them coming up with a publicity stunt, but apparently, after he watched it, the door to his bedroom was locked from the inside."

Yes, the man who is possibly the world's most famous director got the chills from a tiny indie movie and ended up calling a locksmith to solve the problem of the door.

"He said, 'I don't want this DVD in my house,' and had somebody take it back to the office. I haven't talked to him directly, but other people have told me." (*Other versions have Spielberg himself bringing the disc back in a bin liner.*)

However due to disputes between studios and other related issues the film was not shown to commercial audiences until September, 2009 when it was screened simultaneously in seven cities across the US as part of Fantastic Fest. That was quickly followed by a college town tour.

Midnight screenings began to sell out - as the old saying goes, an impossible ticket is a hot ticket - and the legend of the film spread. Paramount cannily put webcams in several cinemas so audiences could record their shellshocked impressions.

And the smartest move? Using a piece of web technology usually associated with smaller music acts, where fans can "demand" a gig - or in this case, a screening - take place in their town. The studio ramped up the tension by announcing that should 1 million "demands" be registered, the film would be released wide across the US.

There are differing opinions on whether it would actually have gone through with a muted release should the counter have fallen short - cinema owners have reported that the plans were in place for a wider October schedule before the demands began coming in.

"It's very rewarding to see the fans embracing the movie. This is totally a fan driven movie, because if it wasn't for the fans, we wouldn't be talking right now. "This movie was launched by Paramount in a way that really allows people to decide whether or not they want the movie to be released and where."

"So if it weren't for them demanding the movie and saying, 'We want it to play in our home town' and if it weren't for the fans spreading the good word online in forums or on Twitter, the movie probably wouldn't have gotten anywhere," says Peli.

One of the aspects I found most interesting about the film is that it has used some of the tricks from old "horror" films, namely that silence and waiting can be more entertaining than frantic fast-cutting and berserk f/x. For extended periods here, nothing at all is happening, and believe me, you won't be bored!

Iain McGlashan

Comedy horror wins recognition from film it spoofs

by Nicola Rider

A WOKING film company has been short-listed in a national competition to have its film featured on a major DVD release.

Esquire Films was set up by Jamie Sims and Timmy Butler and makes short films and promotional pieces for major American companies.

Jamie, 23, entered a competition organised by the company behind cult film *Paranormal Activity*.

And their parody, called *Normal Activity*, is now featured on the DVD of the movie.

Jamie, from Chertsey Road, Woking, said: "The film had to be based around *Paranormal Activity* so we decided to do a parody of the film.

"It basically involves a ghost being in the house. We've kept the main points but put a spin on them.

"For example instead of a Ouija board we used a Scrabble board and instead of a character doing research on the internet he spends his time on Farmville on Facebook."

The three-minute film, which stars Timmy, also 23, and from Horsell, was made at Jamie's girlfriend's house in the village.

Paranormal Activity caused controversy when it hit the cinema screens at the beginning of the year.

It focuses around a young couple coping with supernatural phenomena in their home and is shot like a home made documentary.

The movie took £13.5m in its first weekend on nationwide release in the US at the end of October last year.

Jamie began his career as an actor but became more interested in film making.

Jamie said: "I love all genres but we are making a feature length horror film at the moment."

"I started off as an actor but I fell in love with the process of



Normal Activity is a parody of the US horror sensation *Paranormal Activity*.

making a film." As well as short pieces Esquire Films has also been commissioned by a number of US companies to put together commercial movies.

Jamie said: "The American government has asked us to make a fun film to explain how laws are

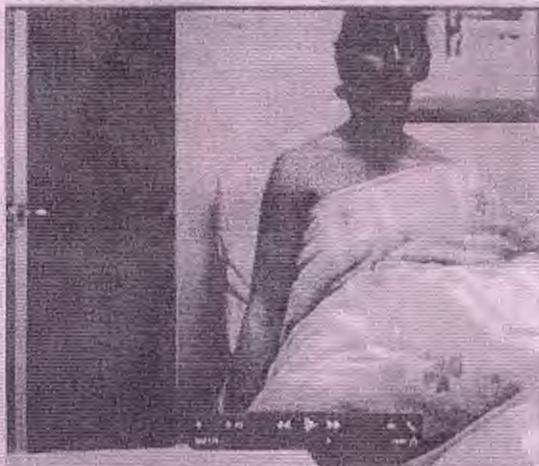
passed. We are also doing one for a company that provides software to students, we did a horror/comedy where Timmy is in the woods and loses his underwear."

In an attempt to further his career Jamie will be attending the University for the Creative Arts

in September to take part in a film course.

Normal Activity is now available to view on the *Paranormal Activity* DVD or on the company's site on YouTube.

For a review of *Paranormal Activity*, see page 17.



The three minute film has been made by Woking's Esquire Films.

PS As part of the promotional process for the film, the director invited other filmmakers to "Film Your Own Paranormal Activity" short film – the prize being that the chosen film would be included on the DVD release of the main film.

The winning entry came from Woking's Esquire Films and the following article highlights their achievement:

Reactions to Ushpizin – 28th October 2010

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Votes	~	~	~	4	1	7	11	5	7	~	~

Total received – 35

Average Score – 5.94

Your Comments

A rare opportunity to see an unusual but interesting film

Good in parts

Not my favourite

A light-hearted insight into a different culture

Moving, well acted, depressing, hopeful

Fascinating insight into a totally different way of life – well acted.

Another excellent choice of film for one world week

It was an education on their way of living, but it shows that there are the same kind of characters in whatever community

Something very different

Sorry, probably the first film I seen at WNCC where I left at the interval.

Several comments regarding the issues relating to the disc and DVD players:

Thank you for persevering

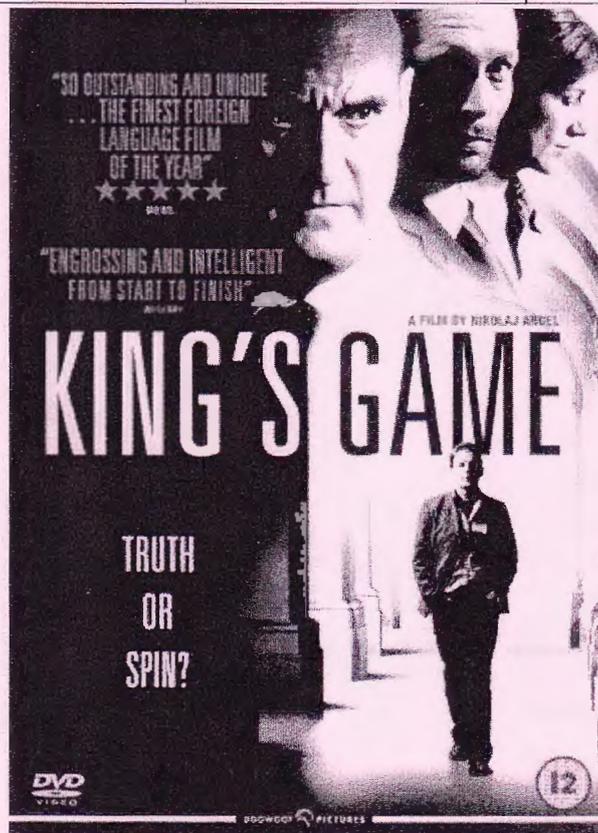
Rather like the good old days with the breakdown!

Pity about the breakdown at a crucial point

Thanks John for sorting out the problem – I did want to know the end, so I must have been interested in the film.

10 out of 10 for John and Steve's incredible perseverance and technical skill in getting the show on the road again

Position	Film	Average Score
1 st	An Education	7.83
2 nd	Le Premier Jour de reste de ta vie	7.54
3 rd	The Hurt Locker	7.09
4 th	Ushpizin	5.94



Our next presentation on
Thursday 25 November at 8pm:

KONGEKABALE (*King's Game*)

Winner of eight Danish Oscars, this polished political conspiracy thriller is based on a novel by a former spin doctor. When the leader of the opposition is involved in a horrific car crash, an idealistic journalist is caught up in the sinister machinations involved in anointing a replacement.

Repropoint

sponsors photocopying of *the main feature*