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MOVIE REVIEW**Sorority Row**

Blood and blackmail on 'Sorority Row'

The Boston Globe

From left: Briana Evigan, Rumer Willis, Leah Pipes, and Jamie Chung star in "Sorority Row." (Michael Desmond)

By Jonathan Perry

Globe Correspondent / September 12, 2009

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Nothing says sisterhood like slipping your college gal pal a date-rape drug to render her semi-conscious, and then throwing her body down a mine shaft after a prank goes awry. And nothing should bring a group of five graduating sorority sisters closer together than a conspiracy to cover up that friend's accidental murder, even as the body count by a revenge-seeking assassin - who really likes his work, by the way - piles as high as the suds in the sorority hot tub.

But of course, if "Sorority Row" had a cast of characters - or a story line, for that matter - that was as half as smart, strong, or secretive as the sisters' Theta Pi pledge, we wouldn't get all the blackmail, bitching, and backhanded compliments these young women dole out to one another.

But they're trying to keep it together, and they have the frantic text messages and the stiletto heel fatigue to prove it. We do get a nagging

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SORORITY ROW

Directed by: Stewart Hendler
 Screenplay by: Josh Stolberg and Peter Goldfinger
 Starring: Briana Evigan, Leah Piper, Audrina Patridge, Rumer Willis, Jamie Chung, Carrie Fisher.
 At: Boston Common, Fenway, suburbs
 Running time: 101 minutes
 Rated: R (strong violence, language, some sexuality/nudity)

to make her watch "Striptease" again.

In either case, "Sorority Row" follows the imaginatively bankrupt trend of remaking slasher films from the 1970s and '80s. This time, it's a regurgitation of Mark Rosman's "The House on Sorority Row," a mostly forgotten 1983 horror flick that features a different victim but the same hackneyed formula of nubile (and of course conniving) young women being chased, chopped, beaten, and bludgeoned.

Director Stewart Hendler pays homage to Rosman by having the girls go to a school of the same name. His other touches are less subtle. The "scary" moments are of the sneak-up-on-you-from-behind variety, but there's little suspense. And apparently no one throws a light switch or gets smoke inhalation in a burning house anymore. All of which begs the question: What on earth is Carrie Fisher (playing the crusty sorority mother, Mrs. Crenshaw) doing in this movie? Maybe she liked the idea of toting a shotgun and saying "Come to mama!" as she reloads. ■

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pang of conscience from the regret-torn Cassidy (Briana Evigan). Her nemesis, naturally, is a blond Stepford Wife-in-Waiting named Jessica (Leah Piper) who wants to marry the senator's son. "Now, let's go wash the blood off in the lake and get back to the party," Jessica announces after the evil deed is done, priorities in place.

And as for Bruce Willis and Demi Moore's daughter Rumer Willis? As Ellie, she just mostly shakes and screams a lot like she's really scared. Either she's afraid the hooded killer is coming to get her next, or maybe her mom is threatening

to make her watch "Striptease" again.

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