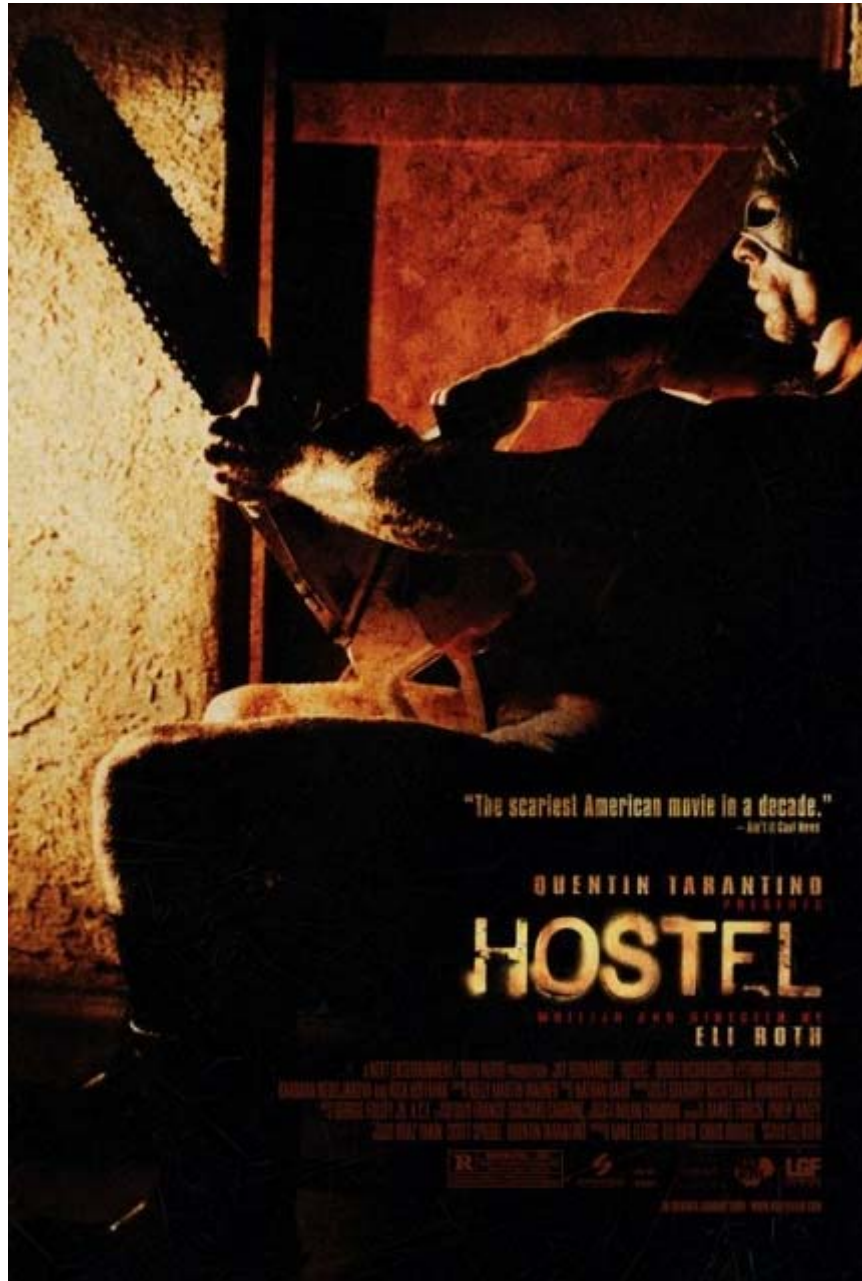


Hostel Film Review:

“Did we come all the way to Europe to get stoned?”...Josh

“Hey, I came all the way from Iceland.”...Oli

“I paid a lot of money for you, and that makes you my bitch”...Natalya



Three backpackers head to a Slovakian city that promises to meet their hedonistic expectations, with no idea of the hell that awaits them....IMDB.com

Hostel is billed in its ad campaign, -and by Quentin Tarantino, as the scariest American movie in a decade. I seriously doubt that claim, but I will agree that *Hostel* is one of the goriest horror films in awhile. What I found most interesting in *Hostel* was not the great special effects utilized to capture state-of-the-art digital maiming, burnings, stabbings, etc., is how director Eli Roth took a real Internet story about killings-for-hire in Thailand and turned it into an Eastern European story. We still believe in the U.S. that Eastern Europe is a wild place where anything bad happens:

“The trailers bill the movie as "inspired by true events". Director Eli Roth says that he found a Thai website that advertised itself as a "murder vacation," offering users the chance to torture and kill someone for the price of \$10,000. Roth later showed the site to Quentin Tarantino and the two developed the idea for the film. Tarantino and Roth said later on an Icelandic talk show that they have no idea if the website was real or not...The movie was written, produced, directed and released theatrically all in a twelve month period, which is three times faster than the average Hollywood film...The interior of the slaughterhouse was filmed at a functioning mental hospital in Prague built in 1910, in a wing that had been closed for over 50 years. Building 10, where many of the scenes were filmed, was where the craziest patients were taken.”...IMDB

There is no point in me breaking down this flick into what I liked and did not like. I stopped taking it seriously as some groundbreaking horror film at the end when Roth went back to conventional and predictable Hollywood formulaic filmmaking. Roth allows Paxton, played by Jay Hernandez, to escape the deadly and bloody fake hostel to kill all the merciless and uncaring foreigners that tricked him and his two backpacker friends into going to the “vacation of death”. Jay gets to run-over three with a stolen car, two of the goonish--Eurothugs chasing him get stoned to death by some homeless street orphans--because Paxton gives them a bag of candy. And lastly Paxton just happens to barley escape his hostel captors by sneaking on a train that carries another person that tricked Paxton and did him wrong. Paxton manages to follow this unsuspecting guy into a practically empty bathroom a large train station in the middle of the day. Put a “closed” sign over the door and then boldly wait until the right moment to flush the man’s face into the toilet and slit his throat. Jay then feels relief as he continues on his journey back to normal Western civilization.

Maybe I should get into all the great and gory parts, but I’ll leave that to the message board quotes from the film’s fans on IMDB. I really see no purpose in Roth building up this great horror franchise and then fall back to some stupid clichés and moronic happy endings for a hero—Paxton—that should be dead like his friends. Paxton is not James Bond and even when it was barely believable that he would escape from the hostel, he decides to go back and save Kana—Jennifer Lim from a sadistic U.S. surgeon played brilliantly by Rick Hoffman. You could give Rick any small role and he would make it memorable. But anyway Paxton’s need to save Kana in the end is only another contrived plot point to allow Kana’s maimed face—Hoffman burned her eye out her head—to commit suicide by jumping in front of a train. If Kana does not do this predictable act, the Paxton would not have been able to escape on the train. I give *Hostel* two cheesecakes and that’s for its great effects and not dumb ending.

Sincerely,

David L. Watts a.k.a. Money Train

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Eli Roth redeems himself with the kick-ass Hostel, 17 September 2005



Author: [Kujol](#) from Toronto, ON Canada

I was one of those people that hated everything about Cabin Fever. I wasn't anticipating Eli Roth's next film, but when I heard the Internet buzz around Hostel, and found it was showing at the 2005 TIFF (Toronto International Film Festival), I decided to check it out.

Eli Roth, who was at the screening, mentioned to the audience that this was the first public viewing in North America. He also told us what we were about to see was a work in progress print of the film. What I saw was one hell of a fierce horror flick that works on every level.

All the actors do a great job in this flick. I was especially impressed with Jay Hernandez, and Derek Richardson, two relatively unknown actors. There are a lot of funny scenes, and dialog in the early parts of the film. It's not that slapstick, forced stuff that was so prevalent in Cabin Fever. There also lots of nudity in the early parts in the film as well. When things begin to turn towards horror, you truly feel the sense of terror the characters are going through. The build up to the climax is just done so well. I loved the fact the story is very believable.

Make no mistake about it, this is a violent, sick, and gory flick. It's not for the squeamish. I haven't seen this type of extreme violence in a North America mainstream cinema. The Takashi Miike, and Asian Cinema influences are clearly seen here.

This is a film that will shock people, and remain in there heads well after the film is over. It will be interesting to see how the film is edited, and rated. In it's current state, I don't see how it could get anything less than the dreaded NC-17 rating. I just hope that it's not butchered too much, as the audience deserves to see the film how it was intended. Eli Roth has completely redeemed himself for what I thought was a very poor film in Cabin Fever, and has made one kick-ass horror film.

bad things happen to bad people, 7 January 2006



Author: [ufemizm](#) from United States

***** This comment may contain spoilers *****

I saw Hostel tonight with a crowd that was very receptive to the experience. Mine was more hostile. The film opens like a teen sex comedy. We are meant to identify with three young guys, who's idea of fun is getting high and having sex with prostitutes. This first section is littered with naked women, in what might just be the least sexy presentation of naked women anywhere. One can sense director Eli Roth and his cronies giving each other high fives off-camera, much like the silhouetted threesome early on in the film, as they pay surgically enhanced women to take their clothes off.

The three men find themselves in Slovakia, and in what is referred to as an art show or an exhibit. Rich men have paid Russian gangsters to torture and ultimately murder a human being, our heroes? subjects? One by one, the men are tortured and killed in escalating graphic manners. The final man escapes, is involved in a car chase, and ultimately becomes what he was trying to escape.

This is, at its black heart, a very dumb movie. Probably, the most clever thing in the film, is the very weak parallel drawn between the legalized red light district in Amsterdam, and the illicit torture rooms in Slovakia. Everything else is just baloney. We don't really care about the three men, so the tortures that they endure aren't really effective at eliciting any sympathy, it's more that we're glad it's not happening to us. The motivations for the men that torture is never made clear, it's more a general sociopathic disconnect that's vaguely hinted at. It's also worthwhile noting that the one character that seems to be gay is singled out as the worst of the torturers, further contributing to the filmic stereotype of homosexual as homicidal.

One should also note the historical context of the film. This is an American movie, about torturing people, made at a time when America, right or wrong, is receiving flak for torturing prisoners in Iraq and elsewhere, and makes no mention of the current world situation.

It's also worth noting that the audience I watched this picture with cheered and applauded at each new horror. It all seemed so Circus Maximus.

Daring, haunting, 22 September 2005

★★★★★★★★★★

Author: [erahatch](#) from Baltimore, Maryland

I caught a work-in-progress print of this film at the Toronto film festival, and of all the films I saw there - including some highly anticipated international "art" films - this was the most memorable, haunting, and even artful film. In a Q+A after the film, director Eli Roth said that he had the films "Wicker Man" and "Audition" in mind when he made "Hostel." Those influences really shine through. Add more than a dash of Roeg's "Don't Look Now" - as well as, of course, "Cabin Fever" - and you've got a good idea of the caliber of experience you're in store for. Here Roth takes some all-American characters akin to those of "Cabin Fever" and sends them not to woods, but to the uber-mysterious (for Americans) landscape of Eastern Europe. As in "Cabin Fever," these cocky characters find themselves, possibly for the first time in their lives, in a situation through which their wealth and privilege can't help them navigate. To say more about the plot would give too much away, but suffice it to say that you're in for a treat... as with Miike's "Audition," this film sets you up for a sucker punch... even though you know you're in for some psychological terror, the moment both films reveal themselves to be thrillers is quite a shock.

The version I saw was chock-full of transgressive sex and violence that, while extreme (especially by U.S. standards), was also very integral to the viewing experience. Roth mentioned, with some trepidation, that he was just about to take his film to the rating board. It's probably too much to ask, but it would be extremely brave of his distributor (Screen Gems, I think) to release the film uncut as an NC-17. In any case, I'm extremely excited to see this film again both in the theater and on DVD, both for enjoyment and as a case study in how much a film of this nature will change from its first cut to the theater and then again to home video.

I can't recommend this one enough. I watch a lot of films, and few have grabbed me to this degree in the last few years. It gets better and better as you view it, but becomes even richer as you reflect on it afterwards.

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Moral Choices and the Dark Side of Humanity, 20 December 2005



Author: [BigMez](#) from United States

I just got back from an L.A. screening of *Hostel*. I haven't seen an effective horror film like this in a long time. My stomach was still knotted up after we left the screening. The last time I felt like that was when I saw *ALIENS* for the first time about 19 years ago. Since then, no other horror film has ever made me feel like that. I certainly didn't expect it from this one.

As much as I loved *Cabin Fever*, I'm not blind to the shortcomings of its script. As such, I was expecting more of the same from *Hostel* - dark humor, gore, and a sense of dread. I'm happy to see that director Eli Roth has taken a big step forward in becoming a better storyteller and filmmaker.

Admittedly my heart sank when the film began. The scenes introducing the main characters were blandly shot and edited. All I could think was, 'Oh no. Roth succumbed to some unseen studio pressure to make a normal-looking horror flick'. The style was typical of the what you'd see in crap like *I know what you did last summer*. But in very subtle ways, the blandness gets washed away and as our heroes enter the threshold of Hell, the style of the film changes as well. This, I learned during the Q&A afterwards with Roth, was intentional.

If you've read some of the other reviews posted here from people who saw it at the Toronto Film Festival, you get the general idea of the story. Contrary to what you might've heard, this is not a 90 minute film on torture. The torture scenes are brief and to the point. Roth doesn't wallow in pointless gore. And this is where I think it shows how he's improved as a filmmaker. He's more interested in scenes and ideas that move the story forward. Yes, there is plenty of gore, but it's relevant to the story and doesn't exist just for its own sake.

One of the aspects of this film that made it so powerful was how Roth created a sense of helpless and inevitability. He provides the dark setup, throws in a sympathetic character, and begins twisting the screws and ratcheting up the suspense. This isn't a movie where you turn off your brain to enjoy it. On the contrary. The more you think about it, the more horrifying it becomes. You begin putting yourself into the character's situation and wondering what you'd do. When you realize that there is no hope for the character, no way to escape, no 'buddy' who's gonna turn up at the last minute to save the hero, and not a shred of humanity or compassion to the antagonists, real fear begins to set in.

Another great element in the script is how the 'survivor' makes moral choices that define their character. Instead of being merely reactive like the characters in *Cabin Fever*, the survivor makes several decisions which change the course of the story. It's a sign of well thought-out script and a filmmaker who cares about the fate of his characters.

For horror fans, this is an absolute must-see. It's so refreshing to see a horror movie that actually makes you feel uncomfortable and one in which you have no idea what's going to happen next. As for the gore, I was surprised by what they got away with. Although there were no credits at the end of the film, the cut I saw was rated R by the MPAA and according to Roth, he didn't cut anything out.

Incredible Film, 17 September 2005



Author: [markjesus](#) from Canada

The only reason I didn't give it a perfect score was the fact that it took a long time to get to the real meat and potatoes of the film. But once it got there, the film was one of the best of the year and I can't wait to see it again when it comes out theatrically. Unfortunately, when it comes out it will be a heavily cut film and a lot of the intense scenes will lose their punch, especially during the final 15 minutes which I must say has some of the craziest stuff you'll ever see in a movie. The acting was great. The gore effects were great (and should be improved once everything is colour corrected). I found some scenes to be way too darkly shot and you couldn't see some of the neat stuff that was on display. And one last thing, everything you've heard about the level of violence in this movie is true, it is ultra graphic and very disturbing stuff. I won't give away any of the plot cause doing so would ruin the experience. PS. I'd definitely not recommend this as a date movie

Good horror, non-existent story, 20 December 2005



Author: [Todd Koerner](#) from Hermosa Beach, CA - United States

I like a rip-roaring horror movie as much as the next guy, but this one just didn't do it for me. It certainly felt like it hit all the necessary marks, from nudity and dismemberment to bloody revenge, but at the conclusion, it just felt like eating cotton candy - no real nutritional value, just a sense that I had satisfied some of my prurient appetite without any logical payoff.

The movie was slow in getting started and then it sprinted to a singularly boggling ending. I walked out of the theater asking, "What was the point of all that?" And while this is described as horror, it really should be classified as thriller. There was no explanation or clever twist at the end. Just the end. I'm sure that it will attract an enthusiastic audience of young adults, but the evisceration by the critics will stem any hopes of huge box office. If your expectations are low enough, and your tastes in gore sufficiently robust, then you are in for a good time. Otherwise, skip this and see a classic Hitchcock film. You'll feel better about yourself.

Saw Hostel at Toronto Film Fest Today, 17 September 2005



Author: [Darryl Shaw](#) from Canada

This is what horror is all about. Not your music video, hip-hop editing, glossy, PG-13 flavor of the week popcorn BS. This IS hardcore.

If you want to see a horror movie that doesn't look away, that stays in the room long after every other movie has squirmed to some other reassuring shot- then you need to watch this movie. Eli Roth shows that he's not a one off- he's a true innovator, the future of the genre, and I hope he inspires many others in reviving Horror from the Kevin Williamson-esquire lull (which was good in the beginning) back down to the depths of visceral balls-to-the-wall hell ride it should be (not a Disney theme park ride). You know there's hope when Tarantino is the Exec producer! Watch this movie Pre-neutered (un cut!) if you can. My real fear now, is that the censors will cut this movie down to the opening half hour.



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