

Post Victory Horror

tonight after watching the Bombers take game one in the ALCS thanks in no small part to C.C. Sabathia's excellent pitching plus some errors in the field by the Angels, I watched my latest DVD rental. I have never seen a Sam Raimi directed effort apart from the blockbuster *Spider-Man* films. Apparently, he was well regarded as a low-budget horror maker and made his return to the genre last year in the aptly titled, [*Drag Me to Hell*](#). This decidedly B-movie was equal parts fright, gore, and humor (mainly from some of the ridiculous situations, but I think this was the intent... not taking itself too seriously).

The film follows a bank loan employee who is a possible candidate for a promotion to assistant manager. Christine is approached by an elderly gypsy woman (complete with a creepy glass eye) who is in need of an extension on her delinquent mortgage payment. When the request is denied, the old beggar woman takes it quite personally and places an evil spirit upon our heroine and (you guessed it) strange, horrific things begin to happen that only Christine is witness to.

Christine's boyfriend, Clay, is skeptical to say the least. However, he does accompany her to a psychic who knows how to rid the woman of her problem before she is literally... well... you know dragged to hell. Goofy, yes but is there a b-grade horror film that isn't? Plus, you get to see the wide acting ability of Justin Long who you may remember from the live-action *Alvin and the Chipmunks...* so maybe not so much since he was the voice of Alvin.

Always In The Wrong Place At The Wrong Time

Thus sums up the life of John McClane the anti-hero of the four action packed Die Hard films. The latest (I can't believe I have not seen it before now) [Live Free or Die Hard](#) could as easily gone with its working title of Die Hard 4.0. NYPD senior detective John McClane (played as always by Bruce Willis) is aided by a twenty-something computer genius to stop the evil plans of a cyber-terrorist group to totally disable the nation's computer infrastructure. Led by another computer genius ([Timothy Olyphant](#)) with a chip on his shoulder, the villains succeed in taking control of much of the East Coasts transportation, finances, and utilities. This is a three-pronged plan called a "fire sale."

Next to the original, this is the most interesting and action-packed episode of the bunch. There is a mixing of the old school philosophy of shoot 'em up and pick the bad guys off one by one with a snide one liner (McClane's signature line "Yipee-ki-yay, _____ is muffled in a key sequence). However, the addition of the detective's reluctant assistant (played by [Justin Long](#), the "Apple Guy") brings a touch of new school action as the duo attempt to stop the nefarious scheme.

While the first two films centered the action around Christmas, this adventure takes place on the 4th of July holiday, convenient when most of the government is off. Speaking of the government, it always seems that in these movies, the federal agents are portrayed as nitwits who always call in the local law enforcement to handle the catastrophe at hand.

The best thing to me about the series is that there is no hiding the fact that Bruce Willis ages between films. He is no longer the spry actor he was when he saved his estranged wife

from the huge skyscraper in the original [Die Hard](#). He is bruised and battered but still keeps ticking especially when something personal is at stake. McClane is not disposable and not needing to be replaced with a fresh face every other film.

The action pieces are not bad, either. There is sooooo much going on this time that not two minutes go by when along comes another cliffhanging moment. Cars flying at you in a tunnel, seemingly defeated villains popping back up for one more slug-fest. My favorite involves a police car doing battle with a machine-gun firing helicopter. Not to mention the antagonist's frustration at McClane's apparent immortality.

So, action fans should not be disappointed in the latest installment of this entertaining series.

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Munk-ey See, Munk-ey Do

In 1958, a struggling songwriter experimented with a recording device by speeding up the audio-track of a recording producing a squeaky, high-pitched, comical tone. Thus, Ross Bagdasarian created David Seville and the Chipmunks with the song "Witch Doctor." The unique sound was an instant sensation and led to multiple Grammy award winning albums, several cartoon series, and the 2007 live-action/CGI feature [Alvin and the Chipmunks](#).

In the film, Jason Lee plays Dave whose life is turned completely upside down when he becomes the reluctant guardian of the trio of talking, singing rodents (call me mean if you must but yes indeed they are rodents). Alvin (Justin Long) is the mischievous leader of the three. Simon (Matthew Gray

Gubler) is the intellectual, bespecaled middle sibling. Rounding out the threesome, Theodore (pop singer Jesse McCartney) is the chubby, emotional young one. In one day, the brothers cause Dave to lose his job at an ad agency, wreck his house, and ruin his date with his ex-girlfriend. Yet, when he hears the chipmunks sing Dave thinks that his dreams of becoming a successful songwriter just fell into his lap. He writes for the group "The Chipmunk Song (Please Christmas Don't Be Late)."

Upon hearing the novelty piece, a greedy, selfish record company owner sets out to control the group. "Uncle" Ian (David Cross) lavishes the boys with fancy toys, video games, cool clothes, and almost more food than Theodore can stuff into his enormous cheeks. Eventually, the villain drives a wedge between the chipmunks and Dave which leads the brothers to walk out and move in with the slimeball. Eventually, Ian's true motivation emerges as he leads the group on a taxing tour schedule, leaving no time to be boys.

The live-action *Alvin and the Chipmunks* is fun for children and mildly entertaining for older people. Personally, I would rather enjoy the animated adventures of Alvin, Simon, and Theodore. Also, the hip-hop version of "Witch Doctor" was just not good. However, I did enjoy the up-tempo version of "The Chipmunk Song."