



TADZU LEMPKE (Michael Constantine, left) places a gypsy curse on Billy Halleck (Robert John Burke) in "Stephen King's Thinner."

'Thinner' doesn't do King justice

By CLIFF HICKS
Film Critic

There's a theory about films based on the work of Stephen King — if they've got his name in front of them, don't go see them.

"Thinner" is just another example in the long line of films that can't do Stephen King justice. Look at "Stephen King's Sleepwalkers" or "Stephen King's The Lawnmower Man."

If the filmmakers are stooping to using King's name to get you to see the film (and sometimes it's just on posters, TV spots, etc.), you shouldn't be handing them your money.

King is a genius storyteller, but part of the problem is adapting his horror to film. The most successful and effective movies based on his work have not been from horror stories.

Prime examples of this include "Stand By Me" (which is based off the story "The Body" from "Different Seasons"), "The Running Man" (which King wrote under the name Richard Bachman), "Misery" (off the book of the same name) and the film that should have won Morgan Freeman an Oscar, "The Shawshank Redemption" (which is based off "Rita Hayworth & The Shawshank Redemption" also from "Different Seasons").

All of those films apply an adept skill of capturing character and story,

with the exception of "The Running Man," which is just a fun film. They changed the ending of "The Running Man" anyway.

The problem is that "Thinner" has King's name in front, it is a horror film and it fails to capture the imagination of the viewer.

"Thinner" is the story of Billy Halleck, played by Robert John Burke. Halleck is a lawyer in a small town system, where things are fairly corrupt. Halleck is also just under 300 pounds at the beginning of the film.

The whole ball of wax gets rolling when Halleck runs over a gypsy woman because his wife is giving him oral sex while he is driving.

After the judge acquits Halleck of "any wrongdoing," the oldest gypsy from the family, Tadzu Lempke, curses Halleck with a brush of his hand across the cheek and single word — "thinner."

As it turns out, both the judge and the officer who testified that Halleck was not at fault are cursed with different curses as well.

Here we return to the problem — this is a horror film. One of the reasons Stephen King is so successful as a horror writer (and why horror fiction is effective in general) is because the words allow you to, as the case may be, flesh out the images in your head.

King provides an outline, the descriptions, the characters and the story, and leaves the little creepy details up

The Facts

Film: "Stephen King's Thinner"
Stars: Robert John Burke, Joe Mantegna, Michael Constantine
Director: Tom Holland
Rating: R (violence, language)
Grade: C
Five Words: "Thinner" can't capture King's essence

to the readers. No two people read a horror story alike, which is why it works.

"Thinner" is ineffective because the viewer is forced to accept special effects that aren't at all how they may have envisioned the story.

Instead of gaunt beyond belief, images of Halleck fail to capture the essence of King's horrific ideas, and perhaps display why a film may never capture the essence of a horror book.

Besides all this, the acting isn't all that terrific and the dialogue seems flat and predictable. Even the ending just doesn't succeed in being horror.

The funny thing about the film is that it wanders so far into campiness, one might think it was intentional. Unfortunately (for the film's sake), it probably wasn't.

This is the kind of film to go to at a \$1.50 theater to make fun of. Sorry, trick-or-treaters — no goodies here.

First-edition Shakespeare brings \$250,000

NEW YORK (AP) — A first-edition volume of William Shakespeare's plays with gilt edges and marbled leaves sold for \$250,000 at Sotheby's, the auction house said.

The 1623 Shakespeare folio, sold Tuesday, was described by Sotheby's as "incomparably the most important work in the English language."

The folio was "Mr. William Shakespeare Comedies, Histories,

& Tragedies. Published according to the True Originall Copies," printed in London in 1623. The volume presents the first editions of 18 of Shakespeare's plays and rare authoritative text of several others.

Its pre-sale estimated value was between \$80,000 and \$120,000, Sotheby's said.

Another high-priced item, selling for \$126,500, was the first portrait of Abraham Lincoln with a full beard. The portrait's presale esti-

mated value was between \$30,000 and \$40,000.

The photograph was taken in 1861, two weeks before the president-elect left Springfield, Ill., for the journey to Washington, Sotheby's said. The photo was signed by Lincoln along with the words "president-elect."

Sotheby's did not reveal the names of any of the sellers or the

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