

Child's Play ★★½

Year of Release: 1988

Review by Randy Parker

Country: USA

Verdict: Skip It

Every little kid dreams of having a doll that can walk, talk, and play with him. For Andy, the 6-year-old protagonist of the thriller *Child's Play*, this dream becomes a horrifying reality when his doll, Chucky, not only comes to life, but also goes on a grisly murder spree.

Child's Play opens in a toy store with a dying serial killer transferring his soul, via voodoo, into an innocent-looking doll. A struggling single mother, played by Catherine Hicks (who was the marine biologist in *Star Trek IV*), buys the possessed doll as a birthday present for her son, Andy. Much to his delight, Andy discovers that his new doll, which he names Chucky, is alive; he can walk, talk, play, and much much more.

Trouble starts to brew when Chucky (possessed by the serial killer's spirit) starts to murder people, and the police suspect that Andy is responsible for the crimes. No one will believe Andy, who claims that his doll Chucky is the real culprit—that is, until Andy's mother discovers that the doll has been operating without any batteries in it. But before she can dispose of Chucky he escapes, and in the remainder of the film, Hicks and a detective (played by Chris Sarandon) team up to find and destroy the doll.

Child's Play is fun, campy, not too gory, and at times genuinely suspenseful. Several tense se-

quences in the movie raised the hair on my back, including the one in which Sarandon, trapped in his overturned car, must fend off Chucky's attempts to kill him. Thanks to convincing special effects, the movie passes its most important test: the mobile and murderous doll is believable and quite frightening. Chucky's demented gaze and sinister smile are haunting and will make you think twice the next time you see a cabbage patch kid. I also was impressed by Alex Vincent's performance as Andy, the cute and gutsy little boy who must overcome his mother's and the police's skepticism about Chucky's true nature.

Although I enjoyed the humor, suspense, and premise of *Child's Play*, the film's lack of originality bothered me. The gimmick of a doll coming to life is reminiscent of 1978's *Magic*, which was about a ventriloquist's homicidal dummy. Furthermore, Chucky's knife-wielding antics really aren't all that different from those of Jason in the *Friday the 13th* series. My biggest problem with *Child's Play* is its ending which, although effective, seems lifted directly from *The Terminator*.

Despite these problems, *Child's Play* is certainly above average as far as horror movies go, and if you're looking for some campy humor and good suspense, then the movie is worth checking out.

© 1988 – Randy Parker - All Rights Reserved

<http://www.emusements.com/randyparker/>