

CANDYMAN

WE DARE YOU TO SAY HIS NAME FIVE TIMES.



Chicago citizens are gripped by the recent mysterious deaths in the notorious Cabrini-Green housing project. Earlier last week two bodies were discovered horribly mutilated

Attempts were made to interview Helen Lyle, an "urban legend" researcher. As a recent graduate of the University of Chicago, Helen is understood to



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CAST

VIRGINIA MADSEN as Helen Lyle
TONY TODD as Candyman
XANDER BERKELEY as Trevor Lyle
KASI LEMMONS as Bernadette Walsh
VANESSA WILLIAMS as Anne-Marie McCoy
DEJUAN GUY as Jake

CREW

Written and Directed by BERNARD ROSE
Produced by STEVE GOLIN, SIGURJON SIGHVATSSON and ALAN POUL
Executive Producer CLIVE BARKER
Based on "The Forbidden" by CLIVE BARKER
Director of Photography ANTHONY B. RICHMOND B.S.C.
Edited by DAN RAE
Production Design by JANE ANN STEWART
Art Director DAVID LAZAN
Special Make-up Effects by BOB KEEN
Music by PHILIP GLASS



THE SWEETEST THING

By Michael Blyth

On paper, *Candyman* might sound like nothing out of the ordinary. The story, about a hook-handed folk legend who can be called forth by repeating his name in a mirror five times, only to brutally slaughter those who dared summon him, could be easily mistaken as little more than another formulaic exercise in stalk and slash thrills – a pre-packaged Freddy Krueger for the early 1990s, or a fantastical Michael Myers for a new generation. But in reality, nothing could be further from the truth. While the basic premise slyly masquerades as perfect throwaway fodder for countless teen sleepovers, this iconoclastic shocker was in fact one of the most biting intelligent, politically astute, and let us not forget, purely terrifying horror films to emerge that decade.

Of course, for those in the know, *Candyman* was never going to be anything but special. Originating from the twisted mind of one of horror's most radical thinkers, Clive Barker, the film took inspiration from his short story 'The Forbidden', first published in the acclaimed compendium of macabre tales, *Books of Blood*. In addition to this, it was adapted for the screen and directed by Bernard Rose, whose previous horror film, the nightmarish excursion into pre-teen fears, *Paperhouse*, was one of the most original and distinctive (and still overlooked) genre films of the 1980s. These were two men establishing reputations for pushing the boundaries of horror, and for creating work that was bracingly singular in both content and execution. Rose's keen visual eye was a perfect match for



Barker's impressionistic writing. Horror movie magic was perhaps inevitable.

Still, what we got was no straightforward adaptation. While the essence of the original story can certainly be traced in the final film, Rose made some significant changes in translating Barker's tale for the screen. Two of the most fundamental, and most immediately apparent shifts, were the decisions to uproot the action from a dilapidated Liverpool council estate to the Chicago projects, and the fact that Rose's Candyman was black, as opposed to the long-haired white guy who featured in Barker's story. Such changes were far from inconsequential, surface alterations. Both fundamentally altered (and elevated) the core of the story, taking it from a sly critique on the British class system, to a broader commentary on race relations and inner-city poverty in '90s America.

This decision to cast an African American as the titular villain was one which caused concern amongst some of the film's backers, who initially feared that a black monster would be deemed racist. Rose explained in an interview with *The Independent* in 1993:

"I had to go and have a whole set of meetings with the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), because the producers were so worried. Their argument was, 'Why shouldn't a black actor be a ghost? Why shouldn't a black actor play Freddy Krueger or Hannibal Lecter? If you're saying that they can't be, it's really perverse. This is a horror movie...'"

The NAACP may have been on board, but their position was not shared by everybody. Among the film's detractors were Carl Franklin, director of *Devil in a Blue Dress*, who accused the film of perpetuating "white middle-class fears of black people", and *House Party* and

Boomerang director Reginald Hudlin, who simply branded the film "worrisome".

For better or worse, the bold decision to change the race of its chief antagonist unquestionably informs the socio-politics of the resulting film. With its mythology very much rooted in violent white supremacism (Candyman, we learn, was the son of a slave on a New Orleans plantation in the 1890s, brutally tortured and killed for having an affair with a wealthy white woman), the film is arguably more nuanced than the superficial perpetuation of white anxieties about black people which Franklin perceived it to be. Rather, the film is conscious of these fears and, in turn, critical of them. We are not unthinkingly asked to fear Candyman's blackness, but instead to contemplate the long history of racial and social discrimination which created him in the first place.

Rose recognised synergies between racial anxieties and the

wider themes of urban myth and folklore which are central to the film's narrative, when he said:

"The tradition of oral storytelling is very much alive, especially when it's a scary story. And the biggest urban legend of all for me was the idea that there are places in cities where you do not go, because if you go in them something dreadful will happen – not to say that there isn't danger in ghettos and inner city areas, but the exaggerated fear of them is an urban myth."

The mythical "ghetto", then, is the real boogeyman in *Candyman*. And this "ghetto" in question is Cabrini-Green, a notorious real-life former housing development, populated predominantly by African American residents. Building on its infamy, Rose depicts Cabrini as a nightmarish landscape – not only graffiti-strewn and dilapidated, but also deadly: "I won't even drive past there. Heard a kid got shot there," a character is heard to utter. Cabrini-Green is an all-too-real equivalent to

the terrifying fantasy worlds of, say, the *Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise, or the sadistic outer realms inhabited by the Cenobites in Barker's *Hellraiser*. But while those latter films play on irrational fears and suppressed desires, *Candyman* deals in the tangible horror of contemporary US poverty.

As an outsider conducting research in Cabrini-Green for her post-grad thesis on urban legends, Helen Lyle, the film's central heroine, acts as a stand

in for those with a morbid curiosity for the horrors of the "ghetto". Rose is never uncritical of her position and her gaze, which is ultimately an amalgam of journalist, anthropologist, explorer, and white saviour. Whilst Helen's intelligence is not questioned, and she does seem sympathetic to the conditions and narratives she encounters, she is ultimately imbricated in structural racism. In one scene, Helen explains to her friend and research colleague Bernadette how her own luxury



apartment building was, like Cabrini-Green, originally built as a housing project, but when a highway cut it off from the black neighbourhoods, it became a destination for well-to-do white folk, and subsequently skyrocketed in price. Helen is aware of, but more importantly part of, the urban regeneration and gentrification of her neighbourhood, and as such the increased ghettoization of the neighbouring black suburbs. The film does not invite us to judge Helen as racist, but implicitly scrutinizes her white privilege.

Essential to breathing life into one of horror cinema's most fascinating and conflicted female characters is Virginia Madsen. Whilst Helen occasionally does betray classist tendencies, and her venture may border on poverty tourism, she is a character of strength, intelligence and resilience. Madsen herself was aware that Helen was far from the typically assumed horror heroine. Talking to *Fangoria* at the time of the film's release, Madsen explained;

"Bernard [Rose] immediately takes out that scene of 'getting punished for your sins' which is so exploitative of women. Our traditional role has always been as helpless victims. But now we've had the *Alien* and *Halloween* films, where women get chased but still remain strong. Helen never allows herself to be a victim in *Candyman*. Horrible things might happen to her, but she fights back."

Significant too is the fact that Madsen was in her thirties at the time of filming. If horror films (particularly slashers) are typically understood to be the domain of the teenager, *Candyman* is a distinctly adult take on the genre. The film's opening sequence, in which a bad babysitter and her James Dean-esque boyfriend indulge in a spot of hanky-panky before being slain by the hook-handed assassin, is a perfectly executed red herring. Rose is playing with genre conventions, initially serving up the adolescent thrills that audiences might

be expecting, before promptly subverting expectations and uprooting us into a grown up, perhaps even stuffy, world of academia. Once again, this is not the teen slasher that we might have been led to believe, and Rose knows this, and has fun with it. Even the film's atmospheric score, by acclaimed composer Philip Glass, is a somewhat 'classier' affair than we might expect from a horror movie (his orchestral and operatic arrangements are also in stark contrast to the film's urban settings).

Similarly, Tony Todd is equally unforgettable as the main man. While the far more bankable Eddie Murphy was initially considered, watching the film now it is almost impossible to imagine anyone but the gravelly voiced Todd taking on the iconic role. Todd's *Candyman* is no wise-cracking Krueger-esque loon. Nor is he the strong, silent type, à la Michael Myers or Jason Voorhees. He is a thinker and a philosopher; a verbose figure, acutely aware of his power, and

the strength he acquires from spreading fear throughout his community. He's a snappy dresser too, sporting a long black, fur-lined coat, pressed trousers and freshly polished shoes, like an impeccably styled Blaxploitation idol.

But perhaps most importantly, Todd's *Candyman* is a sympathetic character. His driving force is not cold-blooded revenge, or unthinking malice, but good old fashioned love. Like Boris Karloff's ancient Egyptian prince Imhotep in *The Mummy*, or Gary Oldman's forlorn count in *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, Candyman is nursing one hell of a broken heart. The film ends with the implication that Helen is the reincarnation of his beloved, for whom he died many years before. Once again, Candyman is not just a figure of fear. Sure, he can be terrifying, but he is no one-dimensional monster indiscriminately wreaking havoc. He is a tragic figure, destroyed by love, who will stop at nothing to find it again. When all is said and



done, he's really just a hopeless romantic at heart. As the obnoxious Purcell tells Helen when he recounts the tragic tale of Candyman's lost love and brutal demise, "poor Candyman".

When the film was released in the US in October 1992, it received mostly glowing reviews, no mean feat for a horror movie, given the critics' frustrating tendency to flippantly disregard

genre work. Robert Ebert gave the film a rave, explaining how, "What I liked was a horror movie that was scaring me with ideas and gore, instead of simply with gore" (as though horror movies are usually just gore and nothing else!), while *The Hollywood Reporter* exclaimed, "So long, Freddy. Take a hike, Jason. Hasta la vista, Chucky. There's a new bogeyman in town... This Candyman can



elicit some bona fide shivers while the picture that bears his name is high-caliber horror in its purest, most primal form.”

Audiences too were quick to embrace the pleasures of Rose’s creation, and the film went on to take over \$25m at the US box office, in comparison to its modest \$8m budget. So successful was the film that

three years later it spawned the inevitable sequel, although sadly the second instalment, *Candyman: Farewell to the Flesh*, failed to match the original in terms of artistic and conceptual scope, offering a much more conventional (if not entirely unenjoyable) slasher romp. Alas, a third entry, *Candyman: Day of the Dead*, failed to deliver on any grounds,





and did little but reduce his good name into the depths of mindless horror franchise villain. Once again, poor Candyman.

Rose has often discussed a desire to resurrect his most famous creation, and make a sequel truly worthy of his iconic original. Whether or not that would be a good thing remains to be seen (sometimes it's better to just let sleeping bees lie), but you have to admit it would be great to see this horror legend grace our screens again. I'm sure I'm not the only one pining

to see him one last time. In fact, I've got an idea, say it with me now – Candyman, Candyman, Candyman, Cand...

Michael Blyth is a film programmer for the BFI London Film Festival and BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival. He is the author of Devil's Advocates: In the Mouth of Madness for Auteur Publishing.





ABOUT THE TRANSFER

Candyman has been exclusively restored by Arrow Films and is presented in its original aspect ratio of 1.85:1 with stereo and 5.1 audio.

The original 35mm camera negative element was scanned in 4K resolution on a Lasergraphics Director at EFilm, Burbank. The film was graded on Digital Vision's Nucoda Film Master and restored at R3Store Studios in London. Final grading was overseen by director Bernard Rose and director of photography Anthony Richmond at Local Hero, Santa Monica.

The original stereo mix and new 5.1 mix were remastered at Deluxe Audio Services, Hollywood.

All materials for this restoration were made available by NBC Universal.

Restoration supervised by James White, Arrow Films
R3Store Studios: Gerry Gedge, Jo Griffin, Andrew O'Hagan, Rich Watson, Jenny Collins
EFilm: David Morales
Local Hero: James Cotton, Leandro Marini
NBC Universal: Peter Schade, Tim Naderski, Jefferson Root

Special thanks to Bernard Rose and Anthony Richmond for their generous participation in this project.

ABOUT THE ORIGINAL UK THEATRICAL VERSION

When *Candyman* was first released theatrically in the UK, the film contained a different cut of the psychiatrist scene from that which appeared in the US R-Rated version. The "uncut" UK version continued to appear on UK VHS and Laserdisc, but was later replaced by the US R-Rated cut for DVD release in all territories. We investigated all relevant materials at Universal and Sony, as TriStar was the original US Distributor, in the hopes of finding the original pre-print elements for this alternate footage, but neither studio had any records of this version. Through access to Universal's tape archive we managed to locate digibeta tapes containing this alternate cut, but we were determined to locate this version on film so it could be properly restored and presented in full definition. We finally sourced an original Rank distributed 35mm print from the National Science and Media Museum in Bradford, in which this alternate version of this scene was intact and complete. This material was scanned and restored in 2K and has been inserted into our new restoration of *Candyman* as seamlessly as possible. We thank the following people for their assistance in locating this material:

Rebecca Hill, Kathryn Penny/National Science and Media Museum
Bradford, Bill Lawrence, Tony Earnshaw/Reel Solutions, Rita Belda,
James Owsley/Sony Pictures Entertainment, Bradford Hirsch, Robin
Jones, Jonathan Mann, Dave Osterkamp, Janice Simpson/NBC
Universal, Mike Cabble, Kal Dosanjh/Bonded, Marc Morris

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and Booklet Produced by EWAN CANT
Executive Producers KEVIN LAMBERT, FRANCESCO SIMEONI
Technical Producer JAMES WHITE
QC NORA MEHENNI, ALAN SIMMONS
Blu-ray Mastering DAVID MACKENZIE
Subtitling THE ENGINE HOUSE MEDIA SERVICES
Artist GARY PULLIN
Design OBVIOUSLY CREATIVE

SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, Clive Barker, Heather Buckley, Michael Felsher, Anthony
Nield, Anthony Richmond, Chris Roe, Bernard Rose and
Tim Sullivan.

What Killed Ruthie Jean?

By Jackie Friedman
Staff Reporter

Late Tuesday night Chicago Police spokesman Jarris Varnrobinson reported: "The killer or killers of Ruthie Jean smashed their way through the back of a medicine cabinet in a small apartment bathroom. The attack took place at the Cabrini Green housing project. This mysterious attack brings the total of unsolved murders in the housing projects to an alarming twenty-six, just this year."



It is believed that the attack took place as Ms. Jean was about to leave her apartment for a night out. Her body was found face down, apparently mauled by a sharp object. Two cleaning ladies discovered the grisly scene on Monday evening at 8:20pm. Numerous dead bees were found around the crime scene, a fact that has left the authorities baffled.

***"Life in the Projects
is brutal and now we
have 26 brutal deaths."***

CANDYMAN



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