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PRESS REVIEW

HORROR – JAKOP AHLBOM

London Mime Festival, Horror / Jakop Ahlbom, review: Fear meets farce in a slick homage

This elaborate piece is a must-see for horror film fans, says Lyndsey Winship



LYNDESEY WINSHIP | Tuesday 26 January 2016 | 0 comments



Bloodbath: Jakop Ahlbom nails the horror genre

Fans of horror films, you have to see this. Swedish director and movie obsessive Jakop Ahlbom has made a loving homage to the genre that's clever, thoroughly entertaining and has some genuine jump-out-of-your-seat moments.

Ahlbom's elaborate staging uses illusion, mime, movement and music (no words), sharp editing and a blood-curdling soundtrack to push buttons and reverently poke fun at films old and new, from *The Exorcist* to *Evil Dead 2*. Direct references elicit delighted shrieks from film buffs in the audience, but even those who aren't aficionados will recognise the many tropes packed into this slick show – the stormy night, the deserted house, the creepy, ghostly girl with long dark hair and soul-stealing eyes.

A young woman turns up at her childhood home where she is haunted by the spectres of her sadistic family. What starts with spooky shadows on the wall escalates into a full-on bloodbath and Ahlbom nails the blend of fear and farce so common in the genre, with bad zombie fighting and lashings of fake blood mixed in with unnerving drama underlined by a shaky sense of reality.

This UK premiere is only playing for two nights as part of the London International Mime Festival, but it's a brilliantly conceived and performed piece that deserves to be widely seen.

January 26, Peacock Theatre (020 7863 8222, peacocktheatre.com)

THE STAGE

Horror review at the Peacock Theatre, London – ‘genuinely terrifying’



Horror at the Peacock Theatre, London. Photo: Tristram Kenton

[Carousel](#) [Reviews](#) [Theatre](#) by Stewart Pringle – Jan 26, 2016

At some point during the splatter-movie climax of Jakob Ahlbom’s ingenious tribute to horror cinema, the feeling emerges that literally anything could happen. Having seen bodies levitate and then vanish, a woman dissolve instantaneously, ghosts and revenants appear, disappear, be dismembered, climb through walls and television sets and float across the stage, it’s almost as if Ahlbom and his company have suspended the laws of physics, or conjured some genuine black magic on the stage.

Horror is that all-too rare creation: a genuinely, persistently terrifying theatre show. Part of the London International Mime Festival, it’s a wordless 80-minute ghost train that plays homage to the greatest hits in horror history, while telling its own disturbing story of vengeful spirits and demonic possession.

Framed around a classic cabin in the woods-style narrative, Horror sees three young friends foolishly staying the night in a crumbling old house. It’s no surprise that they fall victim to supernatural shenanigans, but the scale, complexity and bravura of the ensuing bloody mayhem is breath-taking. Tributes to *Evil Dead 2*, *Ring*, *The Exorcist* and *Poltergeist* surpass even the original films in their flawless execution, as Ahlbom’s established combination of grand illusion, dance and music creates shiver-inducing set-piece after set-piece. Subtle it ain’t, but it’s a fiendishly clever horror show that makes *Ghost Stories* seem crass and even *The Woman in Black* look like a leaden-footed museum piece. A black kaleidoscope of nerve-shredding entertainment.

Verdict

A superlative and nerve-shredding tribute to the greatest hits of horror cinema which blends dance and grand illusion.



Horror at the Peacock Theatre

CULTURE THEATRE



THE EDITORIAL UNIT

26TH JANUARY 2016

What generates fear, and why do we love so much to be terrified? That is what Jakob Ahlbom's *Horror* aims to explore. As a love letter to the horror films that both scared and delighted the director in his youth, this performance at the Peacock Theatre could so easily have fallen too far into parody, or collapsed under the weight of pastiche. But the end result is a balletic feat of theatre, mixed with clever cinematography, a great soundtrack and a story with depth.

Forming part of the 2016 London International Mime Festival, *Horror* tells the story of a young woman's return to the old house in which she used to live with her parents and sister. But the house has a sinister past, and, as the fate of her sister is slowly revealed via a series of wonderfully presented, funny nods to classic horror flicks like *The Ring*, *The Exorcist*, and *The Shining*, the narrative takes on a psychological aspect. It becomes the heady emotional suspense, and the idea of love pushed to its limits, that make the production so captivating. It is clear from the play that Ahlbom's least favourite movies of the genre are slasher films.

With a stage that functions as a house with lounge and kitchen, a forest, and a large screen, *Horror's* successes are marked in particular by the skilful choreography and classic horror-movie soundtrack (both executed perfectly by the Jakob Ahlbom Company's sterling troupe of performers). Such a profound tale of familial distress, child abuse and sisterly love is told without anybody uttering more than a word, but far from being empty, it feels like no words are needed.

Whilst non-horror fans may find themselves at a loss when confronted with the references, however blatant, and whilst the imitative nature of the production can sometimes encroach on its excellent personal qualities, *Horror* manages to transcend the background and influences that it so openly espouses. It does classic, solid horror very well – and terrifies you into feeling good.

Verdict: ★★★★★

Stuart McMillan

Dancing Review

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Horror – Jakop Ahlbom Company: Peacock Theatre, London, 25 January 2016

Posted on January 26, 2016 by gerarddavis09

Schlocking hell



Judith Hazeleger discovers someone else's pubic hair in the bathtub. Photo by Paulina Matusiak & Eddy Wenting

If you ever wanted to see someone have their intestine pulled out through their mouth, then this might be the thing for you. Don't think, however, that **Jakop Ahlbom's** *Horror* is some kind of carnival freak show – it's far more intelligent and way cleverer than that.

It's more of a play without words, an updated parlour ghost story with domestic and child abuse fuelling its dramatic core. Actually, the confusing story is not the work's strongest point although it helps contain the creepy atmosphere and gives us characters we can relate to and empathise with.

What really gives *Horror* its oomph is all the ridiculously inventive visual and aural effects. Without giving too much away there are things like a hand with a life of its own, people appearing in several places at once, blood spurting out all over the place, way too

many people in a bath at the same time and a dazzlingly unexpected levitation trick. There are tons of others but what makes them all so special is the immaculate timing and the unexpected nature of what you're witnessing. One moment you can't bear to look, then you're laughing and then you're in total disbelief at what happened.

The show is an homage to the horror movie genre and is packed full of references from classic films such as *The Ring*, *The Grudge* and *The Shining* and also parodies like *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and *The Addams Family*. Consequently the staging is strikingly cinematic in approach with a multi-layered, highly detailed set that even features a wall doubling up as a black and white movie screen. **Yuri Schreuders'** lighting is frighteningly effective and **Wim Conradi's** choice of music and sound effects pull you every which way.

All the cast are excellent, particularly **Gwen Langenberg** as the 'Ring' style anti-hero, and although the ending is a bit lame the journey getting there is absolutely extraordinary. A bloody brilliant bit of theatre.

Horror is part of the **London International Mime Festival** and runs at **The Peacock Theatre** in London until 26 January 2016. Tickets can be bought on the [Sadler's Wells website](#).

Gerard Davis

REVIEWS • LONDON THEATRE • WEST END & CENTRAL

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Review: Horror at Peacock Theatre

PEACOCK THEATRE ◊ 25TH AND 26TH JANUARY 2016

Jakop Ahlbom Company make a show that is 'fresh, funny and downright astonishing'.

ELEANOR TURNEY



Jakop Ahlbom Company perform Horror at Peacock Theatre. Photo: Sanne Peper.

Thunder and lightning: check. Creaky old house: check. Naive young guests: check. Creepy sisters: check. We are firmly in the territory of horror tropes (ones that even a massive wimp like me can recognise), and yet what Jakop Ahlbom Company have managed to do is make something fresh, funny and downright astonishing out of these well-worn ideas.

Horror is part of the mime festival but is presented at Sadler's Well's Peacock Theatre, known for its dance performances. This is sort of neither and both – there's some screaming, there's some laughing, there's some dancing, but it's not totally a mime piece or a dance piece. In fact, the choreographed dances are probably the weakest parts of what is generally a fantastic show.

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Apart from a stonking climactic sequence right at the end, which is choreographed to violent perfection, the dance parts of this performance are fine but not startling. However, the rest of the piece is hugely impressive and features some of the best stage magic I've ever seen. A severed hand crawls around the stage unaided; a body is levitated and then

the sheet is whisked away to reveal... nothing; a tiny woman is swallowed by a sofa; a man's entrails are ripped out through his mouth. The effects are stupendous – six technicians are named in the programme, along with Rob Hillenbrink who designed the "special props and make-up". They are very special indeed – I spent a large part of the evening muttering "how did they do that?" to myself and anyone else who would listen.

Horror plays with shock value very cleverly, subverting expectations just enough of the time to keep you on the edge of your seat. At one point, the Peacock Theatre's air con on the back of my neck nearly gave me a heart attack. As mentioned above, I am not the most robust when it comes to horror but this is a genuinely scary show. Judicious use of disquieting soundscapes, eerie music and sudden loud noises (Wim Conradi with Bauke Moerman) means you can't relax, and there are lots of sudden blackouts and flashes of light to reveal scenes of carnage or horror. The jump-cut style blackouts are perhaps slightly overused, and the music/sound is a tad waring at times, but *Horror* is mostly perfectly judged to be properly frightening.

It's also very funny, both in its nods to classic horror films (*The Exorcist*, *The Ring*, *Poltergeist*, *The Shining*, to name just the ones this horror novice picked up on) and in its character interactions. Guessing who will be the last one standing keeps things interesting, plot-wise, and the introduction of hapless new characters halfway through is a good idea. The story is pretty heavy-handed, in terms of revealing why the creepy, homicidal sisters are haunting the creepy old house and preying on unwary visitors, but it's so entertaining that this is easily overlooked.

Horror gets a bit too convoluted around the middle, and could do with being a shade shorter, just to ensure that its manic energy doesn't drop. These small quibbles don't detract, though, from what is a visceral, exciting and extremely clever show.

Horror was part of London International Mime Festival 2016. For more information, click [here](#).