

I am at times stunned by the quality of the movies riding the current wave of nostalgic retreads, most of the time it's because they're so tragically awful I can practically see the committee of businessmen pulling the profitability strings right behind the screen. Occasionally however one of these movies is a pleasant surprise and *Scream* (2021) sort of was that? At least it was for a lot of audiences, I'm still torn on some elements of the movie, particularly with the casting and performance of the leading actress and the strange slapdash use of the legacy characters. I'm sure at some point in the script they all died, or they didn't all show up, and the studio really pushed to hold them back for a continued franchise. You can sort of feel that weird restraint in the ending of *Scream* (2021), where the reveal of the killers is good but the resolution of the film with Gale Weathers and Sydney Prescott feels a little tired in a *Force Awakens* sort of way.

I say all of that because I was shocked even more still at how much I enjoyed *Scream VI* (2023); a movie that on paper I was poised to dislike after a slew of over-exposure to the marketing which I found totally lacking in any flavor. I am extremely picky when it comes to trailers, they rarely turn me off a movie completely but they often leave me feeling less interested than more, especially when looking at modern horror blockbuster trailers. Thankfully from the opening of this movie being my favorite in the series to the ending being satisfyingly gory I have little in the way of negatives to say.

What works so well about this intro, and the movie as a whole, to me is that it feels very true to what Wes Craven would have wanted; it's a fun slasher with a large cast of stock style characters trying to survive a killer who's always one step ahead of them, all the while being aware of the situation they're in as it relates to horror movies. How to your taste the meta content in this movie will be is entirely up to you, I didn't feel like they dwelled on it too long for its own sake instead choosing to work it into the plot more believably interestingly. The smartest thing the movie does overall is that I think you could enjoy the movie without paying much attention to that stuff at all.

It is also a very well shot movie, only occasionally let down by mediocre editing. I was getting actually invested in intense scenes of ludicrous violence because the directors really know when to speed up and when to slow down. They spend a lot of the runtime indulging in Ghostface's ludicrous physicality which always makes him seem just slightly superhuman in the face of the multiple beatings that the masked killer takes throughout the film. This never managed to affect my suspension of disbelief because Ghostface never simply overpowers someone in one wild smack, always fighting tooth and nail to secure kills. There are a few of those encounters in this movie that look ridiculous, and yet within the logic of the film, paired with being so bought into the action, it effectively blurs the line between silly and tense. In my head it shouldn't have worked as well as it did, but even watching the movie a second time I found myself getting invested and tense just as much as I had the first watch.

This movie does not ooze perfection, but it does mark another success in the *Scream* franchise. Surpassing the 2021 "requel", getting bigger and better in every way, but not losing what makes the movies fun. I will say that at this point I am even excited to see a seventh *Scream* - a sentence I would have thought unreal even a few years ago.