

MISSING



A criminologist character in this film opines that ‘this is the strangest case I ever saw’, but it is arguable that many audiences will consider this to be the strangest *film* they ever saw. Seemingly shot entirely on computers and other electronic media, it certainly differs from traditional production techniques. Yes, we’ve had computer animation for decades now, and budget films have been made on domestic camcorders and even mobile phones, sometimes to critical acclaim - The Blair Witch Project springs readily to mind. This use of a computer’s camera, supplemented by external feeds such as security cameras, has been done before, but it remains a novel concept and probably only really works when the computer is integral to the story. This is certainly the case with *Missing*, and if it had been made any differently it would have lacked the effect the producers intended. The lead part is played by 19 year old Storm Reid as June, and she turns in a very creditable performance.

The plot centres on the disappearance of a teenage girl’s mother and her desperate attempts to trace her. June’s relationship with her mother will be recognised by many: teenage truculence in the face of love and concern, typified by a cell-phone Facetime exchange whilst June’s ‘mom’ drives herself to the airport (naughty!). However, it isn’t long before the concern is inverted as June finds herself waiting forlornly for her mother’s return from a trip to Columbia. She holds up a grubby piece of card with a cheeky but comical greeting on it as everyone disembarking from the flight files past her; everyone that is, except her mother. This is a nicely done scene portraying well that sinking feeling that many of us will have experienced when a loved-one fails to return home at the expected time. Realisation that this is more than a missed flight and that something sinister has occurred introduces fast-moving action,

and a twisting plot that demands concentration. June's capability in harnessing the seemingly unlimited power of modern computing and social media is conveyed by rapid editing and jump-cuts, but of course these are skills commonly possessed by most young people and which leave many of us looking on in awe if not bewilderment. However, some critics of this film assert that even the most skilful hacker would not be able to break into websites and email addresses with the alacrity that June does, and doubt the possibility that it could even be done at all, but perhaps this nuance will frustrate only those that know about these things: the rest of us will accept it unquestioningly, or think it justifiable cinematic licence.

When our Penrith U3a Alhambra Cinema group gathered for our post-screening coffee and chat, most of us agreed *Missing* was an enjoyable film, if a little complex. One of our members appeared to have grasped the plot better than others and was able to explain it to the more bemused amongst us, but subsequent reading on the web of a detailed precis of the script revealed our friend's interpretation wasn't quite correct. Nevertheless, this is a film well worth watching and moves at a pace that should leave nobody bored.

Paradoxically, given that it looks like you are viewing a small computer screen, it would be better seen at the cinema rather than on television. Even less satisfactory would be to watch it via a download to your p.c. – that really would be a case of life imitating art!

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