The Fog is gray and dreary; lacks vision

The Fog, starring Adrienne Barbeau, Jamie Lee Curtis, Janet Leigh, Hal Holbrook, and John Houseman. Screenplay by John Carpenter and Debra Hill, produced by Debra Hill. Executive producer, Charles B. Block. Directed by John Carpenter. Released by Avco Embassy. Released by Avco Embassy. When John Carpenter's film Halloween was released last year, the Boston Globe remarked that it was probably a precursor to something bigger. Halloween's note saying grace was its awesome ability to make the viewer jump on cue; the Globe said Carpenter was honing his talents for a major horror film. Carpenter and Dan O'Bannon com-

Now, Carpenter's The Fog is out, and no one's bothered to justify its existence. I certainly won't, not that the film is bad, but there's little going for it. It takes place in a boring little California seaside hamlet that's about to celebrate its centennial. Putting a damper on the festivities is the ghostly crew of a ship deliberately wrecked by the town's founders. The ghosts are angry. A typical ghost story, nothing fancy. There's not much special as far as acting or writing goes, either. Yet there are moments that stand out, for better or worse. There's this marvelous scene in which a piece of driftwood starts dripping gallons of seawater, which contains a nearby tape recorder that in turn begins to speak in an unearthly voice. The wood burns into flame, it reads "six must die," and then it stops. Boy, is that effective.

Equally effective is the way things go crazy the night the fog rolls in. Furniture shakes violently, telephones ring spontaneously, car horns blare, sun-brilliant lights are seen under doors. Again, it's effective, but this trick was a lot more effective in Close Encounters. Things like this make suspension of disbelief a little difficult. Incidentally, why does Carpenter insist on making you jump before he has sat? In one scene, Hal Holbrook steps out of the shadows, startling much of the audience. That's okay, but Holbrook plays a nice, normal clergyman with a good reason for being in the shadows. Carpenter has wanted a perfectly good thrill, like he did when the cat is Alan bolted from a food locker. He does this a lot. Someone should tell him that it can make one feel cheated.

In order to end on a positive note, I'll say something nice about the fog itself. No kidding — its motions are nearly uncanny. Smoke is carefully lit with hidden spotlights, so you know precisely where the fog is, or is going. It doesn't sound like much, but it gives the fog the现场 presentation it should have.

Now that this is over with, I'm going to wait for Carpenter's next effort.

—Shawn Wilson

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