

## FILM REVIEW

by Noel Tanti and  
Krista Bonello Rutter Giappone

# Housebound

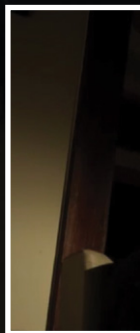
Film: *Housebound* (2014)

★★★★★

Director: Gerard Johnstone

Certification: R

Gore rating: ●●●●●



**Noel:** I wasn't expecting this. I had gathered that *Housebound* was the latest horror fans' darling but besides that I knew next to nothing about it. The trailer gives a dishonest portrayal of film. I thought it was going to be a psychologically brutal home invasion film with ghosts. Which it is, but there's a lot more to it.

**Krista:** I love the way it slips from supernatural to psychological horror to whodunnit to the Peter Jackson brand of exploding head gore, associating itself with that strand in New Zealand's horror legacy. It also made me laugh out loud at some points.

**N:** It does its share of genre-hopping. Besides the ones you mentioned, there are whiffs of crime procedural, sitcom and even soap opera. It's a true compendium of different genres. I must admit though that I found it a bit jarring at

first. However, once I realised what it was going for, I just sat back, relaxed and enjoyed it.

**K:** There was little originality in it but the way it brought all those tropes together and had fun with them was exhilarating. This film finds the tone that Adam Wingard's *You're Next* (2011) was straining for.

**N:** I thought of Peter Jackson too. And Baz Luhrmann, two Australasian directors with a (former) quirky aesthetic that is quintessential to them. However in *Housebound* it was not exploited to its fullest, perhaps to make the film more palatable to a general audience. I found it a bit gimmicky.

**K:** I thought the probation officer/amateur paranormal investigator succeeded in being quite likable. But yes, I get what you mean about 'gimmicky'

or quirkiness. For example the oddball paranormal investigators—from *Poltergeist* (1982) through to James Wan (*Insidious* (2010) and *The Conjuring* (2013)). I did enjoy that he wasn't just an adjunct in this though, but had a more active role. He was a comic character, played partly through his mix of enthusiasm and naïveté.

**N:** What about the house itself? It was my favourite character in the film.

**K:** I found the economical and inventive use of space fascinating. The claustrophobia, and the sense one gets that the house is larger than it appears to be. Large enough to be a recovery house or potential B&B (alternative plot-points in the film). And the in-between spaces, like narrow conduits in a maze, that don't always quite add up. We get glimpses of bits, never a whole. And those clues that its past may have been



more 'Arkham Asylum' than family Bed and Breakfast—not entirely subtle hints, like the huge portrait of Freud on the wall.

**N:** I didn't like the drug addiction angle. I found it spurious and unnecessary, unlike in the remake of *Evil Dead* (2013) where the addiction was an honest-to-god proper narrative device.

**K:** I barely registered the drug angle.

**N:** I would go for a 3.5 rating but I think Ed (the ed.) doesn't allow us halves.

**K:** 4.5 out of 5. Unfortunately, I don't think it deserves a 5. But I'd be happy with a 4.

**N:** Deal. ●

## TECH OPINION

by Matthew Cesareo from the Gadgets team

THINK FUN

# Is new tech killing social interaction?

**msn**, **hi5**, and Myspace started the social media trend. Facebook turned it into a frenzy with over 1 billion people signed up. This could be, perhaps, it is because facebook enjoyed the birth of smartphones and super-fast mobile Internet making the service available virtually anywhere.

But with such facilitated tiny, portable devices, I can't help but think that these innovations have hindered social interaction. I mean, yes, one might argue that you can now find your great uncle Larry from Australia and communicate with him whilst sipping a coffee at the Sliema Waterfront. Then again, is that what people are using facebook for? All I can see are people stuck to their devices posting images of food and statuses about how happy they are, whilst ignoring their significant other sitting across the table who, incidentally, is doing the same thing.

Go to a restaurant and all you can see are people glued to their phones.

Families sit silently around the table on tablets or mobiles, ignoring the fact that they are wasting their precious life playing Candy Crush, or browsing funny cat photos.

As time goes by, things will become worse. Smart clothing, smart jewellery, and smart appliances hit the shelves late this year—you can actually get a facebook-ready fridge. Are these actually necessary? In five years time, people will spend less time going outside or travelling, and spend their lives living a fictitious virtual life in a bid to boost their ego.

I don't mean to sound like a grumpy old man, or like the guy from the Pepperridge Farm advert, reminiscing over simpler times. Truth be told, when I was young I used to be glued to my consoles—the Sinclair and SNES (Super Nintendo Entertainment System)—but I always made sure to spend proper time with my family and friends, and enjoy the great outdoors. ●