

“Us”

By Helen Lutz

The movie “The Sixth Sense” was released in 1999. If you have never seen it, it’s definitely worth the rental or download. Watching Bruce Willis and Hailey Joel Osment play out the story which ends with a definite ‘What?’ – makes everyone ready to see it again. This one I even watched the director’s notes to catch all the symbolism embedded in the film.



Some horror movies are thrillers; some psychological thrillers; some scary; some spooky; some gory; some creepy and some which will just give you nightmares. Jordan Peele’s imagination as the producer, writer and director of “Us” will creep you out, make you jump, give you nightmares, and make you stop and think ‘What?’ as he weaves his new film “Us” with horror, thriller, scary, spooky, sci-fi, gory and very creepy all rolled into one.

It’s 1986 and Ronald Reagan is President, “Top Gun” is a box office hit, and Hands Across America unites approximately 6.5 million people holding hands across the nation to fight hunger and homelessness (you might want to Google it prior to seeing the movie). Young Adelaide (Madison Curry) and her parents visit an amusement park on the Boardwalk near the family’s vacation home. After a bit of a parental spat, Adelaide wanders off finding a house of mirrors sitting open and inviting. She ventures in only to learn that it’s a very creepy place and not so easy to exit. Trying to escape the rooms Adelaide encounters a curious reflection of herself which is living and breathing – the terrified look on her face sets the tone for the entire film.

The movie jumps to present day with a grown up Adelaide Wilson (Lupita Nyong’o) who is a wife and mommy. The family is taking a summer trip to the old family vacation home. Adelaide’s husband Gabe (Winston Duke) is excited about the trip. The kids Zora and Jason (Shahadi Wright Joseph and Evan Alex) are less excited, while Adelaide has an uneasy, dark feeling that something bad is about to happen. After a day at the beach with friends, the Wilsons return to their home only to notice four silhouetted figures standing hand to hand at the end of their driveway. The strangers don’t respond to questions or eventual threats – and then the ‘fun’ begins.

It doesn’t take long for the Wilson family to realize that the four driveway figures are doppelgangers (a non-biologically related look-alike or double of a living person, sometimes portrayed as a ghostly or paranormal phenomenon and usually seen as a harbinger of bad luck). Bad luck is the name of the game as the four go about terrorizing the Wilsons as they break into their home. Things get worse when Adelaide again meets her spooky, ticked off double. What does she want and who will survive?

Peele and Nyong’o draw us into a mystery and fight for survival as the Wilsons try to evade their captors realizing that in the end it’s a fight to the death. Just who are the doppelgangers and where did they come from? How many are there? What’s with the rabbits? “Us” twists and turns us around with tons of symbolism throughout, we just don’t always notice it – until later. This is a movie which can be exhausting as we must think through just about every scene trying to put all the puzzle pieces together. Having only seen it once, I don’t think that Peele quite tidies up several of the plot points – I only had one “A-Ha” moment; however, the music, settings and characters, especially Nyong’o, manage to keep us riveted to the screen not wanting to miss a minute. On a scale of one to four Hart Beats I give “Us” **THREE HARTS**. If you like to think your way through a movie while sitting on the edge of your seat, this one is right up your alley. Just a note: you may want to look up Jeremiah 11:11 before taking your seat.