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## 47th SFIFF: Ancient vampires fail to resurrect horror film (4/04)

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Ancient Chinese vampires awake from dusty coffins on a desolate foggy night where slight traces of dead clowns hang on swaying trees.

A modern mélange of Chinese superstition lands film audiences in the midst of a spooky amusement park, promising a ride it does not keep, as weak supporting roles, weak dialogue and sound effects ultimately drag down the film's quality.

Director Andrew Lau's *The Park* is a convoluted, subtitled film that follows seven 20-year-old adults on a thrilling ride through a haunted amusement park. The tale begins when Alan (Derek Tsang), a sports columnist, uncovers a newspaper article about a ferris wheel accident that took a child's life 14 years ago.

Alan mysteriously disappears while trying to unlock the secret behind rumors of the "haunted" park. Alan's mother, a witch, warns his sister Yen (Bo Bo Chan) about the dangers she could face if she enters the theme park, but hardheaded Yen refuses to listen. Yen realizes that she has taken a wrong turn too late, and one by one, the park takes the lives of all her friends.

Although *The Park* may generate a thrill for novice horror moviegoers, dull dialogue, and poor sound and visual effects ultimately disappoint audiences. In addition, the climax of each scene involves a repetitively high-pitched scream, which loses its effect after the first few times.

Unfortunately, the visual effects are far from frightening. Instead of causing viewers to jump out of their seats, the effects cause them to turn their faces in disgust. One minute, two lovers are caught in an awkward embrace; the next minute, a wire decapitates the man.

The dry dialogue presents jokes that aren't very comical, either.

Although the main plot involves Alan's disappearance, dominant subplots about unrequited love and Yen's struggle to survive simply confuse moviegoers.

Through *The Park* is not a spine-chilling film, audiences can appreciate and embrace the film's originality and its surprise ending.