

THE HOUSE

Three tales of greed, defeat and hope

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If you ever wondered what a Wes Anderson and Tim Burton collab would look like? Look no further than Netflix's new stop-motion dark anthology *The House*. Produced by Nexus Studios, the anthology is a collection of three



separate stories tied together by one thing - a cryptic Georgian-style mansion.

While each segment is directed by different teams, the overall theme of this stop-motion film explores remains the same - questioning the concept of home

and the lengths one can go to build, leverage and preserve one.

Directed by Emma De Swaef and Marc James Roels, the first chapter of the stop-motion centres around a family of four living a quaint life in the countryside. But all that humble joy takes a turn for the dark when greed and ambition take hold. The second chapter, directed by Niki Lindroth Von Bahr, is perhaps the most unsettling of the three, especially if you have a thing against creepy crawlies. Set in the titular house but some time into the future, the second chapter follows the misadventures of an anthropomorphic rat trying to refurbish and flip the mansion.

The last chapter, directed by Paloma Baeza, is the most hopeful of the bunch. Following the tale of Rosa and her friends, all anthropomorphic cats this time, the final chapter fast forwards into an apocalyptic future. With the house now reduced to a sinking island thanks to a devastating flood, which may as well be a commentary on our impending environmental destruction, the last story is the first of the three to end on a positive note.

While the stories themselves may not sound too impressive on paper, what makes them works of art are the stop-motion wizardry behind each of them. From the felt-faced humans in chapter 1 to the fur-bristling rodents in chapter 2, down to the dreamy scenery in chapter 3 - *The House* is a visual treat in stop-

motion animation.

From the dark and imposing backdrop of the first story to the almost pleasantly misty environment of the third tale, the setting changes but the attention to detail that went into manually making the puppets come alive stays the same throughout. When you think about how much work goes into just seconds of filming stop-motion, it's a wonder just how seamless the puppet movements were in this anthology film. The visionary direction, paired with voice acting from the likes of Helena Bonham Carter to Matthew Goode, make for a memorable end result.

Though each director used their unique techniques, narratives and visuals, the central theme remained consistent throughout the movie's runtime of an hour and a half. All the characters shared the same obsession and attachment with the titular house. Through the different chapters and timelines, the house changed heavily in appearance, yet stayed the same with its deceptive promises of prosperity.

Labelled as a dark comedy, *The House* does deliver some laughs. But what makes the anthology a better fit for the horror genre is the way it creeps up on you - through the visuals, the characters and the score. A safe haven, a sanctuary, is what a house means to most, but when that familiar sense of safety is questioned in the worst way, that is where *The House* gets chilling.

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