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Review: *You're Next*

By [Jordan Gass-Poore](#) on August 22, 2013 - 2:00pm in [Reviews](#) | [New Releases](#)



Family dinners can be hell. Just ask the Davisons, or what's left of them, in the horror flick *You're Next*, opening Friday. During a rare family dinner to celebrate the wedding anniversary of Aubrey ([Barbara Crampton](#)) and Paul ([Rob Moran](#)), a mysterious gang of masked murderers invades the Davisons' grand backwoods vacation home, only to find out that one of the victims harbors a deadly secret themselves.

Director [Adam Wingard](#) may be best known for his low-budget horror films *A Horrible Way to Die* (which also co-stars [AJ Bowen](#)) and *V/H/S*, and it's this keen sensibility to make something visually grand out of nothing that puts *You're Next* ahead of other recent horror and suspense films. But that's not saying much.

The blood-splattered "You're Next" on walls and glass is a schtick that's been done to death and that the movie could have done without (and would've been better if it had). I'm pretty sure the film's cast, which also includes filmmaker [Joe Swanberg](#), Texas native and filmmaker [Amy Seimetz](#), [Nicholas Tucci](#) and [Sharni Vinson](#) (*Step Up 3D*), didn't need a set cue to begin screaming or appearing to be really distressed. That's what Swanberg's character was there for.

There's been talk by critics and fans of *You're Next* that it's reinventing the genre. I think they mean the horror genre. Or could it be the slasher, thriller, suspense, horror-comedy, you-name-it genre? Writer [Simon Barrett](#) does an intelligently wonderful job at blurring the lines between all of these genres and creating his own. Barrett's dialogue (when it isn't improvised in the film) keeps a steady pace, but just feels clunky in the mouths of the actors, as much as I'm a fan of Bowen, Crampton ([my article](#)), Swanberg and Seimetz.

The only reason I felt any connection with the characters played by the aforementioned actors was because of their previous work. I didn't feel like there was enough time between the family dinner and the start of a long chain of murders to really get a sense of what these characters are like or what role they play in their family dynamic. This is a movie whose plot depends heavily on a family dynamic, much like Michael Haneke's *Funny Games* and 2008's *The Strangers*, but that's where the similarities stop (especially in the case of *Funny Games*).

Home is not necessarily where the heart is in *You're Next* and the feeling of discontent is made abundantly clear from the first 15 minutes of the film. I had to chastise myself for jumping at such mediocre scare tactics employed by Wingard -- a family member sneaking up on each other and a glimpse of the Lamb Chop-like mask's reflection on a screenglass door. (The masks are kind of laughable and cute.)

The plot twists (yes, there's more than one) didn't make an impact on me because, like I said before, I didn't really care about the film's characters, whose deaths were monotonous and not gory enough to appear realistic or make me cringe in any way. So, the only thing I have left to say is ... next.

Austin/Texas connections: As mentioned, Amy Seimetz is a native Texan and Joe Swanberg can sometimes be seen in Austin films. A.J. Bowen appeared in Austinite Emily Hagins' latest film, *Grow Up*, *Tony Phillips*. Wingard and Barrett's *A Horrible Way to Die*, which also stars Bowen, won awards for Best Screenplay, Best Actress and Best Actor at Fantastic Fest 2010.

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