

Horror show 'The Manor' veers off course and fails to thrill



CHENNAI: The pandemic has spawned some spooky stuff on streaming platforms and “The Manor” is one of the latest to hit Amazon Prime. Part of the second “Welcome to the Blumhouse” quartet, it is writer-director Axelle Carolyn’s second feature. While the first in the quartet was all about love and family, the second zeroes in on care home horrors and phobias. Now Streaming on Amazon Prime, writer-director Axelle Carolyn’s work is eerily constructed with Barbara Hershey making an appearance after a long hiatus as 70-year-old Judith. Most of the shots were taken at night and these add to the sinister goings on at the assisted home, “The Manor,” which is run by a bunch of crooks, including a doctor and a couple of nurses who fudge reports to push some residents into a state of fear and panic. The plot at first looks promising, but veers off-course at the end into a state of bizarre make believe.

At the celebrations to mark her 70th birthday, Judith suffers a mild stroke and insists on moving into a care home, and she chooses The Manor. She tells her daughter, Barbara (Katie Amanda), and grandson, Josh (Nicholas Alexander), that “whenever I become ... diminished, I don’t want my family to see me like that.”

Carolyn incorporates an interesting interplay among Judith, Josh and Barbara, as the 14-year-old boy wonders why his grandmother who is mentally agile and physically fit should be shut up in a home. As days roll into weeks, Judith notices

strange happenings and two of the nurses (Shelly Robertson and Stacey) are rough with the residents. Moreover, Judith is irritated by the way they treat her – like “a child,” and the no mobile phone policy (fine print in the agreement which she signed without noticing) angers her.



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Visually polished and with attractive settings, “The Manor” seems like a vacation resort, and director of photography Andres Sanchez plays with light and shadow trying to infuse a sense of thrill, but does not quite succeed. The movie fails to build a coherent form of tension, and the script is too pacy for a story of this sort. However, an accomplished Hershey dispels a bit of darkness with her joie de vivre, but still falls short of the magnetism she brought to her difficult roles in “The Entity,” “Shy People” and even “A World Apart.”
