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StagKnight

(U.K.) An M2, Shepperton Studios production. Produced by Simon Cathcart, Rob Mercer. Executive producer, Jonny Potter. Co-producer, Lara Cathcart.

Directed by Simon Cathcart. Screenplay, Cathcart, Rob Mercer.

With: Martin Bayfield, Jocelyn Osorio, Paul Coskun, Simeon Willis, Sandra Dickinson, James Hillier, Jason Hyde, Paul Coskun, Harry Athwal, Danielle Mason, Stephen Wisdom, Tony Tang, Joe Montana, Santos De Castro, Simon Cathcart, Barry McNeill, JC Mac.

By [DENNIS HARVEY](#)

Crass crowdpleaser "StagKnight" is a comedy slasher pic that overcomes its initial loutishness via genial high energy and a few late-breaking twists. Aptly billed in promo materials as " 'Predator' meets 'Porky's,' " Simon Cathcart's first feature is bloody good fun -- albeit on a cruder level than, say, "Shaun of the Dead" -- that might suffer, export-wise, from its very British (if still lowbrow) humor. Nonetheless, DVD sale to various offshore territories is assured.

Actually proud of their status as "weekend warriors," the 10 thirtysomething male members of a paintball team repair to the Surrey countryside for sport of various kinds. This particular trip also functions as a bachelor party for nervous, nebbishy groom-to-be Brian (Simeon Willis).

But the proprietress of Happy Valley Paintball Park, witchy Fay (Sandra Dickinson), has something else in mind. She tricks the guests into performing a Knights Templar ritual that summons to life a huge, armored, faceless Guardian Knight, which begins quickly reducing their number once everyone heads to the surrounding woods for a "night game."

First reel is none too appealing, as the broadly drawn characters drink, drug, humiliate each other and abuse two party girls imported for recreational purposes. But pic grows more engaging as it goes on. There's a memorable standoff between Fay and yuppie creep Charles (James Hillier), as well as a surprising romantic development for her hulking "little brother" William (6-foot-10-inch former rugby pro Martin Bayfield, also the thesp in the

Guardian Knight suit), who emerges a rather gentle giant after all.

Given the raucous soccer-hooligan humor, an odd note is provided by nearly half the cast (including Dickinson) making no attempt to disguise their American accents. (One assumes transatlantic paintball teams are rather few.)

Design and tech contributions are slick.

Camera (color, HD), Robert Shacklady; editor, Lalit Goyal; music, Paul Weir; production designer, Stephen Wisdom; sound, Gerard Loret; assistant directors, Steve Murphy, Andy Pearson. Reviewed at Another Hole in the Head, San Francisco, June 1, 2007. Running time: 81 MIN.

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