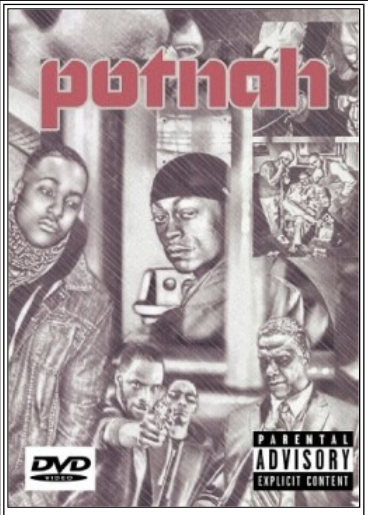
Potnah (2011)



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Review by Bill Wolford
Added: March 14, 2012

Sometimes when you're watching a movie, you get in a groove. You feel like you've got the rhythm of the film figured out, and then you can sit back and just coast along with it. But what happens when a simple film is complicated by needless jargon, and overly complicated flashbacks and late entry plot elements that feel like they were tossed in at the last moment? You get this film.

Potnah is a film that tells a supposedly true story about the New York underground cigarette cartel. I never knew there was one myself, but you learn something every day. I can also see people killing and being killed for cigarettes too. Being a former smoker, I know they are at least as addictive as any drug out there, so why not make money off this "legal drug". The meat of the story concerns a man who is thought to have killed his partner in crime. He denies this, but at the same time will not reveal to police who really did it.

The story is told clumsily in multi-flashback mode, and switching back to the present long enough for the police to prod the man back into his story. Some of the flashbacks work well, while others feel like they didn't really need to be a part of the story. Since this film is based on fact though, I believe the director was trying to put as much of the real story into his film as he could, but it leaves the story with a complicated feel to it, when in hindsight it was a very simple story to tell.

There are some twists and turns along the way that were a bit hard to keep up with due to a storyline that did not establish its characters very well. Another twenty minutes at the beginning of the film to set up the periphery characters would have gone a long way to enlighten the viewer, and make the story flow at a better and more satisfying pace. I do have to admit to enjoying the flashback scenes in the prison. It had a very authentic feel, and the actors in that part of the film did the best work in the movie. The story is finally concluded in a satisfying manner, with no loose ends that I could notice, it's just too bad that it had to take such a messy path to get there.

Potnah is shot in widescreen format, and the picture quality is great. However, the sound leaves a lot to be desired. The entire movie is overly loud, and there are quite a few instances of annoying voice-overs that are even louder and more muffled than the regular soundtrack. The films music is rap and hip-hop flavored which had pretty good sound, and was the style of music I expected for an inner city story like this one. The cover of the DVD has parental advisory stickers on the front and back, and they are large. The funny thing is that this movie, while unrated, would barely make an R rating. So the stickers feel like they are there more to entice you into buying something you think is going to be more gritty, bloody and realistic than it actually is. It was an interesting story, and if you're a fan of big city crime tales, this low budget film could be a decent time waster for some of you.

5/10.

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Director:
Darrell Smith

Starring:
Rahim Ali
Alex Ubokudom
Kyron Hodges
James Lyones
Stan Adams

Genres:
Crime Drama, Drama, Urban Drama

#1: **Kyron hodges** - added 03/16/2012, 12:55 PM
If this was my first review I would be worried but my first got me 3 awards in last years film festival, and my second review compared me to Quintin T. My third review landed me a international distribution deal, but I thank you for watching although you would never understand.

#2: **Bill Wolford** - added 03/16/2012, 01:20 PM
well, reviews are just one persons opinion you know. Everyone has different opinions. Remember too, a review is not about the maker of the film, but the film itself. I do wish you the best of luck and hope you keep making movies for as long as you are able.

#3: **Chad** - added 03/16/2012, 01:43 PM
I haven't seen the movie so I can't comment either way, but keep in mind that any press is good press. I would never have heard of the movie had Bill not written this review, but after reading it, I'm interested in checking it out and will be tracking down a copy. Some other readers may feel the same - having a movie pointed out to them and telling them "it's an average flick" is a whole lot better than them never hearing about it in the first place.

#4: **Kyron hodges** - added 03/17/2012, 09:24 AM
Bill I appreciate your opinion but what I meant by you would never understand was the negative life I lived up to filming Potnah. I tried unsuccessfully for seven years to have my movie made and it took me and the rest of the cast Alot of effort and positive energy to get it done. My actors were mainly street people I knew from various walks of life that like me are looking for a positive outcome. Unfortunately some of my actors had negative setbacks since the movie wrapped (one was killed and another is in jail facing ten years because of negativity) so after reading your review It reminded me of all the obstacles I faced getting to this great point in my life.

#5: **Bill Wolford** - added 03/18/2012, 01:46 AM
Sorry about your hardships. The review is based solely upon the movie, and even with this information it cannot alter the review. It would, however, have made an interesting extra to tell the story behind the film on the DVD somewhere, then it could have been relevant as part of the review. Maybe if you get the chance to reissue the disc, you can tell your story, as people love to hear what goes on behind the making of a film, and it's not all just as easy as some people might make it out to be.

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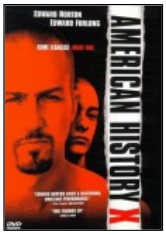

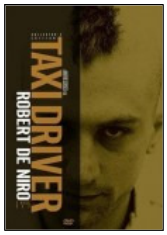

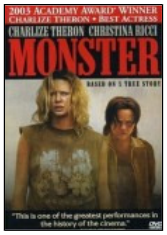

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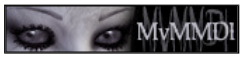
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