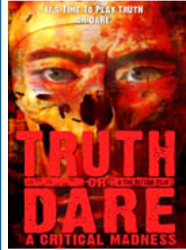



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Case Number 19480: Small Claims Court



Truth Or Dare? A Critical Madness

[Sub Rosa Studios](#) // 1986 // 87 Minutes // Not Rated
Reviewed by Appellate Judge Tom Becker // August 13th, 2010

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Appellate Judge Tom Becker gained 15 pounds playing "Truth or Layer Cake."

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The Charge

Time to play...

The Case

It's good news/bad news time for Michael Strauber (John Brace). The good news is he's finally gotten that raise he's wanted, so he can take care of his wife the way she wants to be taken of. The bad is that Michael's wife, Sharon (Mary Fanaro, [Any Given Sunday](#)), is already being taken care of—by Michael's best friend. When Michael catches them doing the horizontal boogie, he storms out, tears in his eyes.

Michael picks up a pretty hitchhiker and takes her to a camp site. To break the ice (and give the film a hook), they start playing Truth or Dare. Instead of the usual T or D high jinks—truths about "first times" or dares involving clothes shedding—Michael ends up lopping off a finger, slicing open his chest, and pulling out his tongue. Clearly, this is not your father's Truth or Dare—or even Madonna's—and Michael ends up in a mental institution.

Thirteen months and some state budget cuts later, Michael finds himself a free man. His first order of business is to drop in on his now-ex wife and her new husband.

And he's not bringing cheesecake.

There are two ways to look at **Truth or Dare? A Critical Madness**, and they are not mutually exclusive.

One is as a typical, entertaining, and typically entertaining low-budget, direct-to-home-video '80s slasher/horror entry. It contains all the requisites: some nudity, lots of violence (some graphic, all cheesy), a masked madman, and plot holes so glaring, it seems like big chunks of the film are just missing (they aren't).

The other way is as a kind of cheeseball historical document. **Truth or Dare** was one of the earliest efforts of the direct-to-home-video genre. Writer/director Tim Ritter originally created **Truth or Dare** as part of a segment of an anthology he and his friends shot with home video equipment, copied, and then took around to video stores for sale and rental. He was still in high school at the time. Based on favorable response to the Truth or Dare segment of the anthology, he expanded the script, shopped it around, and was able to get funding, eventually shooting the film on 16mm for home video release. The story of the ups and downs of being a teen-age filmmaker is told in one of the supplements here, a "making of" narrated by Ritter, "Reflections on **Truth or Dare? A Critical Madness**."

If fans of the film are looking for a new, jazzed up release, then they'd better look elsewhere. Apparently, Sub Rosa is merely re-releasing an earlier edition of **Truth or Dare**; thus, the film gets a terrible 1.85:1 nonanamorphic transfer and a "making of" that's almost 10 years old, rather than the 2009 documentary **Crimson Carnage: The Making of Truth or Dare? A Critical Madness**. Other supplements include a commentary with Ritter, Allen Richards of b-independent.com, and another guy, which is a jokey, scattershot affair, and a few on-screen text bits: "Film Facts" and some background on Sub Rosa Studios. There are also some trailers for **Truth or Dare** and its even-cheesier-looking sequels.

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The Verdict

A thin slice of direct-to-video cheese, **Truth or Dare? A Critical Madness** gets points for its backstory even if it's lacking as a film. Despite some entertaining, if dated, extras, the transfer is so miserable that it makes this disc worth a rental at best.

Guilty.

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