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American Reel (MVD Visual)

By
Upchuck Undergrind
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It's interesting, given that forgotten David Carradine films were bound to surface in the wake of his death, to see this one in particular. It's interesting, because it's such a personal film. He didn't write it or direct it but one feels he is central to the film, other than just as the main actor. AMERICAN REEL tells the story of a singer-songwriter who played the same small stage for years before his hungry agent finally lands him a shot at the big-time. You can take the man out of "Hicksville" but you can't take the "Hicksville" out of the man. David Carradine's James Lee Springer is a devoted songster and his sincerity and artistic honesty inevitably clash with the recording industry, which is pretty mercilessly satirized in AMERICAN REEL. His agent stands in the middle, having to be the deal-making Hollywood guy while still being a friend to Springer. The movie is more than just the "buddy movie" it's described to be in the DVD sleeve copy. It's a melodrama about having a dream and pursuing it and accepting that dream's fruition in whatever form it takes. It's also a sharp look at the conflict between marketing/hit-making and the aesthetics of the artist. AMERICAN REEL is a surprisingly heartfelt drama-comedy that's about more than music, and though it becomes too maudlin toward the end, it's a minor flaw in a minor classic. And I said it's a personal film. You see, David Carradine wrote and performed all the songs on this film and a 12-song soundtrack is included as a bonus feature.

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