

Exhumed : Release Year - 2011

Overall Rating : 7.5/10

Directed By : Richard Griffin

Sarah Nicklin (The Disco Exorcist)

Michael Reed (Dark Feed)

Debbie Rochon (Caesar and Otto's Deadly Christmas)

Rich Tretheway (Nun of That)

Supplied By : Wild Eye Releasing

Film Reviewed By : Rick L. Blalock

Date Reviewed : August. 1, 2013



PLOT

A moody, atmospheric horror in the Hammer tradition, Exhumed is the tale of a twisted family who, unable to leave their home, turn their captivity into a disturbing and violent game that will challenge their very reality. From Richard Griffin.

THE REVIEW

The latest film from Director Richard Griffin is an odd little number, one about a strange group of individuals, whom are all kin - or are they? The film is set in motion, when a college student named Chris, rents a room at a strange boarding house, which is overseen by a domineering woman, known to us, only as "The Governess" The inhabitants of the house all differ in personality. There's the two pretty girls in Laura and Rocky, the slacker Lance, and then there are the two whom seem to run the whole thing, of course the aforementioned Governess, and then the Butler-type right hand man. The Governess's rule is strict, and for whatever reason, she has made it a rule that no one is to go outside for any reason. The reasoning behind this is never told, but the inhabitants board themselves up in the house, with the windows covered. It's the proverbial whole nine yards. however, for whatever reason, the inhabitants are fine with these rules. Obviously, the newcomer to the fold finds it a bit odd, but seeing as he only plans to stay a few weeks, he sees fit to just ride it out - not to mention the company from the two girls makes his decision to stay a lot easier. One girl in particular, the young and impressionable Laura almost immediately takes a liking to the strapping young man, something that the overprotective governess strongly detests. Her dislike for the new housemate actually ends in murder, when The Governess pushes Chris down the stairs. Although the act was in cold blood, The Governess tries to claim it was an accident. Whatever the case may be, the incident itself sets off a chain reaction, in which both those who try to leave, and those who come in contact with the mysterious "family" end up dead. This of course, in the end threatens this "family's" very existence.

In my eyes, indie filmmaker Richard Griffin, is simply one of the best around, and it is all due to his versatility. He is one filmmaker that is not about being hung up on one singular film style. Over the course of his film career so far, we have seen him do, modern Horror, and various throwbacks whether it be the Grindhouse style of the brilliant, THE DISCO EXORCIST, or the '50s-styled THE ATOMIC BRAIN INVASION(A film that I have not seen yet), the guy has covered lots of ground already. But just when you thought that he had done all of the interesting stuff, he comes at us with his latest effort, EXHUMED, which is done in sort of an old school black and white Noir style. EXHUMED is a stylishly captured character study, written in a way by screenwriter Guy Benoit that lets its characters to dissolve, slowly but gracefully. The solid script is one that is well thought out. Here we have a family unit that is governed by a mysterious Matriarch type, who sets rules for the household, the most strict of them being that no one ever leaves the house. We are never told why, hell, we don't even know how everyone relates to one another, but that is the effectiveness of the film. Yes, the beauty of EXHUMED is the not knowing. It is because the film is so strange, and because we aren't quite sure how it all will unfold, that we stay interested in this story(or at least that's why I did).

The film interests us via it's characters. As I mentioned, EXHUMED is very much a classy character study. In learning about each of the film's characters we find that they are all pretty much different - giving us the obvious clue, that this is no "real" family, Each of our characters has vices; Rocky is a bit on the promiscuous side - very sexual, while Lance is an alcoholic pill-popper, who may have had aspirations to be a musician at one time. We also have the Butler, who is a bit of a weird one. He seems to live to serve The Governess, and also has a strange mannequin fetish(something else that is not really elaborated upon). Then we have Laura, who is one of the film's characters that the film seems to most rely upon. From what we learn, we gather that she is seemingly the longest standing member of the "family"(outside of The Governess, and maybe the butler)> She has flashbacks of the past, which give hints that this now "family" may have been some kind of cult of some sort. Laura is almost like a child-like hopeless romantic, who has daydreams of guys with their shirts off. Laura is in heaven when Chris arrives and is immediately smitten with him. The attraction between two consenting adults seems innocent enough, but as I said, it soon gets Chris killed. After his death however, Chris lives on because Laura is still able to see and interact with him. As for The Governess, well, just as her name implies, she

"governess", and with an iron fist, or should I say, "butcher knife" She's a motherly-type, in a very warped sense of the idea. She has a weird perception of the world, one that thinks the sunlight is bad, and that someone is out to get her/them. These are her beliefs, she firmly believes in them, and expects everyone to believe them - and if not, they could end up dead.

EXHUMED is a film that is driven by a host of brilliant performances. I mean it when I say that everyone in the film performs wonderfully. Over my 8 years of reviewing movies, I have to say that I have never seen Miss Debbie Rochon any better. Over the years, I have seen her in many films, and in many roles, but never quite like this, this is Rochon at her sadistic best. I loved every minute of her domineering persona "The Governess" - it is well played and very believable. Also shining again is one Sarah Nicklin, who I just love. So far prior to this, I have seen her in NUN OF THAT and THE DISCO EXORCIST in which she starred(both Griffin films), and she is just wonderful! Not only is she super cute, but she's also super talented(I have a little crush on the lady!). Here she plays it well as the naive dreamer type. She dreams of love and seems to just want to let it all out, and especially be free of The Governess's rule. But it seems as if from a young age, and after the death of her real family, this is the only type of family that she's ever known. And so, she just doesn't know "how" to leave. Aiding Laura's character is the charismatic college student "Chris", portrayed by the genuinely charismatic Michael Reed. Reed is an excellent Actor, and when paired with his real life wife, Nicklin(as he often is), he really shines(as do they both). While the role of Chris doesn't demand as much as some of his previous Griffin roles, Reed's Chris, is definitely a pivotal aspect in the film. As I said, the character helps in further expanding the character of Laura. Rounding out the film's main players is one Michael Thurber, who is The Governess's Butler. The film doesn't go out of its way to let us get to know him, but that ultimately turns out to be for the best. He's a strange one, which makes him all the more interesting. We aren't exactly sure why he's here, or better yet why he stays, but we sense that he feels somewhat obligated to protect the family unit. And just to make him more odd, thrown in is of course an obsession with mannequins, which he keeps locked away in a special room. He dresses them up, and even poses them for provocative snapshots. Yeah it's odd - but so is he! Supporting these characters are of course Evalena Marie's "Rocki" and Rich Tretheway's Lance. The two characters may not be main players, but as with all puzzles they are still much needed pieces. The two characters help give the twisted household more diversity. Simply put, as far as the cast goes, they should all be proud.

Technically, the film shot on a budget in New England, doesn't appear as such. For an independent film, EXHUMED is one that looks and sounds great. As with all of his films, Griffin puts a lot of effort into them, and EXHUMED is absolutely no exception. The film is captured with a stunning Black and White palette, by Director of Photographer, Ken Willinger and his team that gives the film a truly classic look and feel. It truly is a treat to look at. I just wish that at least half of the independent films being made today had this much effort put into them, as Griffin and company have done here.

To sum it up, EXHUMED is a strange but interesting film, about strange but interesting characters. It is unique in that it is a little "outside the box", and less predictable than most. I thoroughly enjoyed the film for that fact alone.

GORE METER

4.5/10 Various stabbings and hammer bashings. Also a slit wrist.

MUSICAL SCORE

7/10 The film also features a very nice score by composers, Daniel Hildreth and Alec K. Redfearn. The score features a variety of styles, but most impressively it features a reoccurring theme that is sort of like a creepy lullaby. I loved it!

OVERALL IMPRESSION OF THE FILM

EXHUMED is a very nice old style character study that really gets into a viewers head. Well crafted, it is one that was well thought about. The story is a strong one, as are it's characters and directing. This film is a highly impressive effort, and is clearly Director Richard Griffin's best to date. I highly recommend!

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