



### ***Iron Doors***

*Typically, individual conceptions of hell square with those passed along through the centuries by theologians, fabulists and artists. Nuns of the Roman Catholic persuasion may not have been as poetic as Dante Alighieri, but, for generations of parochial and Sunday school students, they've conjured visions of eternal damnation unmatched by any Hollywood screenwriter. No torture was too painful and no amount of heat of Earth could match that of the average sidewalk in Mister Beelzebub's Neighborhood. Compared to what happens in '**Iron Doors**,' Dante's *Inferno* is a walk in the park. In it, a yuppie wakes up after a night of boozing on the floor of a large concrete vault, whose only point of egress is a formidable iron door, locked from the outside. At first, the poor slob is belligerent to his captors, naturally assuming they are pranksters with visual and audio accessibility to the room. The vault is completely empty, except for a pair of lockers with a padlock protecting what's inside them; a dead rat, about to become animated by the motion of maggots; and a fluorescent light fixture. Instead of revealing themselves, whoever imprisoned the man (Axel Wedekind) either were too drunk, themselves, to remember where they left him or had no interest in tormenting him or watching him die. It is in this way that "Iron Doors" differs from "Saw," "Cube" or other exemplars of torture porn. One might wonder, here, how the prisoner was able to survive without food or water. Suffice it to say, director Stephen Manuel offers a solution to that dilemma, but it's none too appetizing.*

Facilitating Manuel's conceit is his decision to give the unnamed man hope of escaping, even after denying him communication with outside forces. For example, in a fit of anger, the man punches the light fixture and it reveals the presence of a key that fits the padlock. Instead of having a clown jump out of the locker and slamming a pie in his face, Manuel and writer Peter Arneson provide him with an acetylene-torch kit and tanks of gas. Even if he knew how to use them properly, which he doesn't, the iron door proves too thick to crack. After one door to hope is closed, however, another opens. There's no reason to spoil anyone's surprise as to what happens in the second half of the film, except to suggest that a little bit of hope can be worse than none at all. Working in an extremely tight space, Manuel does a pretty good creating a palpable aura of extreme claustrophobia. If psycho-thrillers are primarily measured by their ability to put viewers in the shoes of the protagonist, "Iron Doors" succeeds pretty well. The movie had been repurposed for 3D, but, given the setting, I can't imagine that it added much. –Gary Dretzka

<http://moviecitynews.com/2013/02/the-dvd-wrapup-house-of-cards-flight-peter-pan-cabaret-narayama-hello-i-must-be-going-pa4-vreeland-side-by-side-more/>