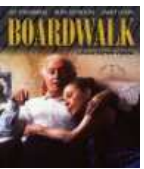





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Boardwalk Blu-ray Review

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[Boardwalk \(Blu-ray\)](#)
Lee Strasberg, Jan...
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An elderly Jewish couple get terrorized in their own neighborhood by an anti-Semitic street gang in Stephen Verona's *Boardwalk*. The 1979 film tackled the changing demographics of the Coney Island area and its boardwalk at the time, showing the effects on three generations of a prosperous Jewish family struggling to hang on in a neighborhood they had lived around for decades. Two stellar lead performances by Lee Strasberg and Ruth Gordon create a touching portrayal of a loving couple at the end of life. *Boardwalk* is a fine movie when it focuses on the inner dynamics of their extended family and community, though it lapses into almost unknown territory for today's audiences with a heavily dated depiction of a New York street gang.

David Rosen (Lee Strasberg) and his loving wife Becky (Ruth Gordon) have been married almost fifty years. They have lived in their current neighborhood for decades, raising children and operating a family cafeteria along the way. They enjoy living in New York City and particularly enjoy using the Coney Island boardwalk. Before New York City was cleaned up in the past couple of decades, some sections of the city had greatly deteriorated in the 1970s. That had led to roving gangs and it had become generally unsafe for law-abiding citizens in certain areas, especially in once respectable neighborhoods. The couple begin to realize their neighborhood is not the same place it once was, as a gang of street urchins and criminals control the boardwalk they love. The gang begins to target the very elderly couple, pointedly calling them out for being Jewish and attacking them for no reason other than their ethnicity.

Boardwalk is really the story of the Rosens and how they react to the changing conditions around their home. Florence (Janet Leigh) is their engaged daughter, a middle-aged woman working at the family's struggling cafeteria. Florence's adult son is Peter (Michael Ayr), a musician more worried about dating his new girlfriend than sticking around the Coney Island area. The elderly couple see their long-time friends move to Florida and nice neighbors move to better areas. The increasing trouble caused by the street gang against their business and home begin to wear them out when devastating news hits Becky. The rest of the movie has David Rosen enduring one hardship after another, until he takes matters into his own hands.

Ruth Gordon was one of those character actors that had made the rare leap from supporting player to a semi-famous actress, with big roles in movies such as *Harold and Maude* and *Rosemary's Baby*. She gives a touching performance here as the matriarch of a loving family. The love between David and Becky Rosen is palpable, one of the best depictions I've seen on film of a long-married couple. The emotional drama between the family is deftly handled and feels completely authentic. The chemistry between Gordon and Strasberg is amazing and hits all the right notes.

The running theme of *Boardwalk* is the anti-Semitism by the merciless street gang, directed against elderly residents in predominantly once Jewish neighborhoods. David is a kind man and solid citizen, but even he hits a breaking point after the street gang practically ruins his life. They attack his wife, his home, his business, and even his synagogue.

The street gang's somewhat crude characterization is *Boardwalk's* biggest failing, they are complete boogeymen with little explanation for their behavior. The gang is also one of those creations from Hollywood that exist more in movies than reality, featuring apparently a member of each racial group and gender united in their hatred towards the Rosens. The one-note characterization of the gang pales in comparison to *Boardwalk's* nuanced handling of the relationship between the Rosens.





Movie 

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Independent distributor MVD Visual grants *Boardwalk* a rough but watchable film transfer for its Blu-ray debut. The 1979 film is presented in 1080p resolution at the proper 1.78:1 aspect ratio. I was hoping for more clarity but secondary film elements have been used, leading to a fairly rough appearance for this particular film stock. The overall image is soft and contains modest detail, though it clearly is from a true film source. Its print condition shows a certain amount of damage and debris, especially in the opening minutes. This is not from a clean, restored film negative that many videophiles would demand for the best-looking Blu-rays. Nicks and scratches to the print are easily evident in a number of frames.

The AVC video compression averages a satisfactory 26.89 Mbps for the main feature, on a BD-25. There are small hints of chroma noise in the thick haze of grain in a few scenes, but for the most part avoids serious artifacts of that nature. The film transfer itself has been left unprocessed by filtering, the dull resolution and drab color palette are almost certainly due to the poor film elements. This transfer is definitely not from the original camera negative, lacking the type of true resolution and detail that 35mm is capable of in 1080P. If I had to guess, the transfer was struck from an inferior internegative or even a distribution print.

The older film print is soft but contains decent black levels and no intrusive halos from sharpening. The grain structure is likely exaggerated by the inferior film elements, though its chunky look has not been drastically altered to appear unfilm-like. Given *Boardwalk*'s niche status as a film for home video in 2014, this is likely the best it will look unless the original camera negative is discovered.

Video ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

A 2.0 PCM soundtrack serves up a decent sonic experience for what is mostly a dialogue-driven drama. Peter's sings a couple of bland songs but the music is dated; a viewer will immediately understand what era they are watching. Fidelity is fine, if a bit limited and thin. It is the type of mix that one might hear from an older television production, lacking punch but clearly conveying important dialogue and key events.

Optional English SDH subtitles display in a white font.

Audio ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

All we get is a trailer for the special features.

[Trailer](#) (02:25 in HD) – The original trailer plays in faded glory.

Extras ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Full disclosure: This Blu-ray was provided to us for review. This has not affected the editorial process. For more information on how we handle review material, please visit our [about us](#) page to learn more.

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The bad part of town @ 2:43



Sunday drive @ 3:12



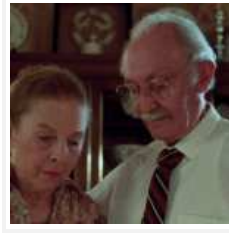
This kid is killin' it @ 3:43



Proper attire for paper reading @ 4:29



Your friendly neighborhood gang @ 5:00



Happy couple @ 5:56



Religious assistance @ 6:13



This movie was made in the '70s? I don't believe you @ 8:02



Janet Leigh @ 9:01



Keeping each other warm @ 9:36



Chatting up the locals @ 11:20



Kitchen reading @ 16:18



Neighborly @ 20:02



Concerned citizens @ 21:52



Maybe the gang doesn't like those umbrellas? @ 24:52



M	T	W	T	F	S	S
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AVC Blu-Ray MVD Visual PCM Ruth Gordon Stephen Verona



About Christopher Zabel

Christopher Zabel has been a movie aficionado since his collegiate days at Florida State University.

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