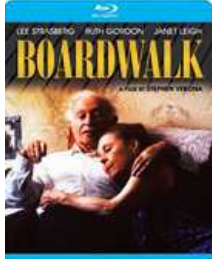




Case Number 27152: Small Claims Court



Boardwalk (1979) (Blu-ray)

MVD Visual // 1979 // 98 Minutes // Not Rated
Reviewed by Judge Patrick Naugle // March 29th, 2014

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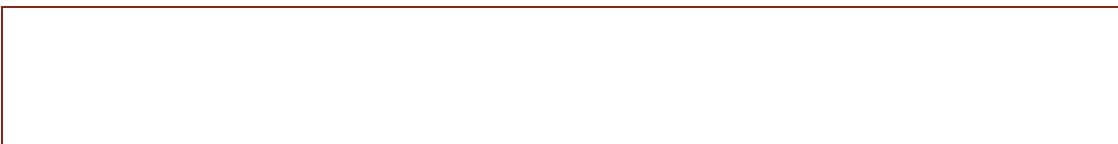
Judgment: 75

Perp Profile

Studio: [MVD Visual](#)
Video Formats:
 • 1.85:1 Non-Anamorphic (1080p)
Audio Formats:
 • Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround (English)
Subtitles:
 • English
Running Time: 98 Minutes
Release Year: 1979
MPAA Rating: Not Rated
Genres:
 • [Blu-ray](#)
 • [Drama](#)

All Rise...

Judge Patrick Naugle loves for love's sake.



Distinguishing Marks

- Trailer

Accomplices

- [IMDb](#)

The Charge

Love, violence, and survival.

The Case

David (Less Strasberg, [Going in Style](#)) and Becky Rosen (Ruth Gordon, [Harold and Maude](#)) are living out their golden years in a Coney Island neighborhood being taken over by dangerous street gangs. David owns a local cafeteria and his wife tends to their home, each content in the other's presence. The Rosen's have two sons ([Deathtrap](#)'s Joe Silver and [Fame](#)'s Eddie Barth) who work at the cafeteria, as well as a widowed daughter (Janet Leigh, [Psycho](#)) who is about to marry a vinyl floor salesman she doesn't love. As their neighbors deal with the constant threat of burglary and the family spirals into various degrees of crises, the Rosens attempt to stay sane by leaning on each other, even through a devastating illness that will test their strength, love, and faith.

I had never heard of **Boardwalk** before receiving it for review. In fact, after doing some research, it appears the movie had fallen into virtual obscurity. While you can find a few scattered reviews and some information online, **Boardwalk** has not stood the test of time. I don't know of anyone who has heard of the film, much less seen it, which is a bit surprising considering it features three well-respected actors.

There's an undercurrent of doom and gloom that runs through **Boardwalk**, with several characters going through some sort of terrible crisis. Be it a fear of commitment, the threat of robbery, or a serious illness, this is not a happy little movie. This is surprising considering the film's poster features the main couple as an Al Hirschfeld cartoon in bed with a Playboy magazine, under the phrase, "The next time someone tells you to act your age, tell them about these two." Even the trailer makes the film look like a light hearted comedy, which it most certainly is not.

Amidst the melodrama are some fine performances, especially Gordon and Strasberg as the elderly Jewish couple who are still blissfully in love after almost 50 years of marriage. Ruth Gordon believed her performance in **Boardwalk** was the best of her career, and I'm apt to agree. Her vivacious personality is what gives the film its heart and soul. Equally as good is Lee Strasberg, best known as a legendary acting teacher who shaped the careers of Marlon Brando, Marilyn Monroe, and Al Pacino. Although his performance and Jewish accent border on cliché, Strasberg's moments with Gordon are wonderful. Rounding out the cast is Janet Leigh as their widowed daughter, trapped in a loveless marriage with a son who is nothing but a disappointment.

Where **Boardwalk** falters is in its portrayal of the street gang that terrorizes the neighborhood. Looking like rejects from Walter Hill's [The Warriors](#), the young punks never come close to being convincing. The way they attack and threaten seems ridiculous at first, and then even more so as the film moves towards its conclusion. In fact, they attack so often and so furiously you'd think Coney Island was some kind of a lawless future dystopia. At one point, the gang leader throws a Molotov cocktail into an open restaurant in broad daylight. which seems a bit far fetched.



Written and directed by Stephen Verona ([The Lords of Flatbush](#)), **Boardwalk** isn't some lost masterpiece or undiscovered gem, but rather an interesting footnote in the career of the cast. Gordon, Strasberg, and Leigh all give heartfelt performances, as the film moves from one melodramatically episodic moment to another, stumbling towards a conclusion that feels more at home in a Charles Bronson **Death Wish** movie than this film.

Presented in 1.85:1/1080p HD widescreen, **Boardwalk** has heretofore never been available on VHS or DVD, making this Blu-ray edition the first ever home video presentation. That's the good news. The bad news is this transfer isn't in the greatest of shape. The visuals sport a fair amount of grain and dirt, prominent during the darker scenes. Colors are vibrant and black levels dark, but the image isn't half as sharp as viewers might expect from HD. The Dolby 5.1 Surround track is a front heavy mix that sports a few sporadic directional effects, especially in the sequences near the amusement park. Otherwise, this more or less feels like a mono track. Also included are English subtitles. The only bonus feature is the film's theatrical trailer.

Boardwalk is that oddity of a film that works on the level of performance, but the screenplay leaves much to be desired. Ruth Gordon and Lee Strasberg make for a fascinating screen couple, and the sole reason to seek out this rarely viewed film.

The Verdict

Moderately guilty.

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