

amongst the cast. Not only is this frustrating to see but it only serves to cheapen the viewing experience dragging down the overall standard of the film.

So as much as I can appreciate the work behind the camera to make the most of its limited budget, *Bigfoot Country* still fails to impress as a whole. It takes far too long to get to the meat of the story and its characters are completely unlikeable. In this state, the film is difficult to connect with and the end result is a missed opportunity for Mills to shine as a director.

**Rating:** 🧠🧠🧠🧠🧠

*BIGFOOT COUNTRY* is out now on US DVD courtesy of Sector 5 Films

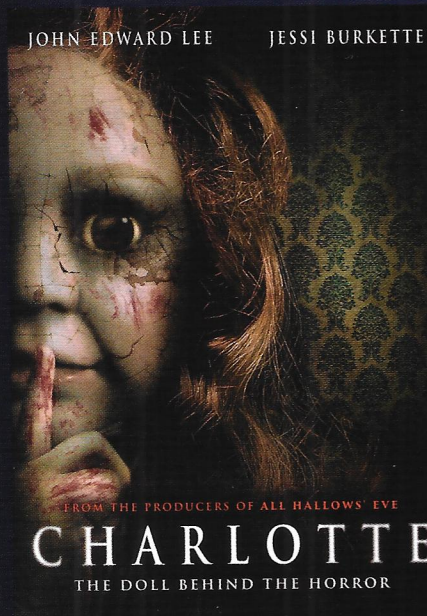
REVIEWED BY JON DICKINSON

## CHARLOTTE

**THE FILM:** *Charlotte* is an anthology film featuring shorts from a bunch of independent filmmakers who have experienced different levels of success. Presented as a series of shorts with an interesting wrap around directed by Patrick Rea (*Enclosure*), *Charlotte*'s segments are introduced as a series of shorts that are shown to a babysitter who is held hostage by an evil doll.

Generally speaking, anthology movies consist of a collection of shorts linked together by a common theme. However, *Charlotte*'s segments do not fit this mould. Instead, it serves as a platform for Patrick Rea to showcase his previous shorts alongside the work from Colin Cambell, Corey Norman, Calvin Main, Johnny Lee and April Wright.

As a whole, the project is not as polished as other anthology films like *Creepshow* or *V/H/S* but the concept of being able to showcase a bunch of shorts from independent filmmakers to an audience outside of the festival circuit by creating an



anthology film itself is a fantastic idea.

So speaking of the segments, there are eight in total and they all range between eight and ten minutes running time. Although *Charlotte*'s segments differ in quality and production value there's still a lot of fun to be had here. This rings true with Rea's 'Get Off My Porch' sees a man defend his home from a pair of unrelenting Girl Scouts determined to sell their cookies. Corey Norman's 'Tickle' starts out as a harmless urban legend but the end result is a bloody good watch.

Both segments were hilarious and show plenty of creativity from both filmmakers and their crew. However, my favourite segment of the film comes in the form of 'Howl of a Good Time' which stars Leslie Easterbrook (*Devil's Rejects*) as a cinema usherette who crosses paths with a young girl who sneaks into the cinema. What at first appears as as simple straight-forward monster flick turns into something worth checking out.

On reflection, *Charlotte*, as an anthology film, doesn't offer enough to keep the pace alive. Maybe the project would benefit from cutting out a couple of the segments but I guess you have to take the rough with the smooth to appreciate the stronger segments.

**Rating:** 🧠🧠🧠🧠🧠

*CHARLOTTE* is out now on US DVD courtesy of MVD.

REVIEWED BY JON DICKINSON

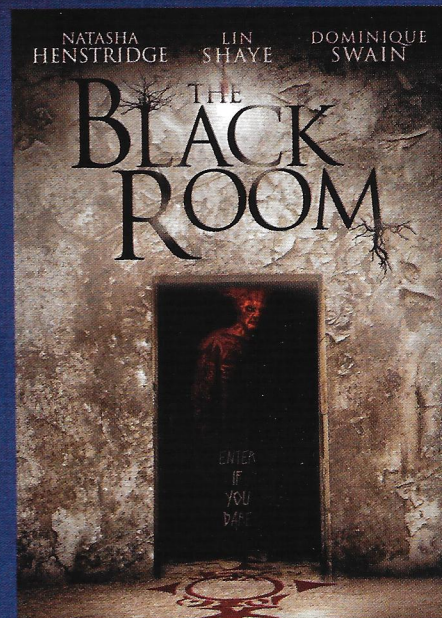
## THE BLACK ROOM

**THE FILM:** Rolfe Kanefsky's *The Black Room* is distinctly strange. More of a pitch black comedy than horror, it is essentially *Wishmaster* meets *50 Shades of Grey*. *The Black Room* stars Natasha Henstridge (*Species*) and Lukas Hassel (*The Blacklist*) as a married couple whose first intimate moments in their new home is savagely interrupted by an evil force lurking in their basement.

Played for straight but completely hilarious without ever crossing into spoof territory, Kanefsky has delivered a film that serves as a unique take on the succubus mythology. Completing the package with some pretty effective practical effects that are admittedly quite impressive and the end result is far from unwatchable.

Making a surprising appearance on-screen with Henstridge and Hassel is everyone's favourite godmother of horror, Lin Shaye. Her character might consist of a blink and miss it cameo but thankfully, Natasha Henstridge and Lukas Hassel do a great job to carry the film... but only if you don't take it seriously. The rest of the cast only serve as cannon fodder for the evil succubus but that's not a bad thing.

So what is essentially a film where a



demon seduces his prey, audiences can look forward to seeing ghastly kills, over the top orgasms, dark humour and a backstory that will make your grandmother blush. Clearly, *The Black Room* will not appeal to many but for the few of you looking for a light-hearted gore-fueled time then this is for you.

**Rating:** 🧠🧠🧠🧠🧠

*THE BLACK ROOM* is out now on US DVD courtesy of MVD.

REVIEWED BY JON DICKINSON

## THE GLASS COFFIN

**THE FILM:** Haritz Zubillaga's *Glass Coffin* is a claustrophobic thriller that tells the harrowing experience of Amanda (Paola Bontempi), a successful actress who finds herself imprisoned inside a luxury limousine by an unknown assailant. With the windows heavily tinted and her mobile phone jammed she has nowhere to run or hide.

As director, Zubillaga has plenty to offer his audience by imposing a no-nonsense style of filmmaking. A clear plot, fantastic performances and a stunning ending complemented by some stunning cinematography, Zubillaga takes no prisoners and holds his audience in a vice-tight grip that's not easy to shake.

Meanwhile, in the lead role, Paola Bontempi harnesses the raw power to deliver a performance that will have audiences on the edge of their seat. As Amanda, Bontempi works hard to keep the attention of the audience in this single-location chiller. Her performance feels wholly believable and in this film, she shines brightly.

Looking beyond the unbearable scenes of torture and sexual violence, *The Glass Coffin* is not by any means an easy watch. In fact as a whole, it has plenty of reasons to make an audience scream with an abundance of horrific sequences that will surely instil a

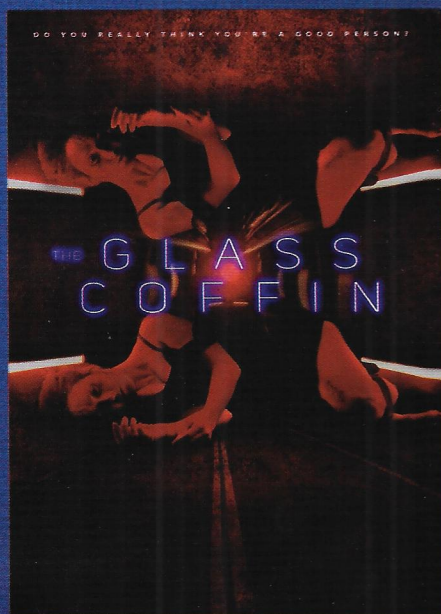
nervous disposition in the most hardened of viewers.

So with no further spoilers or comments, let me tell you that by the time of its unexpected third act, I was left feeling stunned and in a deep state of shock.

**Rating:** 🧟🧟🧟🧟

*THE GLASS COFFIN is out now on US DVD courtesy of MVD.*

REVIEWED BY JON DICKINSON



## LEATHERFACE

**THE FILM:** It's difficult to approach a film with an open mind when the fact that it exists at all feels like an issue. There are few who would argue that *Leatherface: The Formative Years* was something the world needed and yet here we find ourselves; mourning the loss of Tobe Hooper as an unnecessary prequel to his most monumental of cinematic achievements lands on us. Not that the beloved director would be exactly turning in his grave however; he and original Texas Chain Saw Massacre writer/producer Kim Henkel both serve as executive producers on this new vision, after all.

Leaving behind the Sawyer homestead for most of its duration (or rather, hurtling toward it), *Leatherface* eschews the 'kids-get-stranded-and-set-upon' narrative, opting instead for a violent, Bonnie and Clyde (plus three) road movie. Pursued by Stephen Dorff's Ranger Hal Hartman, whose daughter is murdered by the Sawyer clan during the film's opening, five fugitives hit the road, led by psychotic lovers Ike and Clarice who charge across the country like Mickey and Mallory Knox, blasting through the patrons at a diner en route to Mexico, in one of the film's stand-out scenes. Indeed, it is during the more violent moments like the diner massacre that the film finds itself working rather well.

The narrative's strongest asset is the ambiguity surrounding Jed's identity. When

Lili Taylor's Verna Sawyer (far and away the film's best performance – all controlled, bubbling fury and concealed mania) bursts into the hospital where her son is held, she is told that all the inmates' names have been changed, and it becomes something of a guessing game as to who among the core group will eventually don that famous mask. It's a bold decision that differentiates the film from other such origin stories, and raises questions throughout. It does mean however, that we are made to wait for the finale for any real chainsaw action, although when it comes, boy howdy is it bloody. The climax as a whole though, is pretty undercooked, with no time given to the tearing apart of one of the film's key relationships, and little belief that the burgeoning monster is on the doorstep of becoming the iconic figure of the title. We are taken to the Sawyer house for the third act, and into a familiar hallway, but it is as though the film is holding back on treading too closely to the original film for fear of disrespect, when in this regard, it could have done with daring to go all in.

A smart move in bringing *Leatherface* to the screen was the hiring of Inside directors Alexandre Bustillo and Julien Maury; if you're going to cash-in on a classic, you may as well make it look nice. And while visually the film breaks no new ground, it is satisfying to look at, with all the sun-baked Southern sweat you'd expect although – as with Marcus Nispel's 2003 TCM remake – none of the grimy, queasy Texas authenticity of the original. And is that not the problem with all more recent films linked to the franchise; ramping up the gore is little substitute for the squalid danger of Hooper's landmark film.

Whereas Rob Zombie's depiction of Michael Myers' upbringing formed part of a reimagined take on its source material, *Leatherface* marks itself as a prequel to one of the greatest films of all time, without

feeling as though it runs into it. The Texas Chain Saw Massacre told us all we needed to know about its murderous man-child, due to the late Gunnar Hansen's tragic, unhinged portrayal. Taking an interesting narrative approach to the subject, *Leatherface* is perfectly watchable, well performed and enjoyably bloody, and about as good as a completely unnecessary prequel can reasonably be. Like Nispel's take, it's a solid if unremarkable horror flick, but if you're going to hang onto the heels of a classic, you simply must deliver more than that. It's probably the best Texas Chainsaw film not directed by Hooper although, unfortunately, that amounts to a pretty flimsy endorsement.

**Rating:** 🧟🧟🧟🧟

*LEATHERFACE is out January 9th on UK DVD and Blu-ray courtesy of Lionsgate.*

REVIEWED BY KEVAN FARROW

## #FROMJENNIFER

**THE FILM:** There are times when you see a film's poster and your expectations suddenly lower themselves. Well in the case of Frank Merle's *#FromJennifer*, the poster certainly left me with an impending sense of dread. However, within five minutes of watching, I knew that I was in for something special.

Based on characters created by James Cullen Bressack, director of the modern 'video nasty' *Hate Crime*, *#FromJennifer* is a strange movie but in a really good way! Tapping into the YouTube craze, where content creators have the potential to earn millions by posting regular videos to their YouTube channel, the film follows struggling actress Jennifer (Danielle Taddei) who discovers her ex-boyfriend has posted a sex video of them both. Fired by her manager and left to fend for herself she takes inspiration from her best friend Stephanie to harness the power of social media to get revenge on her ex-boyfriend and teach an important lesson to those that love to post revenge porn.

Filmed entirely from the use of action cameras, *#FromJennifer* operates with a low-budget aesthetic that echoes the semi-professional production values shared by the video blogs uploaded to YouTube every day. As director, Merle does a superb job to set up the story and uses the hand-held gimmick to create a film that is compelling to watch. Throw in a razor-sharp script also written by Merle and what you have is a solid effort all round that will have you laughing one minute and creeped out the next.

In the lead, Danielle Taddei gives a solid performance as Jennifer. Her ability to deliver a flat sense of humour without cracking a smile gives her character a lovable charm. Meanwhile, playing her right-hand-man in the revenge plot is Derek Mears (*Friday the 13th*)

