

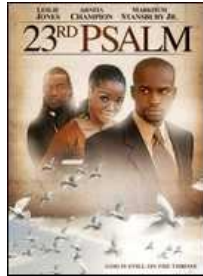


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Case Number 21331



23rd Psalm

Vendetta Filmworks // 2007 // 88 Minutes // Not Rated
Reviewed by Judge David Johnson // May 12th, 2011

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Scales of Justice

Video:	80
Audio:	80
Extras:	80
Acting:	65
Story:	75
Judgment:	68

All Rise...

Judge David Johnson's favorite Psalm is the one about the dog and the vomit.



The Charge

God is still on the throne.

Opening Statement

A low-budget drama about a detective besieged by inner demons, investigating the murder of a prostitute with healing powers: a gem for the faithful or a lump of stale manna?

Facts of the Case

L.A. detective John Smith (Markhum Stansbury, Jr.) just received what will turn out to be strangest case of his career. A benevolent prostitute was found strangled in an alley and as Smith probes the crime, he discovers something remarkable: she had recently come to Jesus and not soon after received the power to heal the sick.

But who killed her? Smith runs into several roadblocks over the course of his investigation: a shady pastor, the girl's obstinate pimp and his personal struggles with alcoholism. Thankfully, God sees fit to send Smith some helpful visions and Bible verses that eventually lead him to the killer.

The Evidence

Once a week, I volunteer at the local juvenile lock-up facility. I go in for an hour and we hang out with the kids, read some Bible verses and talk about pretty much whatever is on their mind (lots of questions about dinosaurs and ghosts). I'm always on the look-out for a Bible-centric movie that doesn't suck. And these kids can spot a sucky Bible movie before I even walk through the metal detector. Which is why I approach these God-focused DVD releases with a mix of apprehension and hope: will one of these be up to the high standards of something like [Saving God](#) (the runaway gold standard according to the kids) or a flaccid offering like [Facing the Giants](#)?

A cursory look at **23rd Psalm** gave me some optimism. It's a murder mystery, the detective looks serious and bad-ass, the setting is an urban crime environment and it obviously doesn't shy away from a strong message.

Sadly, it wasn't long into the film's runtime until I realized that this film would merely be just another also-ran. I can appreciate what writer/director Christopher C. Odom is going after here. The guy is obviously committed to crafting an exercise in devout Godliness and the Holy credentials are impeccable: plenty of verses that literally pop up on the screen, introspection that leads to cries to the Almighty, miracles aplenty and a Gospel-tinged plot point where the first is last and the last is first.

Theology-wise **23rd Psalms** is rock-solid, but it's the movie-making that hampers its success. The production is ultra low-budget and it looks it. Film quality is homegrown and the action—while earnest—is wooden and amateurish. The pacing is off,

Perp Profile

Studio: [Vendetta Filmworks](#)
Video Formats:
 • 1.78:1 Anamorphic
Audio Formats:
 • Dolby Digital 2.0 Stereo (English)
Subtitles:
 • None
Running Time: 88 Minutes
Release Year: 2007
MPAA Rating: Not Rated
Genres:
 • [Drama](#)
 • [Religious and Spiritual](#)

Distinguishing Marks

- Commentary
- Bonus Footage
- Bloopers

Accomplices

- [IMDb](#)

as well, with long, static stretches of heavy-handed dialogue broken up by the occasional floaty Bible verse or Divine vision.
The DVD: an okay 1.78:1 anamorphic widescreen transfer, 2.0 stereo, director's commentary, bloopers and bonus footage.

Closing Statement

It's got a good heart, but **23rd Psalm** falls short. The search continues.

The Verdict

Time served for good behavior.

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