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Film Reviews: Halloween Party (2011) - By Cary Conley

Posted on Thursday, January 03, 2013 @ 00:25:15 Mountain Standard Time by Duane



I must

confess that I'm not much for comedies, and the rather cheap-looking cover art for Halloween Party--which makes it look like an ultra-cheap, shot-on-video B-movie--doesn't do the film any favors. But while the film is a relatively cheap SOV B-movie, writer/director Linda Palmer manages to add all the parts together in such a way as to elevate the film. The result is a surprisingly fun little film with spunk and heart.

The film revolves around a Halloween Party where many of the guests are, as the tagline suggests, "looking for love in all the wrong faces". We've met this cast of characters before: there is the obnoxious young man dressed as a werewolf with a libido to match his arrogance who spends the night hitting on a girl who dropped him a full year earlier after one date; the young lady who is the object of the werewolf's desire, Erin (AKA

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Studfinder), who is just as shallow and typically uses these parties to pick up her latest one-night stand; the pirate and wench, an unhappily married couple--he's an alcoholic who has eyes for every woman but his wife, and she's paranoid that he's cheating on him; the seemingly happy couple (Ben and Julie) who are throwing the party, and who everyone looks upon as the perfect couple, but who have a teenage daughter filled with angst that they are worried about; and finally, there is Mason, a homeless man with a tragic background and a heart of gold, who inadvertently crashes the party when he's mistaken for a reveler in a particularly authentic hobo costume. Add to this a mishmash of supporting characters and you have what will become a very interesting party.

Halloween Party is essentially an ensemble piece with several individual storylines that are slightly connected to each other and occur over the length of the party. Palmer has conceived a unique idea in order to capture all the action at the house: Ben has decided to run cameras in every room as well as having a couple of fake guests (dressed as Cecil B. DeMille and his assistant) running around "pretending" to film when in actuality they are indeed filming. In addition, he straps a video camera on his dog, creating a "doggie-cam" to further capture some of the guests off-guard. Not only was this idea unique, but it also allowed Palmer to make transitions from one story to the next during the film. There are some flaws with this idea, though: first, the "doggie-cam", while a fun idea, makes for a very shaky experience that was nausea-inducing even for the brief amounts of time it was on-screen; and second, many of the transitions, which were meant to be comedic, weren't all that funny. For example, two of the

guests playing bullfighting (one the toreador and one the bull) near the hot tub. Most of these hot tub scenes, used transitionally, were not as funny as the rest of the film, though the original idea certainly had merit. Another transition Palmer uses frequently is when trick-or-treaters interrupt the party asking for candy. Again, some of these transitions were funny, as when one young boy is given what looks to be a condom for his "treat" while two other children are criticized for their lack of imagination by wearing cheerleader and witch costumes.

While many of the characters' stories were resolved by the end of the film, the real focus here is the character arc of Studfinder Erin. She is a beautiful woman and she knows it. She's also tired of the one-night stands and succession of men who are just as shallow as she is herself. Her greatest desire is to meet a man who is nice and who also has more honorable intentions than just taking her to the sack. She's tired of the endless parties and the men like Werewolf-boy, who pursues her ruthlessly but comes off as pathetic. In a moment of fortune, Erin grabs the homeless man, Mason, to escort her to the party in an effort to block Werewolf-boy's advances. But what Erin doesn't know is that Mason isn't a reveler dressed in a particularly authentic costume (complete with bad smell), but an actual homeless man. What she also doesn't know is that this chance encounter has the potential to change her life forever, if she can manage to lift herself from her shallow conceits long enough to view Mason with a more objective eye. So, does Werewolf-boy hit the jackpot? What becomes of the Pirate and Wench? How about Ben, Julie, and their teen daughter—are they able to work things out? And finally, does Erin see the light and view Mason for what he truly is? These questions and more are all

answered by film's end, but you'll have to see it for yourself to find out how each character's problem was resolved.

In a way, my viewing of Halloween Party traveled the same arc as Erin's character did with Mason. While the package itself—much like Mason's looks— isn't terribly impressive, if given a chance, Halloween Party ends up being a far better film than one might imagine—just as Mason ends up being a far better person than most of the partygoers ever imagined.

Palmer has created a sensitive, funny, and ultimately touching film. The writing is strong, the plotting is unique, and while some of the jokes fall flat, the film still remains quite humorous. My one technical criticism is with the sound, as I had to turn the TV up loud to hear the dialogue but the soundtrack, when it came on, blew me out, which had me constantly operating the volume control on the remote. But the soundtrack is also fun, and has been released on CD as well, so if you enjoy some good party music, you might want to track down not only the film but the soundtrack as well. A bonus is the fun and very cool title design for the opening of the film.

For screenings in your area or for more information about Halloween Party, go to www.halloweenpartymovie.com.

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