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The Quiet Arrangement

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List Price: \$16.95 [Buy now and save at Amazon]

Review by [Rohit Rao](#) | posted May 26, 2011 | [E-mail the Author](#) | [Start a Discussion](#)

THE MOVIE:

Crime never pays. **The Quiet Arrangement** employs a number of narrative tricks like fractured timelines and shifting perspectives to give us a crime thriller that drives this point home. Unfortunately, what it fails to provide is any reason for us to care about most of the characters.

Walter Briggs (Kevin M. Hayes) is a dirty lawyer with a bag of cash that isn't his and a recently kidnapped wife whom he desperately wants back. Before you can say 'botched money drop', two men are dead in a field and the real kidnappers are scrambling to cover their tracks. Thrown into the mix are a couple of bored cops, a kidnapper with an insatiable sexual appetite and a star-crossed duo who should have their faces next to the definition of *Stockholm syndrome*. This promises to be anything but boring.

In his feature-length debut, writer/director David C. Snyder definitely follows through on that promise. He demonstrates an understanding of pacing and momentum that serves the story well. While the motivations of certain characters aren't always transparent, the unexpected links that develop between them provide small jolts of excitement and suspense. This element of surprise is kept alive through the fractured narrative which I alluded to earlier. We start the film with one set of characters and follow them to the end of their arc before resetting the clock and viewing the same day's events through a fresh set of eyes. This approach allows us to play the role of the all-seeing Greek chorus. We watch tragedy unfold even as the characters turn a blind eye to their surroundings.

While the shifting perspective of the narrative framework gives the film some flair, it also undermines a major component of any successful story: the characters themselves. Since we only get to spend short bursts of time with most of the characters before their segments are interrupted (often violently), we rarely develop any sort of connection (positive or negative) with them. I understand that this is a thriller and not a dramatic venture but truly effective thrills come courtesy of fully realized performances. Anything else is just a sucker punch. We sense the emergence of real stakes as a relationship forms between Sharon Briggs (Christina Simkovich) and her captor (Kyle Jason) in the second half of the film but by then it is too little, too late.

Although Kyle Jason's performance anchors the film, the real star here is David C. Snyder. He has a keen visual sense and an instinctual understanding of what makes a flick like this tick. His slavish determination to keep the film moving comes at the expense of emotional heft, rendering his directorial style somewhat aloof and detached. With that said, he seems to possess self-assurance and skills that will blossom nicely in time.

THE DVD:

Video:

The movie was presented in a 1.85:1 widescreen aspect ratio. The film was presented with a fairly flat and desaturated color palette as it was bathed in blues, grays and blacks. Some smearing of brighter colors (like reds) was



CONTENT

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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noticeable. There was also a significant amount of grain present throughout the film with a few of the darker scenes lacking shadow detail. While the visual presentation betrayed the ultra-low budget origins of the project, it remained watchable.

Audio:

The audio was presented in a Stereo mix without any subtitles. Other than fluctuating audio levels in a few spots, I found this mix to perfectly convey the eerie isolation that was crushing the characters. Even the convincing drone of the soundtrack (courtesy of Bombience) carried more menace than I anticipated.

Extras:

I am pleasantly surprised by the extensive slate of extras that have been packed on to the disc for a low budget feature like this. We start things off with 5 **Deleted and Extended Scenes**. While most of the scenes add absolutely nothing to the proceedings (and deserved to be cut) we do get a peek at an alternate ending for the film. It's actually an extended ending as one of the few surviving characters goes on to meet a violent death. I prefer the theatrical ending that leaves things more open-ended.

Next up, we have **Always Leave Through the Front Door: The Making of The Quiet Arrangement**. This half-hour long documentary by actor/director Jordan Weeks covers outtakes and interviews from the cast and crew of the film. We get to hear from director David C. Snyder on how challenging it can be to make a film for less than 2000 bucks (a shockingly low number). There is an especially entertaining bit on how some of the naughtier scenes in the film came to be. A revealing segment also delves into the score by Bombience and their affinity for guitar driven ambient noise.

This is followed by 3 **Short Films** which are all offered with an optional director's commentary. *Tedd's Nite Out* by David C. Snyder is a throwaway bit that shows a minor character from the film sniffing some glue and appropriately bugging out. It's a cute tie-in that can't really stand on its own. *Still* (also by Snyder) is the more impressive piece. It was created by Snyder for a 48 hour film project in 2008 and features a few of the cast members who appear in *The Quiet Arrangement*. It's a creeping bit of horror that suddenly erupts in brutality. It's too slight to have a lasting impact but it clearly highlights Snyder's budding talent. The final short film is *One More Kiss* by Jordan Weeks. The less said about this pseudo-artsy B&W twaddle, the better.

Snyder directed a number of **music videos** before he made *The Quiet Arrangement*. 3 of them by Public Enemy, *The Impossibles* and Tah Phrum Duh Bush are featured here. A **Teaser** and **Theatrical trailer** are also included. Just for good measure, 2 **Audio Commentaries** cover various aspects of the production. The first track with director Snyder is the more technical one. He discusses the finer aspects of guerilla filmmaking and tactics to keep audiences in suspense. The second track with Snyder and a revolving cast of actors is less focused and more conversational in nature.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

The Quiet Arrangement is a competently assembled crime thriller that rises above its miniscule budget to give us a tale of treachery and tragedy. The only thing holding it back is a complete lack of characters who would earn either our sympathy or ire. I hate to be greedy but sometimes a well-oiled plot machine just isn't enough. **Rent It.**

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