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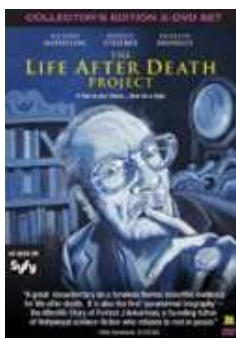
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The Life After Death Project

2013

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Mankind has always had theories of what one meets once they have passed on to the other side. The concept of life after death is a part of every culture and every religion. The ideas range from heaven and hell to reincarnation and even non-existence once a person has taken their final breath and meet with the cold embrace of the reaper. Many have also tried to prove that there is life after death through various means and I would conclude that even if there is concrete scientific proof the debate will always continue.

The Life After Death Project is another effort to prove that despite what some might believe there is in fact something which awaits us when we leave this world. The first documentary originally aired on the SyFy Channel while the second which is included here is in fact a straight-to-video release and this is the project of Paul Davids who most notably was the director of the documentary *The Sci-Fi Boys*. The first *Life After Death Project* is much more of a personal journey for him. Paul was a longtime friend of Forrest J Ackerman, a man known to most science fiction, horror and fantasy film buffs thanks to his numerous writings and most importantly his magazine *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. Ackerman was a long time atheist who didn't believe in the concept of an afterlife, but perhaps things have changed since his unfortunate passing.

What has led Davids to exploring life after death would seem innocent enough. After printing a list of his daily schedule he returned to find one line mysteriously blotted out. As he pondered why this might have happened it become to seem feasible that it may have been a message from beyond and more importantly, one from Forrest J Ackerman regardless of what his personal beliefs might have been while alive. Through the documentary Davids continues to investigate, a path which leads him to some unusual occurrences, some of which have no explanation, others that seem to connect to Ackerman. He goes as far as taking the print out forensic experts who can't duplicate the effect and even have some strange encounters themselves and as his investigation continues he meets with verified psychics who have some surprisingly accurate details.

The second documentary features interviews with a number of individuals who all have their own, unique stories to tell regarding their experiences with the afterlife. This includes those who have worked in the medical profession, nurses and those who have dedicated time to hospice, and they have tales to tell with phenomenon which can't be readily explained. There are also the average people whom you wouldn't assume had any dealings with ghostly encounters but in fact have.

The evidence presented in both documentaries presents some very compelling evidence which for some will validate what they have long believed while for others it could be a means to change their opinion. Unlike the cavalcade of paranormal television programs which seem to dominate the airwave, *The Life After Death Project* isn't going to feature any horrific spirits or night vision scenes with an "investigator" trying to make contact with the other side and then being "scared" out of their minds. As far as the valid psychics, these are individuals who have undergone a great deal of scrutiny to prove that in fact they do have a rare gift. While the full details aren't discussed or even necessary, it can be assumed that this isn't the type of validation that the likes of Sylvia Brown or John Edwards would manage to pass.

Of the two documentaries offered here, while both have a wealth of information, I felt that the original Life After Death Project to be the better. I believe in part this has to do with the connection that I have to Ackerman and while I sadly never had the chance to meet him, he was an influence on me in many ways, particularly as a means to introducing me to a number of different monsters and movies thanks to his magazine. It really gives some great insight into the type of person that Ackerman was but it also shows that perhaps even a person who didn't believe in the afterlife may have very well learned otherwise and decided to pass this knowledge on to his friends. Davids thought the two documentaries never seems to try and approach this in a way where it's information that's twisted in such a way to present a certain narrative. He instead simply shows not only what he's going through but others as well with some very down to Earth interviews.

In preparing for this review I started to think prior to even starting it about my grandmother who had passed away over a year ago. Years before her death she would talk with me about her will and what things I might want. There was a clock which I always had fond memories of which I had mentioned but there was something else that would never actually be included in any will. I had talked with my grandmother about how after she passed on I wanted her to find a way to come back and tell me what it was like. I haven't seen her since she died, at least not that I've noticed. However while watching the first documentary one of the people interviewed is the legendary Richard Matheson. As the case usually is I had IMDB pulled up for any additional research or notes I might want to take and decided that I wanted to see if there were any future movies coming based on Matheson's work. I was a little shocked to click his name and discover that he'd passed away a few days before, something which left me wondering that while this might not be something from my grandmother, but was someone actually trying to pass along a message from the other side? The strange coincidences and interconnections however ended up going a little farther, but these are details I won't bore you with.

The first disc in the collection includes some additional interview segments which didn't make it into the final cut. The second DVD however doesn't have any extra features at all.

The Life After Death Project might not convince everyone that there is something beyond this mortal coil but there are those who have been looking for just such validation. Personally, I'm still a bit on the fence and really not certain what I should believe if anything, but overall this is a rather fascinating look at the theory of life after death and should enlighten a few people as well.

-mike

Directed by:
Paul Davids

DVD Features:
Audio: 1.33:1

Written by:
Paul Davids

Featuring:
Richard Matheson
Whitley Strieber
Dannion Brinkley
Michael Shermer
Gary E. Schwartz
Forrest J Ackerman
Catherine Yunt
Mark Macy
Juanita Sena-Shannon
Ian Johnston
Lynne Kitei
Michael MacDonald

Life After Death Project 2: Personal Encounters

Featuring:
John B. Alexander
John Lerma
Lynne Kitei
Claude Swanson
David Abbott
Marisa Ryan
Bernardo P. Gallegos
David Sereda
Linda Pace Alexander
Glennys MacKay
Debbie K. Smith
Theresa Vigil
Stanislav O'Jack
William Tiller
Melissa Armijo

Audio: English Dolby Digital 5.1
Forrest J Ackerman: He Coined the Term "Sci-Fi"
Uncle Forry, Joe Moe, and the Demise of the Ackermansion
The Director's Relationship with Forrest J Ackerman
Ray Bradbury, Rick Baker and Paul Davids Speaking at the Ackerman Tribute
Jacob McMurray, Senior Curator of the Science Fiction Museum
Dr. John Allison: 3 Years After the Inkblot Incident

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