

Unsolved

USA 2009

produced by

Sean Lyng, Lance McDaniel, Fritz Kiersch (executive), Dennis Schneider (executive) for OCU Films

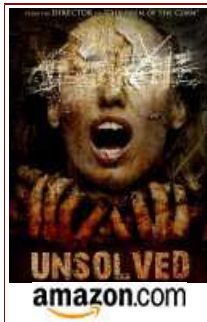
directed by Lance McDaniel

starring Jane Bunting, Josh Shideler, Tinasha LaRayé, Arthur Scappaticci, Carol Klages, Jerome Braggs, Quinn Gasaway, Ashley Grinols, Milan Epps, Lance Marsh, David Pasto, Amy Briede, Alicia Cheadle, Lauren Fair, Marion Fields, Eric Lansdowne-Peoples, Michael Dean Moore, Dustina Reasons, Margaret Shippey, William Steuernagel, Allison Sundstrom, Alaithia Velez, Aja Wiltshire, Nakita Colbert, Lezette Boutin

written by Sean Lynch, Lance McDaniel, music by Rick McKee

review by

Mike Haberfelner



For a class project, criminology student Amanda (Jane Bunting) decides to reopen a 15 year old campus murder case, on one hand because it's an ambitious project, on the other because ... well, it happened on campus, so the scene of the crime and many of the key figures are nearby. However, everyone in charge, including her professor (Lance Marsh) and even her adoptive father, the university's dean (Arthur Scappaticci) try to talk her out of it - with the success that she and her boyfriend/project partner Nick (Josh Shideler) investigate another case, a comparatively simple sexual harrassment case, as a smokescreen, and while Nick works on that one, Amanda sinks her teeth into the campus murder. 15 years ago, a girl called Heather (Ashley Grinols) was murdered on campus after she had a fight with her boyfriend Michael (Jerome Braggs), and Michael was arrested for her murder but released soon thereafter, because there wasn't a single piece of evidence.

Amanda's first way is to Michael, but there she's only met with hostility because he claims her father wanted to pin the murder onto him ... and the ruder Michael gets, the more Amanda is inclined to believe him. And then she learns that the sexual harrassment case (that was based on trumped up charges) and the murder case might actually have been connected, and that her father and the chief of police (David Pasto) have actually somehow been involved in everything that happened back then - weirdly around the time Amanda has been adopted after witnessing the murder of her parents. And suddenly Amanda realizes Michael is the only one she can trust ... and boy does she need someone to trust, because someone doesn't like her

digging up old dirt one bit, and that someone has a knife and starts killing people, the exact same way Heather was killed 15 years ago, and this someone gets closer and closer to Amanda, culminating in the murder of her boyfriend Nick. This was probably done to scare Amanda off doing any more research - but now she bloody well has to avoid to me next on the kill-list.

But assuming that Amanda is right and Michael's not the killer (which is anything but proven), then who is, and how long before he gets his hands on Amanda herself ...

Unsolved is a film that picks up the slasher formula and takes it back to its murder mystery roots - and it succeeds, too, as it injects a certain level of intelligence and integrity back into the standard slasher plot, along with believable and fleshed out characters - and yet there are bloody enough murders and plenty of suspense to keep the hardcore genre fan entertained. Plus, the solution of the mystery comes as an actual surprise without just being pulled out of a hat at random, but still makes sense, narratively. Pretty good, actually.

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