

DVD Review: The Electric Chair

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STUDIO: Wild Eye Releasing/MVD | **DIRECTOR:** Mark Eisenstein | **CAST:** Victor Argo, Jessica Dublin, James Faivre, Tom Gannon

RELEASE DATE: 10/19/10 | **PRICE:** [DVD](#) \$14.95

BONUSES: director's commentary, filmmaker's shorts, unreleased feature trailer

SPECS: NR | 105 min. | Comedy/drama | widescreen | stereo

RATINGS (out of 5): Movie  | Audio  | Video  | Overall 

[The Electric Chair](#) is a virtually unknown 1985 dark comedy that showcases the talents of Victor Argo, a familiar face from the New York City-set films of Martin Scorsese (*Taxi Driver*) and Abel Ferrara (*King of New York*). All hail the character actor!

The independent film's plot is minimal: A shoe store owner (Argo) does an absolutely brutal stand-up comedy gig in front of an unresponsive audience and delivers the second half of his invective-laced monologue strapped into an electric chair, which might be a prop or might be real.

The press notes for the film state that Harvey Keitel ([Bad Lieutenant](#)) was originally slated to play the comic, but he had to back out and suggested Argo as a replacement. This was a bit of luck for Argo, because the film is the best demo reel an actor could have — he's on screen for most of the picture and is able to show off his ability to deliver both cheap gags as well as venomous social satire.

Argo is so overpoweringly good that he can nearly sustain the whole movie, but in the long-run, *The Electric Chair* plays like an excellent short film unwisely extended to feature length. The Charles Bukowski/Hubert Selby-like quality of the world the character inhabits is intriguing but stifling, and the messages that are implicit in the film (about the performer as preacher and society's negative reaction to the non-conformist) get driven home without mercy.

Also included on the DVD is a commentary and a handful of shorts by filmmaking teacher Mark Eisenstein, who wrote and directed *The Electric Chair*, his first film.