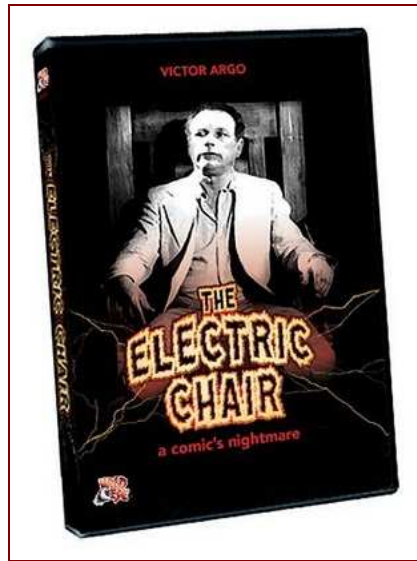


McBASTARD'S MAUSOLEUM

indie, horror, and cult cinema blog.

Saturday, December 25, 2010

DVD REVIEW: The Electric Chair (1985)



THE ELECTRIC CHAIR (1985)

DISTRIBUTOR: Wild Eye Releasing/MVD Visual

RATED: Unrated

DURATION: 105 Min.

DIRECTOR: Mark Eisenstein

CAST: Victor Argo, Tony Corona, Jessica Dublin, Tom Gannon, Tim Pankewic, John Iannaci

TAGLINE: A Comic's Nightmare

PLOT: Victor Argo (GHOST DOG, TAXI DRIVER) is a shoe store manager who attempts to revive a failed career as a stand-up comic by performing at a mysterious club where he finds himself sharing the stage with a looming, ready-to-shock electric chair... and performing before an audience of himself in the various stages of his life, and other friends, family and enemies - who are all subject to his cantankerous and biting routines on love, friendship and god.

FILM: THE ELECTRIC CHAIR (1985) began as one man play penned by Mark Eisenstein. When it was decided to turn the one-man show into a independent feature he approached actor Harvey Keitel to star. Keitel's other obligations prevented him starring but he wanted to direct the film. Eventually he withdrew from the project all together (leaving Eisenstein to direct) but not before suggesting fellow Martin Scorsese alum Victor Argo for the role of "The Comic" - a shoe salesman turned comedian who performs a cantankerous stream of consciousness routine in a smoke-filled dive bar. He shares the stage with an ominous electric chair as a man sporadically intones him to not sit in the chair. Argo is fantastic as the curmudgeonly salesman who is angrily eschews bitter and ranting monologues offering life-learned observations and hard truths to a room of uninterested patrons, equal parts Rodney Dangerfield ("Your wife runs off with your best friend, and you miss him.") and Charles Bukowski, it's scathing and stirring stuff.

Padding out the film's running time is intercut footage of Block Island in Rhode Island shot in 1971 - it makes for uneven viewing for sure and at time's tested even my ample patience. The film is shot on black and white super 16mm film with lots of hard shadows and washed out lighting. It looks pretty rough but what struck me about the

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SUBMISSIONS: If you would like to submit a Blu-Ray, DVD screener, comics, music, or whatever for review please email me for the address and I'll write about it on the blog. **Wanna submit content to the site?**

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DVD REVIEW: The
Electric Chair
(1985)

DVD REVIEW:
Puppet Master
(1989)

film was Argo's great performance, why is this the man's only leading role?

DVD: THE ELECTRIC CHAIR DVD from **Wild Eye Releasing** marks the first time this film has appeared on the home entertainment market. Presented in a black and white it's a mix of 1.33:1 and 1.66:1 aspect ratios. The print is far from pristine and definitely rough around the edges (literally). Something I appreciate about the folks at Wild Eye/MVD Visual is that they're giving a voice to cult and indie filmmakers that simply wouldn't have an outlet otherwise. This is a 25 year old film that has never had a proper home video release and now thanks to Wild Eye Releasing we have it. The special features include a commentary with director Mark Eisenstein who is joined by gonzo filmmakers Keith J. Crocker (**THE BLOODY APE, BLITZKRIEG: ESCAPE FROM STALAG 69**) - very informative and fun as Eisenstein recounts his experiences making the film (with his film students) and working with Victor Argo. There is also a 23 min. mini-feature by Eisenstein called THE ROACH which really felt like a lackluster student film in my estimation, it did very little for me. There are also six short (and quite esoteric) Eisenstein films which didn't appeal to me. We also get trailers for THE ELECTRIC CHAIR and his unfinished film GOD IS ON THEIR SIDE (2002) which features David Johansen (of NEW YORK DOLLS and BUSTER POINDEXTER fame) as none other than God. From what I gleaned from the commentary the film is in the process of being finished for release from Wild Eye Releasing.

SPECIAL FEATURES:

- Director's Commentary with director Mark Eisenstein and Keith J. Crocker
- Mini-Feature THE ROACH (23 min.)
- 6 Short Films
- SMOG (6:36), EIGHT TRAGEDY TERM PAPERS+3 (14:53) THE PROFESSOR (5:04), MARK EISENSTEIN: INVENTOR OF THE FRAME (1:45), CITIZEN EISENSTEIN (3:27)
- Mark Eisenstein Trailers for THE ELECTRIC CHAIR and GOD IS ON THEIR SIDE
- Wild Eye Releasing Trailers for NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD : REANIMATED, GOLD, GOTHKILL, THE BLOODY APE and BLITZKRIEG: ESCAPE FROM STALAG 69

VERDICT: THE ELECTRIC CHAIR is an interesting if uneven mid-80's document of New York City underground cinema featuring a stellar performance from prolific character actor Victor Argo. It's striking and darkly comedic, the stand-up stuff is great and Argo's performance is engrossing. So, while it's rough around the edges if you're a fan of Jim Jarmusch's films I can see it striking a chord with you. Definitely not for everyone though.

****1/2 (2.5 out of 5 stars)**

TRAILER: <http://www.wildeyereleasing.com/electric.html>

- McBASTARD

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Posted by McBastard at **12:29 PM** 

Labels: [Black Comedy](#), [Victor Argo](#), [Wild Eye Releasing](#), [Mark Eisenstein](#)

1 comments:

Jimmy Faivre said...

Weird that this is always labeled as being from 1985. Maybe because it was a play first? Anyway, I had the pleasure of playing "Larry the drummer" in this film and it was shot during the entire month of May, 1987 in Bayonne, NJ. - for what it's worth. :-)

January 10, 2011 12:14 PM

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[Anonymous wrote...](#)

Here's a link to the official UK website:<http://www.cult-labs.com/shock-labyrinth/Sam@cultlabs>

[Albert wrote...](#)

You can't go wrong with early Dario Argento and Lucio Fulci. Look like Arrow Video is going to have some great new DVD release in 2011, Blu-Ray too hopefully! To keep on top of all new releases I...
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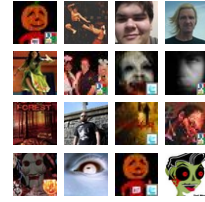
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