



THE ELECTRIC CHAIR (DVD) - MVD VISUAL 60/10

The Electric Chair was originally available in 1985 (or is it 1986?) but was never widely released. It stars the late Victor Argo who had roles in such movies as Taxi Driver. This black and white feature is certainly an odd one and is about a stand up comedian who seems lost in life. He goes to a gig at a bar, which seems busy. When he enters a singer is on stage but is not getting much attention. The movie flashes back and forth to scenes of a desolate neighborhood with a first person point of view and no one else around. He is introduced by the bar owner to minimum applause and starts his set with a song but hums some of the lyrics. One liner jokes are up next. The few seated audience offer little reaction and the comic's material turns to sarcasm and bitterness. After a while an electric chair appears on stage, while he is wondering out loud what the chair is doing there a person seated beside the stage asks him not to go near it. In the meanwhile the set continues with a dance and is then back to jokes again. One table's occupants keep having ice cream, a Rabbi occasionally plays the saxophone, the electric chair warning is said again, a couple start kissing and having sex and another patron starts reading. Finally the comic proceeds to sit in the chair but gets up and tells more jokes before sitting on it again. The repeated electric chair warnings lead to some anger before more scenes from the aforementioned desolate place with some dialogue about life and love. Just as The Electric Chair ends the comic does seem to actually die in the electric chair.

It is anybody's guess what The Electric Chair is really about, it is certainly one about the meaninglessness of life but probably something more in the mind of its writer (director and producer) Mark Eisenstein. The extras, which include a commentary, provide (only) some of the answers but are full of New York and film school anecdotes. Among the secrets revealed is that Harvey Keitel was close to being cast for the role of the comic. – Anna Tergel