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The Electric Chair Is a Killer

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## The Electric Chair Is a Killer

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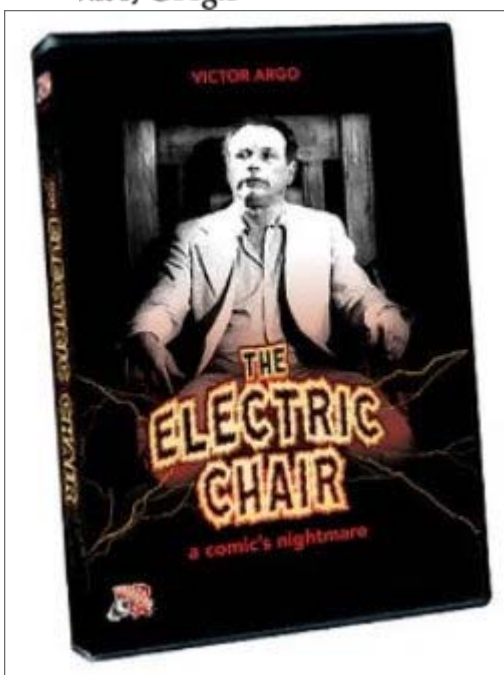
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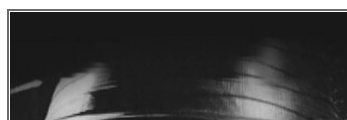
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Recently released on DVD, 1985's *The Electric Chair*, director [Mark Eisenstein \(http://www.allmovie.com/artist/mark-eisenstein-599915\)](#)'s independent film, is a movie to be loved or hated. Filmed in black and white at a picturesque, forlorn location by the sea, it is an episode in the life—or death—of a stand-up comedian.

[Victor Argo \(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victor\\_Argo\)](#) (a familiar face in movies and TV) plays a shoe salesman (Arnie Schwartz from Bayonne, New Jersey) who is angry. He's angry at his wife, his agent, men, women, God, sex—you name it, he's angry at it. Once a comedian, he returns to the stage to deliver his routine in what seems to be a deserted vacation destination (similar to Cape Cod but identified as Manhattan).



A heckler in the audience shouts out, "Whatever you do, make sure you don't go near the electric chair." Sure enough, there's an electric chair on stage. The comic rants about the unfairness of life like a disillusioned misanthrope who actually believed that life was fair. The heckler continues to issue warnings which the comedian both resents and takes as a dare.



Victor Argo's performance as the comic is (ahem) electrifying. In a film stylistically similar to David Lynch's *Eraserhead* (1977), Argo



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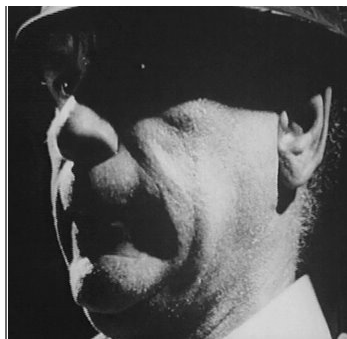
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fiercely grabs the spotlight and doesn't let go—after the closing credits he's still delivering his shtick.

Exactly what is going on in *The Electric Chair*? Well...Arnie tries repeatedly to make a phone call to an engaged line, travels through a long tunnel, arrives in a deserted town, and takes the stage after a singer delivers her rendition of "Amazing Grace." Arnie's audience is coldly unreceptive and we watch him dying on stage—a comic's worst nightmare.



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Bonus features on the DVD include a director's commentary, trailers, and a truly bizarre, surreal mini-feature, *The Roach*, which could be described but should be seen.

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## About this article



Article Author: [Bob Etier \(/people/missbobetier/\)](#)

Two words describe Bob Etier: "female" and "weird." Like many freelance writers, there's something about her that isn't quite right. Read her stuff and find out what.

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