

Indie Horror Films

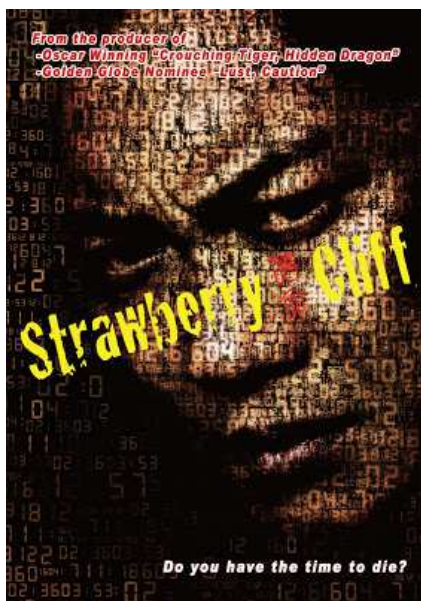
All genres of suspense, terror, and horror will be reviewed by Richard Gary. His address to send preview copies supplied upon request to rbf55@msn.com.

Wednesday, June 5, 2013

DVD Review: Strawberry Cliff

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Images from the Internet



Strawberry Cliff

Directed and written by Chris Chow

Cinema Asian Releasing

105 minutes, 2010 / 2012

www.MVDvisual.com

Let me take you down coz we're going to *Strawberry Cliff*, a late comer in the Asian horror genre that has apparently taken it's time to get to the Western market. This is strange, considering it is mostly filmed short in English and contains location shots in Los Angeles, Paris, and the majority takes place in Hong Kong.

Apparently, L.A.'s accidental waitress Kate (Leslie-Anne Huff) has the ability to know when someone is going to die just by looking at them, though she doesn't know how, as is explained in the very first and expository scene. She tells a young man that he will perish that very night. It seems everyone she tells in this film has no more than a couple of days. In typical Asian cinema, there is some figure that is too white to be natural crawling around to help speed things up.



Leslie-Anne Huff

To further complicate matters, this doomed man, Jason (Anthony Chaput), is part of a mental collective of three called a hive, where different individuals all share a "soul". They can each see what the other is doing as they live their own lives. One character explains that it is like watching multiple televisions as the same time. Truly a cosmic consciousness. The other two, are Jeanne (Antonella Monceau) in Paris, and Darren (Chinese pop star Eason Chan) in Hong Kong.

The irony of the film is that while Kate can look at others and know, she cannot do the same with herself, despite the

fact she has grown up with a congenital heart disorder that should have killed her years before, even though she is a young woman in this story (the film description is that she is a teen, but I don't buy that). A secondary fatefulness is due to her and Darren's particular psychic histories, as both have low-level jobs, with Kate working in a diner and Darren as a bartender; we see both taking abuse from overly masculinist customers. You know something has changed when one stands up to their bully. An inconsistency, however, is that both Jeanne and Jason seem to be doing quite well, judging by their clothes.

Despite some reminiscence of *Ringu* (1998), such as the quest and the fate of one of the characters, this film relies a lot more on atmosphere than on horror. Sure, there are a couple of good scary moments peppered within, but much is played up in mood, highlighted by a haunting score full of

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drawn out violin bass notes and woodwinds.

While Huff's Kate is obviously the central character of the film, it is also abundantly clear that Chan is the star. Heck, it's his picture on the cover, and his appearance is probably what sold most of the copies of this film. The Asian markets love their pop stars, and Chan is right at the A-line. As with so many of these stars, especially in Hong Kong, he is also an actor, but thankfully a good one. This is his first film in English, and though he states that he had to learn a whole different rhythm of acting thanks to the new language (from the *making of* documentary that is not on the disk, but is on YouTube for those interested), it is seamless, and he appears confident in the role.



Eason Chan

Huff's character often seems stunned about what is happening or being said around her, but that is not surprising as I have found that Asian horror either over- or under-explains things, and this case is the former. Not a complaint, just an observation.

Another character of the film is the city of Hong Kong, with its numerous dauntingly high buildings (this statement coming from someone from New York City), and both new opulent and older seedy neighborhoods. For us in the West, a good thing about filming in Hong Kong is that because it was until recently a British regent, nearly everyone speaks English, and all the store signs are bilingual. The way the film leaves off would make it primed for a sequel, though as far as I know there haven't been any plans for it. I get the feeling this film didn't get the audience numbers it was expecting, despite Chan's presence. I'm not surprised, because today's audience of Asian horror have come to rely on much more creepy killings, in such now classics as the aforementioned the *Ringu* (*The Ring*) series, *Ju-on* (aka, *The Grudge*, 2002), *Gin qwai* (*The Eye*, 2002), or *Chakushin ari* (2003), rather than this amount of suspense and mood.

That being said, this film kept this viewer's attention throughout, even with all the expository chatter, and the action moments (such as the growing shadow) were all the sweeter for their moments.

Personally, I hope a sequel does rear its head.

Bonus video:

Posted by Robert Barry Francos at 12:01 AM

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