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## [Jack in the Box \(R Squared Fillms\)](#)

By

[Upchuck Undergrind](#)

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I'm conflicted about Jack in the Box, and it's the kind of conflicted in which I'm entertained and curious throughout the film; when all is said and done, the two ends of the conflict kind of cancel each other out while also enhancing each other's amplitude. Or something. I'm of two minds about it. Isn't it obvious? The torture porn genre spawned an offshoot subgenre whose members aren't always torture porn. It's the locked room full of strangers dying one by one, the story full of enigmas and surprises. It's the lineage of films inspired distinctly by the "Saw" franchise. Not calling them all "Saw" ripoffs, simply crediting that particular seminal member of the modern torture porn canon for creating a stream amongst the eddies of the TP genre, whatever one thinks of it. Sort of like "Halloween" and "Friday the 13th" spawned the slasher genre in the more general horror category. Of course, they owe themselves to prior body counters "Texas Chain Saw Massacre" and before that, "Bay of Blood." All of these are predated by the proto-slasher "Psycho" and hints at the slasher film to come existed even before that. Now, having autopsied the family tree of this subset of torture porn that includes JACK IN THE BOX, let's talk about JACK IN THE BOX. It has the distinction of being one of those films that extends from torture porn but is not itself TP. The blood in JITB is minimal, and I do mean minimal. This is a psychological thriller all the way. It doesn't have a lot new to say. There are no twists on the genre to speak of, unless you count as a twist the fact that every murder is off-camera or otherwise unseen and there is no gore excepting the single instance of the blood seeping under the door. I don't know if any film of this sort has ever been this bloodless. The fact that it works in spite of that, and in spite of the fact that it's story is nothing but variations on themes already fairly well established, is at the core of my ambiguity. The film is not original and has little grisly shock value – something that has often made up for lack of originality – but it is attention-keeping nevertheless. At the end of the day, I was entertained and intrigued. So, I guess that's a fifth digit skyward (avoiding copyright infringement accusations via path of parody, all nice and constitutionally supported, which means so much in this day and age, not that the constitution itself... but I digress), with the above-mentioned caveats?

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