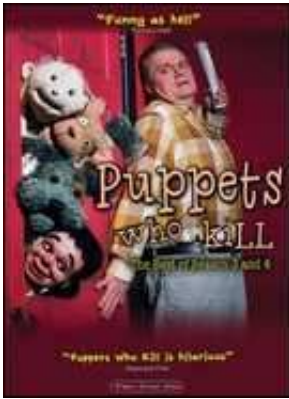




Case Number 20686: Small Claims Court



PUPPETS WHO KILL: THE BEST OF SEASON 3 AND 4

VSC // 2002 // 290 Minutes // Not Rated

Reviewed by Judge Paul Pritchard // February 11th, 2011

The Charge

"Furthermore, apparently one of your inmates sodomized the neighbors dog."

The Case

With a tone more in keeping with Peter Jackson's **Meet the Feebles** than **The Muppet Show**, **Puppets Who Kill: The Best of Season 3 and 4** is ripe with dark comedic potential; potential that is never fully realized.

The show revolves around four criminal puppets: Rocko the Dog, Cuddles the comfort doll, Buttons the bear, and Bill the ventriloquist dummy; all of whom live with (non-puppet) Dan Barlow, who owns the half-way house they have been sent to in a last bid attempt to rehabilitate them. Each of the puppets has their own idiosyncrasies. Rocko is particularly anti-establishment, and struggles to control his violent behavior and foul language; Cuddles shows signs of a passive aggressive personality, and once went postal; Buttons has an insatiable sex drive, often getting into trouble for his promiscuous ways; finally there's Bill, who has psychopathic tendencies (which includes dismembering men's testicles), and 56 ex-partners who all died in mysterious circumstances. Each episode sees one or more of the puppets attempt to reintegrate into society, usually with chaotic results.

A major failing of **Puppets Who Kill** is the over reliance on its novel concept and quirkiness to carry the series. Sure, there's no denying the show is reasonably unique, but the writers' fail to follow through on the possibilities presented to them, resorting instead to an increasingly noticeable dependence on profanity in the absence of genuine wit. There's no doubting the fact that a cute little teddy bear cursing is funny, but after less time than you'd think the novelty starts to wear off, and you end up with an increasingly tiresome show. I could count the number of well-written gags on this DVD on the fingers of one hand; as opposed to the numerous, and pointless, foul-mouthed diatribes that pollute the show. Before long, episodes just start merging into one, with no real sense of progression as characters repeat themselves ad nauseum, and what should have been a treat becomes a chore. Though each puppet gets their own character-based episodes, writers' John Pattison and Dan Redican never explore them beyond their single dominant characteristic. Though it isn't atypical of sitcoms to be thus, **Puppets Who Kill** suffers more than most due to its singular tone and refusal to go any deeper.

The final nail in the coffin is the refusal to delve into the darker aspects of the show. Let's be honest, puppets -- particularly ventriloquist dummies -- can be pretty creepy (or is that just me?); by rarely touching on this, **Puppets Who Kill** is solely reliant on its lackluster gags. The more disturbing side of the show's concept is wasted completely. I appreciate the desire to make the series a comedy first and foremost, but one need look no further than the BBC's **The League of Gentlemen** to see how TV can combine comedy and horror, without either genre having to suffer.

On the plus side, the series' direction shows a degree of proficiency lacking in the writing. Likewise the puppetry on display is excellent, with barely a sight of an errant rod or wire. From a technical standpoint, **Puppets Who Kill** never feels inhibited by the limitations of its leads.

Puppets Who Kill: The Best of Season 3 and 4 contains a collection of episodes from seasons 3 and 4, with each season having its own disc. Anyone purchasing the DVD can look forward to the following episodes:

Disc 1

- * "Buttons on a Hot Tin Roof"
- * "Cuddles the Manchurian Candidate"
- * "Buttons the Dresser"
- * "The Lovely Fred"
- * "Dan and the New Neighbour"
- * "The CBC is Killing Again"

Disc 2

- * "Joyride"
- * "Dan and the Garden Sheers"
- * "Mr. Big"
- * "Dan is Dead"
- * "Buttons and the Make a Wish Foundation"
- * "Bill and the Berkowitzs"
- * "The Rival House"

The 1.33:1 transfer is sharp, detailed, and contains strong colors. The stereo soundtrack also impresses, with a clear, well-balanced mix. The only extras included are a selection of commentaries -- the lion's share of which are located on disc 2.

Contrary to the views expressed in the pullquotes which adorn the DVD, **Puppets Who Kill** is not "hilarious"; it is dull, tiresome, and -- due to the total waste of a potentially fun idea -- disappointing. Quality production values aside, there's little here to recommend. Move along.

The Verdict

Guilty.

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Scales of Justice

Judgment: 60

Perp Profile

Studio: VSC

Video Formats:

* Full Frame

Audio Formats:

* Dolby Digital 2.0 Stereo (English)

Subtitles:

* None

Running Time: 290 Minutes

Release Year: 2002

MPAA Rating: Not Rated

Distinguishing Marks

* Episode Commentaries

Accomplices

* IMDb

<http://us.imdb.com/title/tt0313505/combined>

* Official Site

<http://www.puppetswhokill.com/>