



REVIEW of *13 Knives* directed by William Stancik

If there had been an *X-Files* episode where Chris Carter sends Mulder and Scully to investigate *Pee-Wee's Playhouse*, you'd have an idea what Laslo Film's *13 Knives* is like... but probably not. *Peewee* and *The X-Files* have nothing compared to the strange and twisted world that is the mind of William Stancik. Bizarre and brilliant.

To understand a Stancik film, you've got to track one down and watch it for yourself. I've teased the guys for their minimalist approach to filmmaking and their loosey-goosey shooting style and have compared them to everybody from Monty Python to Mel Brooks, Matt Stone and Trey Parker. The truth is, in a world cluttered with clones and copycats where most everything is a regurgitation of something else, you just don't come across truly original stories that often. William Stancik is just that, a true original with something to say.

I don't pretend to know where his ideas come from or who his influences were. Frankly, I don't care. His stuff is unique and entertaining. I don't have to know the secret behind the magician's trick to appreciate the show. Stancik is a wordsmith with his own brand of humor. He takes an idea or theme and slowly allows it to unravel. It's usually a slow burn and half the time you don't even know what the hell is going on. His cast delivers with such conviction, it doesn't matter. You're simply along for the ride.

13 Knives begins with J. Gabriel Wagner and Alex Wood as a pair of incredibly well dressed documentarians in matching plaid suits, investigating the site of a gruesome cult mass suicide. They interview a former member named Langford (played by Joe Zumba) who provides the backstory and all the ridiculous details.

We're also introduced to Zelzar, the eccentric cult leader (played by Wolfgang Rain) and his queen, Alisa (played by the beautiful Kimberly Dreis), who give their own version of what took place along with injecting some of their cooky gospel according to the alien space dolphins. Rain and Dreis are simply hysterical together.

13 Knives has all the dry satire and witticisms you'd expect from a Stancik film, along with all the familiar faces. Stancik himself makes an appearance as one of the surviving cult members giving a deposition. Clocking in at a solid hour, the film doesn't disappoint. Stancik's stamp is all over it, but there's something different. This one's a little darker than usual. Maybe it's the idea of a mass suicide mixed with undertones of the supernatural, I'm not sure. There were also creepy moments like when Zumba explains that he'd been given so much LSD as a child, he spent much of his time dreaming about killing people. Even the score by Import/Export creates an unsettling mood to the film.



It's dark, but quickly kicks into gear and easily establishes itself as one of my favorite Stancik works.

There's a chemistry between Wagner, Wood and Zumba that's natural and undeniable. It just works. Zumba delivers some of the most ridiculous dialogue with a straight face and Wood always bites. "Many people thought the cult followers cut their throats to make a blowhole so they could breathe on the alien ship. Others thought it was so their heads could be grafted onto alien bodies. Zelzar was a bit unclear on that part." Kibler (Wood) responds, "That seems like kind of a big thing to be unclear on." Zumba continues, "Visionaries don't have time for a lot of details."

In another scene, Ekroy (Wagner) says, "I always wanted to be a scientist." Kibler turns to him, "Well, you are kind of a scientist." Langford comments, "Yeah, it's not like you have to go to school to be a scientist." Ekroy responds, "Yeah, you kind of have to." Langford shrugs and continues, "I didn't know that. I wanted to be a cowboy." Kibler says, "Cowboys are cool, if you weren't the native Americans."

There's no fancy sets or props, no explosions or expensive eye candy... just brilliant writing and perfect delivery.

I have no idea what waits ahead for these guys. Could we see Alex Wood as the next James Bond... or Joe Zumba, a Bond villain? Perhaps. Or maybe J. Gabriel Wagner in a reboot of *The X-Files*? I don't know. But, what I do know is these guys have great on screen chemistry and whatever William Stancik comes up with, I'll be front row with my popcorn.

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