



REVIEW of *Booth* directed by William Stancik

This is the second William Stancik film that's come across my desk. The first was a strange and bizarre exploration into something that resembled *The X Files* on LSD. This second project is all that and more. *Booth* is simply hysterical. It's the story of John Wilkes Booth... the 5<sup>th</sup>! In 1963, while writing a book about his misunderstood ancestor John Wilkes Booth the 1st, he happens to be chatting with his next door neighbor (none other than Lee Harvey Oswald) around the time of the JFK assassination. The two are discussing cherry ice cream and how killing Lincoln may have been an unfortunate error in judgment, but should never have eclipsed Booth's brilliance as an actor. This is what Booth the younger wants him to be remembered for.

With only four characters in this film (five if you consider J. Gabriel Wagner playing a double role), it didn't take long to recognize that this is the same group from *Resonance*, which made it all the more entertaining. Alex Wood plays Booth and J. Gabriel Wagner is Oswald and it is impossible to watch these two discuss Russian ice cream or how much the Russians love Lincoln and that he would have made a great communist had he not been assassinated, with a straight face. The chemistry between them is perfect. Both deliver brilliant deadpan performances. How they managed to stay in character and get through these scenes is the real mystery.

Joe Zumba (Agent Sikes) arrives at Booth's door, reminding me so much of the laconic and enigmatic Patrick Warburton. He has questions about Booth's neighbor, Oswald. "I'm Agent Sikes, I'm with the government. Interesting outfit." "I'm an actor. I was just rehearsing." "Are you leaving for Hollywood?" "No." "What about your neighbor? Is he going to Hollywood?" "I don't think he's going to Hollywood or anywhere else. Is going to Hollywood a problem?" It's just the most ridiculous conversation done with totally serious delivery.

Booth's conscience wrestles with Lincoln's assassination. In a nightmare, he receives a visit from the dead president (played by Bennie Ruckum) and they debate over what a "Pussy Willow" his great relative was. He believes their dispute should have been settled with fisticuffs. There is an amazing scene with Lincoln showing his fight moves.



Once again, Stancik relies heavily on green screen. There are technical glitches with focus issues and spots where the background is less than convincing, but that is the charm of a William Stancik film. Everything works.... well enough. The magic is in the writing. This is absolutely one of the funniest films I've seen in a long time. Stancik films play out like a sketch, reminiscent of Monty Python or Albert Brookes delivering the flavor of old school SCTV. There are technical issues, but who cares! There's not much moving around, but that's not the point. This is just really well written stuff served up with the best deadpan delivery and all the over exaggerated eyeball rolls, fake Russian accents and painfully long pregnant pauses you could hope for.

The cast is great and it's obvious these guys love what they do. This is brilliance in its simplicity.

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