

## “DEAD HOOKER IN A TRUNK” (DVD Review)

Written by Chris Haberman

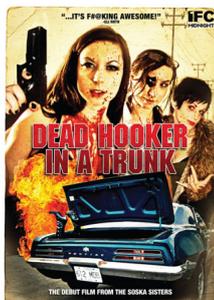
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Made for \$2,500, DEAD HOOKER IN A TRUNK (on DVD tomorrow from IFC Films and MPI Media) is the debut film from the Soska Sisters, twins Jen and Sylvia. In an attempt to kick out a first film that's impossible to ignore, the Soscas wrote, directed, produced and starred in this absurd and outrageous little feature that takes place in a world I cannot begin to understand. None of the characters can be related to on any level, since they make horrible decision after horrible decision. This also makes the flick one hell of a hoot.

The film follows four characters: Badass (Sylvia), her sister Geek (Jen) and their pals Junkie (Rikki Gagne) and Goody Two Shoes (C.J. Wallis). Junkie likes her drugs and rock 'n' roll; Goody Two Shoes is constantly wishing he was back with his church youth group instead of where he currently is: helping these lunatics attempt to dispose of a prostitute's body that has mysteriously been placed in Badass' trunk. Unsure of whether or not Junkie and Badass are responsible for the hooker's death (the two tend to party so hard, they have no idea if they're guilty or not), they plan to dump the evidence and go about their business. Unfortunately, the hooker's Cowboy Pimp is on their trail, as is a hooded psychopathic killer.



What's most admirable about DEAD HOOKER (and is that the best beginning of a sentence so far this year?) is the way the sisters refuse to bore. Every fiber of their being wants you to remain engaged and entertained. This can lead to good and bad filmmaking decisions. The

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good: snappy, Tarantino-inspired dialogue; insanely unpredictable setpieces; earnest attempts at gnarly FX; and an utter devil-may-care attitude toward the treatment of both sexes. The Bad: shaky-cam photography that tries to keep things frantic but becomes exhausting; use of the F-bomb in fatiguing fashion (this isn't adult language; it's a middle-school bus full of kids who have just learned the word and are intoxicated by it); zany characters who are so mentally impaired it's impossible to root for them; and nauseous attempts at seriousness when everything that's come before is a carnival of ridiculousness.

The toughest thing to get past is the shaky camera, though. Even though there are great shots of the city at dusk and morning and some very inspired compositions, the view we get often feels like two people are playing keep-away with the camera. The lunacy of the story is enough without such a distracting visual approach. We're talking about a film where a girl is popped so hard in the head with a bat that her right eye pops completely out of her skull. Rather than go to the hospital, she mutters a complaint and slaps two pieces of electrical tape over the wound. Another character gets her arm nearly severed by a chainsaw. She's a good sport about it—until a semi truck finally breaks the limb off. Again, the hospital isn't necessary; her pals take her to the woods so they can sew it back on with a needle and thread. Then they smoke a joint and laugh about the body in the trunk. These kids are insane.

Despite the necrophilia, dismemberment, hints of bestiality, disemboweling, fatal gunshots, beatings, penis mutilation, etc., the seediness factor never really becomes repulsive, which is a shock, to say the least. Even when the ugliness feels far too clean and tidy to be believed for a second, the Soskas' hearts are in the right scummy place, and it's the thought that counts here. There's even a torture scene with drills and chisels that makes the characters just seem laughably crazier.

In the end, the movie feels like it's trying to come on strong, but I have no idea what it's trying to say. Strength for women? Strength for independent filmmaking? Strength for nutcases on the street who aren't afraid to fight their own battles instead of rely on unreliable authorities? Women are abused left and right. Men are humiliated and emasculated. Everyone is made a fool of. In this kind of film, who do you side with? Who do you root for? What allows you to not feel like a fool for having watched it? Yes, yes...I know we're discussing DEAD HOOKER IN A TRUNK, but I would've really adored a commentary track—if not to learn how a group of filmmakers did as much as they did with so little, then to try and comprehend the thinking behind creating characters so collectively batshit.

Not one but two commentaries were initially announced for the DVD, but are AWOL on the final release, and I do wish there were more special features overall. There's a behind-the-scenes

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segment that shows everyone prepping for scenes on the set and shooting (then cleaning up) some of the nastier FX. It's fun to realize that an “elderly woman and her granddaughter” were spectators during the bury-the-hooker scene. No interviews with the cast or crew here; just outtakes for the most part, which is better than nothing, I reckon. A few alternate and deleted scenes are thrown in, none of which really enhance the film.

There's also an interview with filmmaker/EL MARIACHI star Carlos Gallardo talking indie filmmaking with the Soska twins. He talks about briefly about SINGLE ACTION, an EL MARIACHI-style film he made for \$11,000. The blink-and-you'll-miss-it segment ends super-quick, but is a nice addition, as it's really just here to inspire filmmakers to get out there and do the best with what they've got. Last, there's a trailer section consisting of SPIDERHOLE (torture stuff), UNDOCUMENTED (which also looks torturey), then, ha ha ha, THE HUMAN CENTIPEDE II: FULL SEQUENCE and finally a silly preview for the priest-on-a-road-trip flick THE CATECHISM CATAclysm.

MOVIE: 🍅🍅🍅👤

DVD PACKAGE: 🍅🍅👤👤