

“FOUR BOXES” (DVD Review)

Written by Max Weinstein

Wednesday, 13 October 2010 12:04



FOUR BOXES (Entertainment One) bears an effect on the thinking viewer identical to its sadistic fictional website’s motives, as described by the film’s characters: “It’s trying to terrorize us.” Those same words could equally apply to the movie’s lackluster-turned-lagging-turned-loathsome exchanges that take stabs at everything from pseudo-hip philosophy (“Life sucks, dude, right?”) to marriage (“We’re gettin’ married, dude. We’re gonna push plastic strollers full of babies around Disneyland, *a’ight?!’*”) and fall flat on all accounts.

What’s worse, there’s not a scare in the whole flick, whose intrigue relies on the menace of a man who sleeps in a cage and builds bombs in his basement, but is seen only in dull, grainy flashes of about five seconds.



FOUR BOXES’ overstretched plot—centering around that website presenting the activities of a malicious, hooded terrorist named Havoc and his accomplice, Ziploc—is a YouTube-oriented take on the sick spectator sport of voyeuristic websites. From its opening titles, the story proceeds as an atypical buddy film, with pals Trevor (Justin Kirk) and Rob (Sam Rosen) moving into a dead man’s house, where they plan to shack up amidst the damp, poorly lit clutter for a week. Before we can begin judging their recreational habits too quickly, the film wants us to believe the guys are there for a reason. They own an estate liquidation company—a cleaning service provided to those who don’t want to deal with their recently deceased loved ones’ belongings themselves. Sorting through the old junk, the duo are joined midway by Amber, who’s revealed to have been involved with both dimwits, first with Trevor and now engaged to Rob. From there, the three begin to obsess over a website they’ve stumbled upon called fourboxes.tv, which follows some mysterious, unidentified baddies doing inscrutable, shady things in a small, messy room. Are you disturbed yet?

“FOUR BOXES” (DVD Review)

Written by Max Weinstein

Wednesday, 13 October 2010 12:04

None of FOUR BOXES amounts to much of anything, yet it develops with the pretentious notion that what lies at the end of its tunnel is in some way unspeakably profound. We're dragged through these kids' incessant moping, sulking and brooding about past soap-operatic nonsense (Amber's revelation that she's hungry for a chicken ciabatta proves to be a highlight), there are hints at a subplot involving the terrorists' motives to wipe out the entire country's population—but nothing urgent or frightening ever really transpires. More maddening is the dialogue, which at one point includes the recitation of a misspelled word, “copaseptic.” But even if you're willing to dismiss some blatant misuse of the English language, you may wind up bashing your head over the series of scenes focusing on Trevor's attempts to decipher “what it all means” by writing down a series of codes from the website that go entirely unexplained. Is this fake Morse code? Do these killers come with motives, or are they simply insane? When will these guys do their jobs and clean up this damn mess?

In the film's desperate final-act to patch things up, writer/director Wyatt McDill tacks on a heavy, somber-serious portent of dread and despair, giving his gimmicky “nothing is what it seems” angle one last spin. I'll try and refrain from dropping overt spoilers here; let's just say it all reveals itself as a smoke-and-mirrors illusion, ending with just a whole lot of smoke. FOUR BOXES' surprise revelation is worth at least a bit of an “aha!” reaction; it's the getting to that moment that's so tediously painful.

The cast all turn in fine, even spottily compelling performances, elevating the material to a level that doesn't exist in the writing. If there's one thing to extract from this logically aloof mess, it's that Kirk is up to the task of carrying a genre film of his own; he's engaging as a guy caught between personal crisis and shocking discovery.

The DVD offers a sleek 1.78:1 transfer and Dolby Digital sound, both perfectly competent. The minimal special features include FOUR BOXES' original trailer—which exploits aspects the movie itself is not equipped to deliver—and a blooper reel that feels tacked-on and out of place. Even the film's two deleted scenes are tough to distinguish from those left in; in any case, they add no depth of character or enhanced subtext to an already watery bore.

While FOUR BOXES bills itself as a Hitchcockian “REAR WINDOW of the Internet”, it's pretty evident that such claims remain shamelessly—or shame *fully*—self-appointed. For a less contrived sense of unpredictability and atmosphere, you're better off checking out the film's promotional website, a fake version of fourboxes.tv, which is infinitely more creepy.

“FOUR BOXES” (DVD Review)

Written by Max Weinstein

Wednesday, 13 October 2010 12:04

MOVIE: 🗿🗿🗿

DVD PACKAGE: 🗿🗿🗿

{jcomments on}