

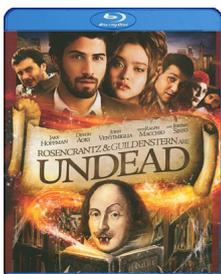
"ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE UNDEAD" (Blu-Ray Review)

Written by Samuel Zimmerman
Monday, 27 December 2010 15:12



Plausibility was never a major issue for me. I welcome the silly, the fantastic and the ridiculous with open arms. In horror/comedy, however, it's often something of a necessity. Granted, ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE UNDEAD isn't very horrific (and isn't trying to be), but still, in tales where relatable folk collide with unimaginable circumstance, you need first to buy said relatable folk and their actions and reactions to both the real world and walking nightmares. ROSENCRANTZ never hops this hurdle and stumbles over many more in the process.

Written and directed by Jordan Galland, ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE UNDEAD finds Julian Marsh (Jake Hoffman), a slacker with a passing interest in reviving his theatre directing career and winning back his ex, Anna (Devon Aoki), answering an ad looking for someone qualified to steer an off-broadway production of HAMLET. Little does he know, the producer and star Theo Horace (John Ventimiglia) is actually the real-life Horatio, who's in fact a vampire and looking to lure the now immortal real-life Hamlet to the production. Julian must now figure out a way to put on a stunner of a show, contend with Horatio and make sure no harm comes to Anna, whom he casts as Ophelia and best friend Vince (Kris Lemche), starring as Hamlet. Also, Anna is now dating an older Mafia-esque goombah played by Ralph Maccio. And that's a problem on many levels.



What's surprising about ROSENCRANTZ is that Julian is a fairly decent representation of a twenty-something, barely successful sarcastic artist coasting off his parents in New York City. And to those not living in east and west coast metropolises who scoff at such a description, yes he is reasonably and surprisingly likeable. The film starts to go off the rails even before the vampires arrive however, with the introduction of Ralph Maccio's Bobby Bianchi. A fool of a wannabe entrepreneur, there's no conceivable way you could believe that Anna would be dating or even interested in this ridiculously broad stereotype of New York City Italian-Americans. It's also pretty hard to understand Julian running errands for his ex and delivering objects to her at Bianchi's home. It all just serves ideas and situations that the filmmakers thought would be funny, but don't organically flow.

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This extends further once production gets underway and the misadventures of Julian and Horatio begin. While there are some notable lines of hilarity, much of the comedy falls flat. The cast is clearly putting their all into the proceedings, but the narrative just doesn't hold up. With a preposterous and unnecessarily convoluted backstory and a subplot somehow involving the Holy Grail, interest is easily lost as neither the exposition, nor the quips support your engagement. And while there's no problem visually as the New York City locations support the indie aesthetic, the editing is awkward and jarring, often bringing punchlines down. It must be said though, that Jeremy Sisto's extended cameo as a detective delivers the film's most hilarious and silly of performances, often overcoming many of its other setbacks.



The Blu comes equipped with an audio commentary and video interview with Galland. Both serve as interesting, fun and detailed looks at the film and its low budget production. The deleted scenes don't add much to the package and neither do the standard EPK-type chats with the cast and crew. The Blu's presentation of the film is quite sharp however, and if you end up enjoying the flick much more than I did, will only be a plus.

There's definitely talent and fun to be found in ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE UNDEAD and with a good deal of tightening up, it could've been a much more memorable film. As it stands, I'm curious to see what Galland does next.

MOVIE: 🍷🍷🍷👤

BLU-RAY PACKAGE: 🍷🍷🍷👤

{comments on}