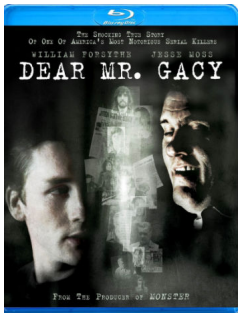
Despite a healthy array of mustaches, serial killer/true crime films are hardly ever very intriguing. Mostly relegated to DTV, the subgenre likes to boast of getting into the minds of mass murderers but more frequently comes across formulaic and mediocre, and while the latest, DEAR MR. GACY (available now from Anchor Bay), is shrouded in positive buzz, we have to ask ourselves, does "better than expected" necessarily equal good?

Essentially a two man show, GACY sees Jesse Moss essay Jason Moss, the real-life criminology student and author who formed a dangerous bond with serial killer, John Wayne Gacy (William Forsythe), in the early 1990's via letters and an eventual, pivotal face-to-face meeting. The film is a chronicle of Jason's descent and loss of control as he grows closer to and becomes easily manipulated by Gacy.



The justfication of the praise DEAR MR. GACY is receiving comes courtesy of its two leads, especially notable genre actor Forsythe, who's stunning and fearless. Both put in intense and captivating performances that are most definitely worthy of applause. To be blunt however, the rest of the film just doesn't measure up and while Forsythe and Moss are on full throttle, it feels like the plot is often playing catch-up.

As Jason begins his correspondence with the inmate, things seem to get emotionally heavy and worrisome to his family and girlfriend, Alyssa very quickly, but the audience is out of the loop as to why they're so up in arms. As spectators, we're privy to much more than his parents, or Alyssa (Emma Lahana), ever are and while we know Jason has been drugged by a male prostitute (I mean, who hasn't?), all his main squeeze thinks is he was sick and missed class. There's a disconnect in the pacing and it only serves to confuse or muddle the effect of the film.

Svetozar Ristovski's direction is also a step behind the the movie's highs, feeling bland

throughout. It seems the style of DEAR MR. GACY is lack of style and exists somewhere between handheld and something more traditional, but never fully commits to either, thus appearing wishy-washy and unremarkable like so many low-budgeters do.

What's also jarring [POSSIBLE SPOILERS] is the way the film pushes you to feel a certain way about Jason towards the end. The title of Jason Moss' nonfiction book, THE LAST VICTIM comes very much into play as the narrative eventually positions him to be Gacy's. But even before Jason gets heavily entangled in the killer's web, he gives the impression he's slightly obessive and possibly deranged. There's never an initial good boy to be corrupted, so when DEAR MR. GACY reaches its conclusion and there's an air of relief at Jason's freedom from Gacy's clutch, he kind of comes across full of shit and pleased with himself.

The Blu, as expected, looks and sounds great. It's lone special feature is a brief doc featuring cast, crew and Barry Boschelli, a childhood friend of John Wayne Gacy and is asbolutely worth the 22 minutes. But while the feature is great, a film with such history behind it should at least include a commentary, if not more in the way of supplements.

MOVIE: 💀💀💀💀

BLU: 💀💀💀💀

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