

"THE CAPTURED BIRD" (Short Film Review)

Written by Justin Beahm
Friday, 06 July 2012 06:59



A gorgeous, haunting exploration of youthful imagination, **THE CAPTURED BIRD** transports viewers back in time to their own early excavations of the dark. The eleven-minute short is the freshman outing from genre publishing icon Jovanka Vuckovic, who reportedly turned to her horror heroes for guidance at the project's outset. In the end, just as she proved in **ZOMBIES! AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF THE UNDEAD** and with how she evolved Canada's Rue Morgue magazine from fan rag to one of the most distinct voices in genre periodicals, **THE CAPTURED BIRD** is clearly the product of Vuckovic's own vision. The results are stunning.

Inspired by H.P. Lovecraft, the Brothers Grimm, and Hans Christian Anderson, **THE CAPTURED BIRD** is at once a fairy tale and nightmare, telling the story of a curious little girl (Skyler Wexler) lured from the security of her jump rope and chalk world into the mysterious confines of a sprawling castle. Once inside the crumbling abode, it becomes clear the building, and its horrifying inhabitants, have been expecting her.

Vuckovic, who wrote and directed the film, touches on a number of primal fears in **THE CAPTURED BIRD**'s brief running time. Angling for the goosebumps of brave viewers are maggots, worms, apparitions, shrouded black hallways, and the birth of a truly unforgettable troupe of beasts. Her color palette is out-and-out Argento, painting the walls with alluring reds and cautious cool blues; Kudos to location manager Brad Gratkowski for landing the quintessential estate-in-ruins for exteriors, giving this socially-funded project the feel of a multi-million dollar picture.



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Rob McCallum's creature design is unforgettable, bringing a centuries-old legend to vivid, dripping, life. In fact, the entire effects crew is to be applauded for delivering scenes that outpace most of what many genre production houses are pumping out these days, and again, on a budget considered miniscule by most industry standards.

It would be remiss not to make mention of the maturity on display from young Wexler, who in her six years, was already a veteran of four television shows before stepping into the shoes of our little BIRD. She carries herself with something that belies her age, and arrives at the film's climax with a sincerity and innocence that serves as the hinge on which the finale swings.

THE CAPTURED BIRD takes adults back to a simpler time when terror and joy often went hand-in-hand, and reminds children that their fear of what lurks in the corner of their room very well may be something to be concerned about. Vuckovic and her crew have created something beautiful here, so be prepared for the festival awards to start piling up for this most unique little gem. I, for one, cannot wait to see what they do next.

