

“THE ABC’s OF DEATH” (TIFF Movie Review)

Written by Kelly Michael Stewart
Monday, 17 September 2012 11:39



The premiere of the much-anticipated anthology THE ABC’S OF DEATH was one of the final genre screenings at the Toronto International Film Festival, and was met with mixed responses. This ambitious project (coming to theaters early next year from Magnet Releasing) teams together 26 directors from around the world, spanning 15 countries; each was assigned to do a short film based on a letter of the alphabet (“A is for Apocalypse,” etc.) and given complete creative control.

Just looking at the exhausting list of talent is enough to make any horror fan drool: Kaare Andrews (ALTITUDE), Angela Bettis (ROMAN), Ernesto Díaz Espinoza (MIRAGEMAN), Jason Eisener (HOBOWITH A SHOTGUN), Bruno Forzani and H  l  ne Cattet (AMER), Adri  n Garc  a Bogliano (COLD SWEAT), Xavier Gens (THE DIVIDE), Jorge Michel Grau (WE ARE WHAT WE ARE), Noburu Iguchi (ROBOGEISHA), Thomas Malling (NORWEGIAN NINJA), Anders Morgenthaler (PRINCESS), Yoshihiro Nishimura (TOKYO GORE POLICE), Banjong Pisathanakun (SHUTTER), Simon Rumley (RED WHITE & BLUE), Marcel Sarmiento (DEADGIRL), Jon Schnepp (METALCALYPSE), Srdjan Spasojevic (A SERBIAN FILM), Timo Tjahjanto (MACABRE), Andrew Traucki (THE REEF), Nacho Vigalondo (TIMECRIMES), Jake West (DOGHOUSE), Ti West (THE INNKEEPERS), Ben Wheatley (KILL LIST), Adam Wingard (A HORRIBLE WAY TO DIE) and Yudai Yamaguchi (YAKUZA WEAPON), plus on-line contest winner Lee Hardcastle. Given a lineup of this caliber, THE ABC’S OF DEATH should be considered required viewing by horror fans—though it’s not necessarily an essential one. The key to a successful anthology feature is quality control to make sure there’s ebb and flow from film to film, and that the final product is one unified piece. Otherwise, it’s just random shorts thrown together, which unfortunately is this movie’s ultimate impression.



The film clocks in at just under two hours and most of the films are about four minutes in length, so if one segment is a little flat, you don’t have to endure it for very long. The problem is that the weaker ones simply outnumber the strong ones, so THE ABC’S OF DEATH is a tricky film to sum up. There are some amazing achievements in this assortment that shouldn’t be overshadowed by the less successful entries, however. Among the highlights is Gens’ “X is for

“THE ABC’s OF DEATH” (TIFF Movie Review)

Written by Kelly Michael Stewart
Monday, 17 September 2012 11:39

XXL,” about a woman unhappy with her appearance who takes the ultimate action to reduce her body size. Eisener’s “Y is for Young Bucks” tells the story of a high-school pedophile via the music-video format. The best of the bunch, and easily the most disturbing, is Timo Tjahjanto’s “L is for Libido,” dealing with a psychotic masturbation contest that ends with sick and deadly results.

I really admire Drafthouse Films for putting this project together, and had wondered how they were going to manage 26 different filmmakers—but the answer is, they really didn’t. The results work as a short-film experiment, rather than a true anthology, and in the end, it really boils down to just a bunch of letters.

