

Independent Feature Film STILL THE DRUMS (2009)

“A Suspenseful Tour de Force!”

A blog about independent feature film and film-makers by Don Haderlein

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Still The Drums, written-directed-produced by Talbot Perry Simons, is one of the most patriotic anti-war films I have ever seen. The film screened August 1st at the 2009 New York International Independent Film Festival in Los Angeles. The film tells the story of four childhood friends sent off to fight in Vietnam. One does not return. Thirty-nine years later, his body is found and an ensuing mystery begins to unfold. The film has moments that reminded me of “Coming Home” and “The Best Years Of Our Lives” mixed in with flashbacks of childhood as rich as “Stand By Me”.

The film at its core is a story of friendship, loyalty and morality. It opens on the night the three men have attended a funeral for their fallen friend who has been MIA for thirty-nine years. Their friend Lt. Jack (Jacky) Buchannon was awarded the medal of honor as a fallen hero. We find out that these three surviving friends, Tom (Talbot Perry Simons), Mike (Bobby Figaro) and Al (Richard Fulvio) have been meeting in a similar way once a year since Jacky went missing. They honor him by drinking Jack Daniels and telling stories from their youth.

This year is different. Jacky is not only the recipient of the Medal of Honor but is having an extension onto the community college named after him. After a few drinks, it is clear that not everything is how it seems, and as the film transitions to weave scenes from three periods of these men’s lives, old war memories spring back to life and the story culminates into a riveting and suspenseful tour de force. The men’s experiences in Vietnam and childhood as friends are told with an effective use of flashbacks. If you were wondering “Why make another film about Vietnam. Haven’t we explored all the issues regarding that war?”, then you will find your answer in “Still The Drums”. This is not only a film about Vietnam but war in general. For these vets, the war never ended. It is not just a flashback or period in their lives, they live with the effects it had and has on them daily. The film makes the point that for all veterans, their war is never really over.

Talbot Perry Simons independent feature film goes beyond the typical war film. “Still The Drums” is a gripping, tense and heart-wrenching film that challenges the viewer to question what he or she would do in a moral dilemma in a time of war. It also reminds us that it is our choices in adversity that define our character and our humanity. Don’t miss Still The Drums. Its a powerful small film that tackles timeless monumental themes in a masterful and balanced manner. The film will be playing again in Saturday October 24th at the City Cinemas on 2nd Ave and 12th street in New York City as part of the New York International Independent Film Festival screenings in New York.