



Projection Booth



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**Chance: A little movie
featuring some big talent**

I'm going to take a break from the norm in this edition of Projection Booth and focus on one film. Awhile back I had the opportunity to see the independently produced film *Chance*, and thought I'd use the opportunity to talk about this great little movie.

Chance is a wonderful film from actress Amber Benson, in her debut as a screenwriter and director. It's a comedy about a young woman navigating a series of relationships, including those of the romantic, friendly and familial nature. Benson plays the title character, a Los Angeles slacker who is on an emotional roller coaster as she attempts to find love, with little luck so far.

Chance goes through the trials and tribulations of an active social life. Less than glamorous clubs, an inappropriate crush on a singer (Andy Hallet) and fending off an obsessive neighbor (Nate Barlow) all factor in to her adventures. Meanwhile, she gets an unexpected extended visit from her mother Desiree (Christine Estabrook), a former hippy whose influence on Chance is perhaps more prevalent than her daughter would like to admit. Chance learns her father Malcom (Jeff Rickets) has left Desiree for an 18 year old girl (Lara Boyd Rhodes). And while sympathetic to her mother, Chance is not exactly pleased to have Desiree living with her.

In the midst of this is the one constant in Chance's life, her not quite stable roommate Simon (James Marsters). In many ways Simon is Chance's opposite, especially socially; Simon barely tolerates the long and short-term romantic guests Chance brings into their apartment. But when it's just the two of them, he and Chance also bond over their similarly offbeat sensibilities and sense of humor. Chance seems conflicted about how exactly she feels about Simon, but there seems to be more than a little bit of passion beneath the surface of their turbulent friendship.

Among the many highlights the film has to offer, there are the occasional missed opportunities. There is a very delightful fabricated history Simon and Chance create to amuse themselves that we see played out at one point. But it does make you wonder how

exactly these two did come to live together, which unfortunately remains an unanswered question. And when we meet Heidi, the young woman Chance's father is now dating, it is a disappointment to see her portrayed as a fairly one-note, typical teenage ditz. But if nothing else, the disappointment with this character reflects well on the strengths of the film. It's simply that by the time she is introduced, we've come to hope for something more, thanks to all that has been delivered so far.

But what stands out most about *Chance* is how genuinely charming and funny the film is. Benson has created an excellent group of characters, who are extremely likable, engaging and original. From Simon's obsession with time and punctuality, to Chance's hysterical (and too naughty to repeat or ruin) view on lesbian sex, to Desiree's unique way of physically retreating from her problems, there are some inspired moments here. Benson has a gift for clever, funny dialogue, delivering one laugh out loud scene after another. There are scenes that are simply comic gems, such as an argument between Chance and an ex-boyfriend about his unhealthy obsession with his teeth, which builds to a comic crescendo.

The cast is uniformly strong and adept at playing the comic and emotional scenarios their characters go through. Benson, Marsters and Estabrook in particular manage to hit all the right notes, always making their characters as sympathetic as they are offbeat. Those familiar with Benson and Marsters from their roles on "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," will be surprised by the very different characters they portray here, and the terrific chemistry and humor between the two as they banter back and forth. Special mention also has to go to singer Grant Langston, who appears periodically to perform a series of songs commenting upon the situations Chance finds herself in. Written by Langston, the songs are a witty blend of raunchy and sweet.

Also worth noting is that *Chance* was shot on digital video. There has been a lot of debate about the image quality of movies shot on digital lately, with particular criticism given to some recent releases like *Tadpool* and *Full Frontal* that had a rather murky, unflattering look. In contrast however, *Chance*, shot by Patrice Lucien Cochet, looks very good, with a clean, clear visual style that really displays the strengths of using digital for these types of quirky projects.

Chance echoes films like *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* and *The Good Girl* that have similarly taken down to earth, easily relatable scenarios and shown how fresh and funny they can feel. Most of us can relate to many of the situations the characters find themselves in here, as embarrassed as we might be to admit it. This film lets us laugh at it all from the proper perspective. At the same time, Benson deftly manages to get us to care for her characters, and hope that Chance can finally find what she's looking for.

At the screening I attended, I was told that *Chance* didn't have a distributor as yet. Here's hoping this film eventually finds the audience it so richly deserves.