

Man Cave – Feel The Reel Review

The most famous horror writer, Stephen King, says that when a good writer is having fun, the audience is almost always having fun, too. This quote perfectly summarizes the impression that the short script in question, titled *Man Cave*, produces. It is written by Mark Higgins, an erudite writer whose storytelling skills will immerse the future audiences of this film when released.

The audience loves one thing – they want the writer to tell them a story in the most creative and genuine way possible without redundancy or underwhelming building of characters. They instantly appreciate a filmmaker who seems to be narrating the story almost effortlessly, and that right there is the beauty of writing in general, as it's assumed that Higgins went back over and over again to polish the finesse for the sake of the uninterrupted flow and dynamic rhythm.

Nevertheless, the pitch is intriguing, and therefore the idea. In short, a serial killer in his sixties with an invaluable antique collection invites two men of ill-prepared nature to make a deal on the items in his possession. While the visitors hatch a scheme on their own, the host prepares to contribute to a different, more private collection not depicted by the antique hunters at that moment. So, the private collection consists of corpses that would make the owner's dead wife's company in the basement. In his words, his wife asked for the two visitors, and he must oblige.

It's fascinating how Mark Higgins manages to tell a complete story in less than ten pages (to be exact, seven). The story has transparent act breaks, meaning a beginning, middle and end that asks us to revisit the beginning, as *Man Cave* has a re-watch value that explains how the script works outside of its unprecedented framework. That means that the story holds firmly onto its intertextuality and enhances the communication with other art forms in the genre. That's why the longer one is involved in it, the more one takes out of the story.

As a result, we come to appreciate the discreet nod to Hitchcock's *Psycho*, the monumental work that soon became revolutionary in the genre, and the history of cinema overall. The gripping image of Harold's wife, May, who sits mummified in a wheelchair with her rotten black eye sockets, is an image that one will never forget. More importantly, it's an image/one-perfect shot that elevates the nod to *Psycho*, as it adds more to the form and matter. The woman's maniacal laughter echoes in the eternity of the man cave, which by now has become the purgatory without exit belonging to the fashion of the Kafkaesque nightmare. Which is more unbearable, the everlasting silence or the disturbing laughter?

The conversation between Harold and his wife, May, is the culminating point of the script. Aristotle stated that the best plots should have the reversal of fortune and revelation should be executed simultaneously, and while he mentions the example of *Oedipus Rex*, it can be implemented in *Man Cave*, where the reversal and revelation occur when Harold becomes the hunted. Therefore, the conversation that leads to that moment is pivotal for understanding Harold's tragic flaw. Thus, the correspondence is one-sided, but it works from both points of view, which means that Mark Higgins doesn't approach their short script as a writer only, but an auteur director who gained control over every aspect of the creative process – imagine the juxtaposition, visual grammar and various editing possibilities with the ending.

It is said that a writer can always edit something from a story/script, but *Man Cave* passes with flying colours, as it is complete. The storytelling is narrowed down to the essentials, but it knows what it wants to achieve right from the start in its earnest approach. With that being said, the review concludes with the impression that Mark Higgins improves their artisanship through dedication in the re-writing process, as the script's success results from the passion and investment that, in this case, have not faded over time. On the contrary, they grew more potent, and the end results are more than impressive.