

FILM FANADDICT

TALES FROM BEYOND (2004)

Directed by Josh Austin, Nate Barlow, Eric Manning,
& Russell Scott

Review by David Carter

Released by Anthem DVD

Running Time: 110 minutes

Rating: Not Rated

Color format: Color

Audio/Subtitles: 2.0 Dolby Digital Stereo English

Region Code: 1, NTSC

Aspect Ratio: Letterbox 1.85:1

16:9 Enhanced: No

Special Features: None

Trailer Online: Yes



The anthology format has been used in almost every genre imaginable. However, horror and science fiction seem to have a far greater number of these films than any of their fellow genres. The reason behind that trend could be any number of things ranging from the prevalence of short stories in those genres to the financial success of other horror and sci-fi anthology films. Regardless the reason, anthology films have become a staple of horror genre over the years; so much so that any new entries inevitably draw comparisons to the classics of the format. The anthology film also gives several directors a chance to showcase their individual works in

the context of a framing story. Such is the case with the award-winning new film from Anthem, TALES FROM BEYOND.

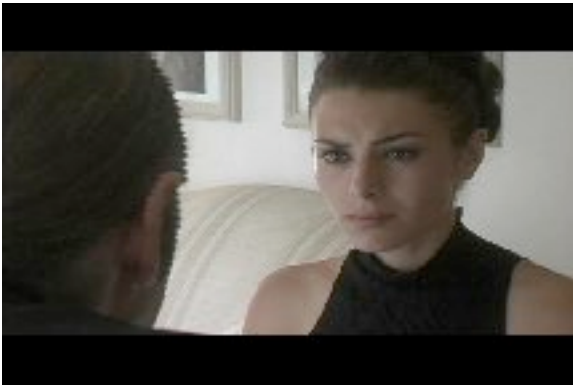
Young couple Rich and Carrie are browsing around an old bookstore for a gift. The helpful owner Jay (Adam West) shows them a group of books that are rare collector's items and in turn they read four of the volumes. First up is "Abernathy." Married couple Evan and Jennifer are having a lot of problems. They fight constantly, and everyone from Evan's friends to his psychiatrist tell him to get away from her. To make matters worse, Evan begins having bizarre dreams about a white house filled with strange people. Are the dreams a reaction to his marital troubles or something more sinister? In "Nex's Diner," hurried businessman Nick stops in to an abandoned diner for a bite to eat. He's not alone for long when two strangely dressed women arrive. When a man in a toga arrives, Nick begins to find out that Nex's Diner is not all that it appears to be. He's in a place where time stops and he makes a drastic mistake when he tries to get the collected time travelers to reveal the secrets of the past and future to him.

The third story is "Life Reply." In it, a slacker opens up the remote control to his new DVR he's received to find that it can control time itself while he's holding it. He and his friend enjoy their newfound power until he sees the evening news' report about his



own death. He comes up with a plan to save his own life, but will it work? The final story is "Fighting Spirit." Vic is a down-on-his-luck boxer who can't seem to win a fight. His family encourages him to give up boxing to work in their restaurant, but Vic won't give up on his dream. He meets up with a bum named Goldie who claims to have been a famous boxer. Vic doesn't believe him, but decides to give it a shot anyway. When Vic becomes successful at last, he learns an amazing secret about Goldie's past.

TALES FROM BEYOND goes in a different direction than most horror anthology films. Rather than relying on gothic settings, as so often is the case in this type of film, TALES FROM BEYOND puts a modern twist on the standard anthology format. Despite modernizing the style, the film sticks firmly in the established patterns for the stories: set-ups followed up with "gotcha" twist endings. They each contain the standard themes of things not always being what they seem ("Abernathy" and "Fighting Spirit"), and people ultimately being responsible for their own misfortunes ("Nex's Diner"). Veterans of horror anthologies should have no trouble determining the "surprise ending" of each segment shortly after it begins. TALES FROM BEYOND is an excellently made film from a technical standpoint, however. Each of the four directors shows a lot of talent both in front of and behind the camera. It would have been nice to get a look at them at work, but the Anthem DVD release of the film does not come with any extra features.



TALES FROM BEYOND is in many ways better than much of the current crop of low-budget horror films. The film has ambition in spades. Each segment is really trying to be something both meaningful and entertaining. Though it occasionally misses the mark, it should be commended for trying to break away from the mold. It's worth a look if you like discovering young directors with a bright future ahead of them.