



“Face Painters” – TMFF Review

“Face Painters” is a story that takes us through the lives of two generations of undertakers. Given the nonlinear narrative, we could say the reader’s attention seesaws between two very different storylines, albeit with the same characters involved starting in Italy, 1928, we learn about the Gravetti family preparing to journey to America; with Buono, our main character, Luca, his father, and Isabella, his pregnant mother.

The second storyline follows the life of an adult Buono, his senile father, and his ambitious younger brother, Michael, as they navigate the difficulties of daily life as owners of a funeral home: Luca is out of his mind and believes they still live in Italy, and Buono and Michael fight over the future of the funeral home. And while Michael seeks to become more commercial and starts selling metal, mass-produced caskets, Buono still holds his father’s belief that an undertaker is working for God, and worrying more about giving the dead a dignified resting place than about making money. We follow Buono’s life as his devotion to his family is tested in many different ways.

“Face Painters” is exceptionally well written, and the author obviously has some fantastic writing abilities and knowledge of the craft. What gives this script its credibility and success is its characters. The author has done an excellent job at crafting individual voices and personalities for all of them. Their backstories are well thought out, deep, and integral to shaping the way they are in the present tense of the story.

The dialogue itself was superb. It’s difficult to write period dialogue because most authors end up using anachronous expressions that cheapen it. This is not the case for “Face Painters,” as every word, every phrase, every expression seems to be appropriate for the time and place on which every scene is set. The author also used the zeitgeist of the 60s to great effect, playing with cultural and racial divides; it added another layer to the script.

We found the final 50 pages of the script particularly well written. They’re full of drama, give great insights into the characters, and were a fantastic, and most importantly, a gripping read. The revelations surrounding Luca’s journey to America and Buono’s personal demons decades later were particularly effective plot points and had amazing payoffs in the end.

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The Monthly Film Festival

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