



The Movie Chicks

FORGIVING THE FRANKLINS

RATING 3.5 (out of 5)

(Director: Jay Floyd, Not Rated, 98 min) Our first screening - South By Southwest 2006 (Regional Premiere)

Movie Chick Cherry: "Jay Floyd doesn't need forgiveness for making this movie; he deserves a pat on the back – 3.5" (out of 5 stars)

The Franklins are a good Christian family – living repressed stifled lives like everyone else in their God-fearing little community. Frank (Roberson Dean) doesn't like discussing his private life with his co-workers; he and Betty (Teresa Willis) have regular sex, but it's mechanical, boring, and always done with their eyes shut tight. Their son Brian (Vince Pavia) is a football player who secretly listens to show tunes and daughter Caroline (Aviva) starves herself to be thin and prays to God about everything including getting her cheerleading moves right and she's angry when He doesn't answer her prayers. A freak accident on the way to the church bake sale injures Caroline and puts Frank, Betty, and Brian in a coma where they share the same near-death experience with Jesus (Pop DaSilva) who frees them from their original sin and shame. They wake up changed people – they don't want to make a big deal out of their "miracle", instead they start living their lives honestly and with passion. Frank and Betty open their eyes and have a sexual awakening (now that's a beautiful miracle) and Brian gets to have his first homosexual encounter, which he proudly shares with his parents to the mortification of his sister. Caroline is freaked out by what's happening to her family after their "divine intervention". Frank's co-workers are stunned as well (they think he's a sexual deviant, but don't have a problem taking his suggestions to try out at home). The ladies of the church's parent group feel compelled to ostracize Betty after the family walks out of Sunday service and Betty refuses to repent. Hardest hit is Betty's best friend Peggy (Mari Blackwell), who has secretly coveted their daughter since she hasn't been able to have children of her own. Peggy is extremely worried about the godless direction the Franklins are heading – she doesn't know if they should be forgiven or if more drastic measures need to be taken. On the surface, this dark comedy seems to be poking fun at the religious fundamentalists (which it is), but there's also an underlying message about honesty, living your life without shame, being who you are, and even about faith (although not the kind that comes from sitting in church every Sunday). And the message is more than just the fact that it's okay to do perverse things in bed, but it's not okay to talk about them in polite conversation. This film is bound to offend some people, remind others of people they know, and make the rest stop and think a little bit. It definitely has something to say – and at the same time it's funny. The cast delivers, especially the Franklins, who get to show life at the extremes of repression and freedom of expression.