

FILM REVIEW: ‘American’ Recounts Internment of Japanese-Americans during WWII

By Kam Williams
For The Skanner News

A couple of months after the attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066. In accordance with this directive, over 100,000 U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry were herded up and taken to internment camps for the duration of World War II.

“American,” though set in the present, revisits that shameful chapter in our history. It is appropriate that the poignant picture stars George Takei, best remembered as Lt. Sulu of Star Trek fame since, when he was five, he and his family were forced out of their home at gunpoint and relocated to parts unknown.

In American, he plays Clinton Nakamoto, a 94-year-old veteran who proudly served his country in WWII, despite having been shipped to a concentration camp on account of his Japanese heritage. At the point of departure, we find him volunteering at the Japanese-American National Museum as he recounts his unfortunate ordeal on U.S. soil to a visitor (Rachel Michiko Whitney) with an impressionable young daughter (Araceli Prasarttongsoth) in tow.



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As Clinton conducts an impromptu tour for them, we learn what life had been like for him when housed behind barbed wire. Ironically, he started every school day began with the Pledge of Allegiance to the country imprisoning him. Nevertheless, when he came of age, he opted to enlist in the army.

The plot thickens when the little girl shows him a picture of her grandfather, who had also been a member of the 442, a Japanese regiment which suffered very heavy casualties while fighting the Nazis overseas. The photo triggers a battlefield flashback in Clinton which ultimately leads to a couple of touching tableaux it would be unfair for me to spoil.

Directed by Richie Adams (“Of Mind and Music”), American is a character-driven drama which packs quite an emotional punch, given its duration of less than 18 minutes. Kudos to George Takei for this labor of love doubling as a very timely teachable moment about racial tolerance.

Excellent ★★★★★
Unrated
Running time: 18 minutes
Production Studio: River Road Creative
For more information, visit: www.americanshortfilm.com.
To see a trailer for American, visit TheSkanner.com.

Debbie Wooten & Ralph Porter to Perform at Harvey’s May 24 – 27

Co-headliners Debbie Wooten & Ralph Porter will perform at Harvey’s May 24 through 27, with six shows total.

Debbie Wooten pulls laughter from her own experiences of overcoming adversity (like being born with spina bifida, or contracting polio when she was five months old) and poking fun at things that she doesn’t understand. She has performed with Jamie Foxx, Louie Anderson, JJ Walker and Arsenio Hall. Her TV credits include “BET Comics A to Z,” “Nick at Nite Funniest Moms in America” and “Oprah.”

Born in San Francisco, California, Ralph Porter got his start doing stand-up comedy in Anchorage, Alaska. He became the first local comic to win the Anchorage Laugh Off Comedy Competition, three years straight. He’s worked with Sinbad, George Lopez, Tommy Davison and Mark Curry, among others. Porter has also performed on BET’s “One Mic Stand” and Bill Bellamy’s “Ladies Night Out Tour”.



Debbie Wooten



Ralph Porter

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precisely what transpires the night they decide to rob Cale Erendreich (David Tennant), a condescending snob whose multimillion-dollar mansion is located just minutes away from the bistro.

As soon as the filthy-rich heir enters the establishment, Sean drives off in his Maserati, leaving Derek behind to serve as lookout. While ransacking the place for valuables, he’s shocked to find a young woman (Kerry Condon) bound and gagged in a well-fortified, soundproof room.

But before he has a chance to help her, he gets an urgent call from Derek letting him know that Mr. Erendreich has finished his meal and is impatiently asking for his automobile. So, instead of freeing the captive, Sean simply leaves without taking anything. Trouble is, it doesn’t take Erendreich long to figure out who has trespassed on his property.

That is the intriguing point of departure of “Bad Samaritan,” a riveting thriller reminiscent of such suspense classics as “Psycho” (1960) and

“Silence of the Lambs” (1991). Directed by Dean Devlin (“Geostorm”), the pulse-pounding film features a talented cast which has expertly executed a captivating script guaranteed to keep you on the edge of your seat from start to finish.

An old-fashioned cat-and-mouse thriller with a frightening villain certain to haunt you long after you’ve left the theater.

Excellent ★★★★★
Rated R for violence, drug use, pervasive profanity and brief nudity
Running time: 111 min.



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