



Royal Faceoff

Diana is doing very
well in school...
That can be dangerous.

Starring

Alyssa Bernier Lesley Staples Carrie Lund
Niels Miller Greg Longenhagen Leanne Bramen

Directed by: Stuart M. Pepper

Produced by: Michael Sausville

www.royalfaceoff.com

Jackass Critics

Royal Faceoff Review (2005)

If anyone filmmakers have my respect it's the ones that make movies just because they love to make movies. These people, from the most to least talented, are at least making movies with passion and spirit. These are the people who make movies against all odds and because they simply have stories to tell. **Royal Faceoff** feels like one of those films. Unlike a lot of independent films these days, **Royal Faceoff** forgoes horror and indie kitsch comedy and aims directly for the family film market, a market that seems perfect for this film.

Diana is a cute teenager with an impossible dream – to have the Queen of England removed from all the world's coinage. Diana got this crazy notion while in a Civics class in high school, where her teacher, a relative to President Truman, gave her students the task of taking on a project to change the world. Diana takes this project to heart and, seeing how much of the world's money has the Queen's face on it, she decides to start an internet campaign to dethrone the royal matriarch from the money. Things go remarkably well after Diana sets up a website with an online petition about the money it appears that she's not alone in wanting new money. Her dream is to have cultural icons imprinted on the coinage so that the countries have a better feeling of ownership for their own money. Not everyone is happy with her plan though, as Diana begins to get some threatening emails from people who strongly disagree with her stance. Her family, very supportive of her campaign at first, begins to think that it's time to stop while she's ahead. Diana insists that these emails are the proof that she's on to something big here, that her idea is important. Her parents reluctantly agree but are still worried. When a man claiming to be royalty in Britain tells Diana he has something that could help her gain victory in her cause, she is skeptical but when the man is able to prove himself, she suddenly has a powerful ally and a way to win her cause. In order to change things though Diana must travel to England and confront the queen and plead her case, something she's willing to do, but may not be ready to do. But is England ready for her?

A cute comedy that seems tailor made for families, there is a lot to like in **Royal Faceoff**. The lead actress is very good in the role and brings a lot of energy to the film. The cast, while offering varying levels of skill, is all into the film and seems to give it everything they have. The movie is well directed, and has a simple charm that fits with the genre.

The big issue I had with the film was the length – it just felt a little long for a movie that's audience seems to be families and kids. Things bog down a little and I think the film could be tightened a little. The opening theme song I had a problem with as well. It's funny, but funny because it's so silly (a rap song about the movie) and runs so long that it wears out its welcome. The song can work, I think that it just need not have the vocals over the entirety of the opening credits.

Royal Faceoff is a clever movie, to be sure, and one I think that would fit perfectly for the family market. There are some funny bits, as well as some terribly corny ones, but there is a lot of heart in this film. Heck, even the director shows off his acting chops here and he ain't bad. I get the feeling too that this may not be the last adventure Miss Diana gets her family involved in, and if it can build from this film, I wouldn't mind that at all.

...C...

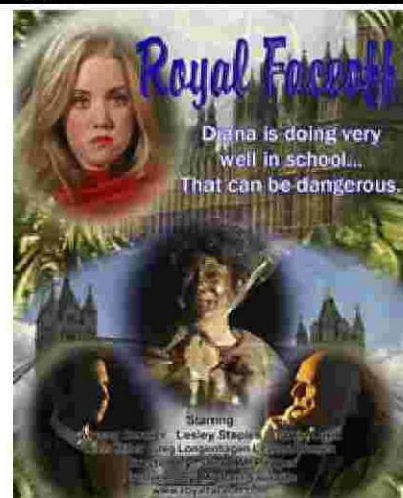


Rating: 6



Royal Faceoff (2006)

An odd-ball story both helps and hinders this film



Entertainmenttopia Rating

C Average

MPAA Rating

UNRATED

Movie Details

Release Studio:

Snappe' Production Company

Director:

Stuart M. Pepper

Producers:

Stuart M. Pepper

Starring:

Alyssa Bernier, Lesley Staples, Carrie Lund, Greg Longenhagen, Guy DiGiovanni, et. al.



Royal Faceoff, and independent picture from director Stu Pepper, is an intriguing picture with a unique, but odd story that sets a young girl, trying to change the world for the better, to London to challenge the crowned Queen of England to remove her image from all currency in the former British colonies and commonwealths. The premise is both good and bad for the film as its unique plot allows for some interesting story dynamics we've never seen before in a film, but the sheer odd-ball nature of it makes it almost impossible to take the film seriously at times because the suspension of disbelief is so great there's nothing real to grab on to.

The film opens up with one of the most cheese-tacular opening songs of all time relaying the events of the film (a version also closes up the movie providing an ending summation), but as you progress through the movie its hard to determine if the production is progressing with tongue planted firmly in the co-screenwriter's cheeks or if most of the film was written with a straight face. There are some points in the film where the actors really overstep and try to hard to create some artificial humor, which makes you laugh, but for all the wrong reasons.

The storyline itself could be interpreted two ways, as either a satire of the American tendency to overstep our international bounds and make unneeded changes to countries we have no business meddling with, or a simple feel good family-type comedy one is likely to find on ABC Family on a Friday night. The film works out far better with the former rather than the latter. There are also some curious subplots about Diana and her family being direct descendents of the infamous traitor Benedict Arnold and the Queen's love letters to former President Truman. Added into the whole, these subplots don't seem to gel entirely with the rest of the production.

Pepper and co-writer Michael Sausville's scripted dialog ranges from witty in parts to downright groan inducing in others, especially when the lead character's parents are interacting with her, the quick cuts and dialog play host to some inconsistencies and have a "home-movie" feel to them at times making themselves more obvious than they need to be. Coupled that with two very awkward montages, one of Diana, in a bikini, listening to her boyfriend play on his guitar and the other as an introduction montage to London in which we are treated to still pictures of the roofs of buildings, and you can see how the movie can feel awkward at times.

It's a shame because Pepper's direction is spot on in some instances with some great perspective shots and use of existing sets. You can tell the film was done with a minimal budget (especially since London looks conspicuously like southern Florida), but this doesn't really detract from the film. What do distract the viewer is the Gandhi-inspired flashbacks where both Diana and her dad, curiously, share the same visions but more than one of them go on for far too long to the point where it looks like the film is being padded out, and the fact that this is a very dialog heavy film with no action shots to break anything up and give the viewer some reprieve throughout its nearly two hour runtime.

I certainly don't want it to sound like I hated this film, far from it; it's a curious, but interesting movie that has great ambitions but maybe not the script and budget to back up those ideas to their full potential. As mentioned before, examining it as a satire of the American culture, even if it was never intended to be held in such light, opens up a realm of possibilities for the feature. As a family-centric piece about a young girl whose class assignment gets a little out of hand, it's an adequate vehicle for young girls as an inspirational piece. The film isn't for everyone, and ambition might have been bigger than execution here, but Pepper has a keen eye and seems adept at working with a minimal budget, so here's looking forward to the next from him and his team.

- **Erich Becker** takes his royal face off.

- [Posted: 2007-02-22]

