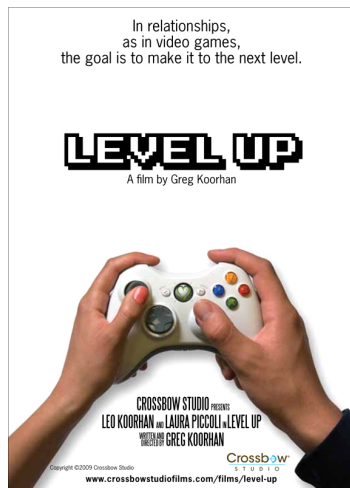


Film Reviews: Level Up (2010) - By Duane L. Martin



Tim (Leo Koorhan) and Maggie (Laura Piccoli) are two high schoolers who've bonded together over their mutual love of video games, which they sit around and play together virtually every day. They're extremely close friends, but that's all, just friends... right? Does life ever work that way?

Enter Amanda (Mia Vallet), the high school's hottest girl and the object of Tim's wishful lust. She also happens to be one of those worthless human beings who uses their looks to get people to do stuff for her. In this case, she gets all flirty with Tim and talks him into helping her study for her computer science test, and he falls for it like a lovesick puppy, which leads to Maggie discovering her true feelings for Tim once the jealousy sets in, and Tim learning a hard lesson about life and about how cruel people like Amanda can be, but is it too late for Tim and Maggie? Will they end up together at the end, or has it ruined their relationship forever? You'll have to watch the film to find out.

Level Up is a short coming in at just 22 minutes, which is just perfect for the story. Everything about this film screams professionalism, from the acting to the camera shots to the editing. Even the DVD packaging is incredibly well designed and the DVD itself is very high quality and has one of the nicest quality labels I've ever seen on a DVD release.

As for the story, it comes off as being very realistic. The relationship between Maggie (who's a wonderfully natural actress, by the way) feels like a real friendship. Tim came off as the shy, awkward, nerdy type around Amanda, while at the same time toning it down considerably with Maggie, who he was far more comfortable with. Basically, the relationships all came off as natural and appropriate to the characters. The only thing I could even remotely think to ding this film on would be that Tim could be hard to understand at times because he'd get rather subdued in his speech. Other than that, everything was excellent from a production and story standpoint.

What I really loved is the naturalness of the relationship between Tim and Maggie. I'm sure a lot of people will find them easy to identify with, as the story of their relationship is likely not an uncommon one, nor is it uncommon to run into stuck-up, user bitches like Amanda, who I'm sure we all went to high school with as well. Add that to the fact that Tim, and especially Maggie are both very likeable and you have a winning combination that would appeal to nearly everyone across a wide spectrum of demographics. Simply put, this is one of those golden films with a mass appeal that you don't come across very often, but when you do, you definitely remember them.

The film was written and directed by Greg Koorhan, and from this example of his work, I'd say he has an incredibly bright future ahead of him as a film maker, and I'd love to see what he comes out with in the future. Two years have passed between his previous short and this one. Hopefully it won't be two more years before we see something new from this incredibly talented film maker.

You can find out more about this film, or check out the previous short from Greg called "Tripping Up" on the Crossbow Studio website at <http://www.crossbowstudiofilms.com>. Tripping Up! also stars Leo Koorhan and Laura Piccoli and is a very cute film in its own right, so be sure to check it out while you're there!