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11
MINUTES
AGO

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(2006-05-19)

2006, Un-rated, 83 minutes

[CREDITS](#)



I've written a number of reviews over the years, and frankly it's not all that fun. I either have to be A) Inspired by a good film, B) Inspired by a really awful film, or C) feel guilty for not writing something when someone was nice enough to send me to a screening. Well, I've got one for you that fits into that "A" category. And this is extra cool because I am one of only a handful of people who've seen this little Indie pic. A couple weeks ago I had the pleasure of screening Bob Gebert's new film "11 Minutes Ago" at my fashionable Van Nuys pad. I

had heard months ago that Bob had shot an entire feature film all in one day, and I was curious to say the least. After much needling, Bob finally popped over one day with a DVD still warm from the burner.

I'll say straight away that "11 Minutes Ago" is a tight and crafty little time-travel romance. Once again, shot in its entirety in one day, and in one location, it is the story of a man named Pack, played by Ian Michaels, who travels from 48 years in the future to collect air samples. Seems the air in 2050 is even worse than the air in 2006, so he needs to collect some for replication. Pack quite accidentally winds up at a wedding reception, where he meets a cute girl-next-door type (Christina Mauro) who's in charge of the festivities. Pack is immediately smitten, and is compelled to pursue her. Problem is he can only stay for 11 minutes at a time before he has to go back to the future, as it were. To make matters worse, he has to wait 3 months in between his jumps, affording him plenty of time to think about that mysterious girl from the party. The film is quite engaging from the first frame, and the layered story peels away like an onion. Even when you think you might be getting confused, and worried about losing your place (which can happen with this genre) it becomes obvious that the confusion is intentional, and that you are in the hands of a clever storyteller. Gebert has worked himself into the film as the director of the wedding video crew, which is in fact the real camera crew, adding another nice little dimension to the film. Many of the other characters have their own drama going on,



notably the frazzled and bitchy bride, handily portrayed by Taryn Reneau, which serves as a solid background for the main story. Further testament to Gebert's writing skill is the fact that he did manage, in today's storytelling climate, to weave an interesting, compelling story without the use of guns, blood, or naked body parts (admittedly three things I don't have much problem with) while still appealing to an adult but kid-friendly audience.

Interestingly enough Bob did not study writing formally, but rather got into acting after performing for many years as a professional magician in Houston. After a stint in New York studying acting, and writing numerous plays for what he terms the "Under-Off-Broadway Circuit," he actually gave up on that whole scene and went back to Texas, where he got involved in community theater, finally ending up at a dinner theater called Renata's--really more of a restaurant with a stage at one end. He spent eight years there as writer and artistic director, developing his sense of story through over 600 performances. Bob ultimately came out to The Wood to try his hand at the screenwriting game. The inspiration for "11 Minutes Ago" came after reading a book by Dov S-S Simens called "From Reel to Deal." Simens posited that to make a really down and dirty feature, one could shoot eight 11-minute real-time takes, and badda-bing, you got a feature; he was struck by this idea, which played into his dinner theater experience-- SCENE/salad/SCENE/dinner/SCENE/dessert--and he thought that if anyone could pull that off, he might just be the guy. And pulled it off he has.

While we are on the subject of the time travel story, it reminds me that just about every writer in Hollywood (myself included) has that time-travel script bouncing around town, or collecting dust in a drawer. I've got to give the filmmakers props for giving life to this story. I think this is the type of film that is likely to improve upon repeated viewings, which reminded me of another recent no-budget time-travel picture called "Primer," which I found to be a little too cold and cerebral to inspire the much-needed second or third viewing to unravel the complicated plotline. Gebert's film has a warm sweetness to it that tends to "invite" rather than "demand" another look. I hope this little underdog flick can buck the system and get a distributor, it definitely deserves a shot.

