



**DOG DAYS OF SUMMER** is a March, 2016 dvd addition to the Hugh Stouppe Memorial Library of the Heritage United Methodist Church of Ligonier, Pennsylvania. Below is Kino Ken's review of that dvd.

**15 of a possible 20 points**

**\*\*\*\* of a possible \*\*\*\***

**United States (North Carolina) 2007 color 88 minutes live action feature drama**  
**Dog Days Entertainment / Dog Days Film LLC / Highway 9 Films / Tamiami Films /**  
**The Film Foundry Producers: Jason Behrman, Mark Freiburger**

**Key: \*indicates outstanding technical achievement or performance**  
**(j) designates a juvenile performer**

**Points:**

- 2 Direction: Mark Freiburger\***
- 2 Editing: Jonathan Olive**
- 1 Cinematographer: Rob Givens**
- 0 Lighting: Chase Livengood**
- 2 Screenplay: Travis Beacham and Christopher Waild from a story by Mark Freiburger**  
**Script Supervisor: Mohammad Elsherif**  
**Music Editing: Anthony Short\***
- 2 Music: Rob Pottorf\*, Andrew McKenna\*, Jon Miller Whitney\***
- 2 Production Design: Andrew Cappella**  
**Art Direction: Jeff Leidersdorff**  
**Set Decoration: Christopher Baker**  
**Costume Design: Hannah Ashford**  
**Makeup: Holly Sago**  
**Props: Amanda Deibert**
- 0 Sound Design: Paul Mariaio**  
**Supervising Sound Editor / Dialogue Editor: Will Howard**  
**Sound Effects: Zach Sievers**  
**Sound Recording: David Price, Zachary Rivenbark**

**Sound Mixer: Will Vernon**

**Sound Rerecording Mixers: Christian Cooke, Anthony Short, Andrew Tay**

**Casting: Nick Conti\*, Mike Liotta\***

**2 Acting**

**2 Creativity**

**15 total points**

**Cast: Will Patton (Eli Cottonmouth), Devon Gearhart\* (j) (Phillip Walden), Colin Ford\* (j) (Jackson Patch), Richard Herd (Frank Cooper), Gregory Alan Williams (Sheriff Lem Baker), Colin Key (Phil Walden as an adult / Narrator / B-Movie Director), Wayne Crawford\* (Quincy Patch, Jackson's dad), R. Keith Harris (Pastor Salem / Marty), Jessica Webb (Camille Ross), Paul Silver (Brock Walden, Phillip's brother), Mark Joy (Chuck Walden, Phillip's dad), Megan Blake (May Walden, Phillip's sister), Richard Fullerton (The General), Patricia Herd (Marilyn Rockwell, proprietress of store / soda fountain), Joe Inscoe (Doc Rockwell, Marilyn's husband), Bonnie Johnson (Martha), George Lee (register clerk), Logan Fahey (Chip Robinson), John Becker (Rudd Bentley), Anne Dale (Mrs. Patch, deceased), Annie Baker (hot blonde number), Amanda Diebert (Linda), Rob Givens (B-Movie cameraman), Ted Johnson (townsperson), others**

**Mark Freiburger traveled as a teen to Edenton, North Carolina in order to watch a baseball game. A few years later he returned to direct his first feature film in that same scenic town on the Atlantic seaboard. It had made a huge impression on him, not entirely a positive one.**

**The story unfolded in this film, DOG DAYS OF SUMMER, is a drama of insider secrets. When a stranger arrives proposing to build a special souvenir for the bisecquicentennial of Edenton's founding, locals regard him with a mix of amusement, astonishment, and admiration. Eli Cottonmouth employs the folksy advertising pitch of a veteran patent medicine seller. He has something rather different, however, planned for this community. It's a secret, not to be disclosed until the festive day itself.**

**Two boys of about nine and ten years of age find Eli equally hypnotic and repellent. He's different from anyone they encountered before, an irresistible novelty. Eli returns their interest, endowing them with a bulky antique camera to record whatever in the area they think remarkable.**

**Wow. This newfound license is the best thing which has happened to them so far that summer. With no school and scanty adult supervision, Phillip Walden and Jackson Patch have plenty of time to scour streets, gardens, and waterfront, especially since they add unapproved nocturnal excursions to their itineraries.**

**It seems Eli has more in mind than just an art project. Asking for a private room in Town Hall to work and store materials, he uses his sanctuary chiefly as a photo development**

darkroom, asserting he needs pictures of Edenton in order to create his commemorative masterpiece for residents. No one sees him actually sculpting or modelling. So just what is he up to?

Tracking Eli's footsteps doesn't yield any revelations for the boys about their benefactor's activities. It does lead them to several shocking situations where, like Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn, they observe unsettling violence. Ultimately, Phillip's naivete is destroyed. He must choose whether or not to become one more cynical repository for unsavory secrets. So many apparently respectable people in town have already committed misdemeanors or serious crimes. These surely ought to haunt their consciences. They raise significant issues about behavior and responsibility.

What is the purpose of life? How should it be lived? Is life only a span of time for grabbing as much as you can for yourself?

Who can the pair of boys adopt as role models? Mysterious, ironical Eli? Quincy Patch, the short-fused, blind, embittered father of Jackson? Their minister, who preaches concern and charity yet is himself deeply enmeshed in unconfessed sins?

Trying to make sense of their discoveries, Phillip and Jackson must rely upon their own consciences and nascent social principles to find any kind of solution to betrayals by the very people in their lives granted guardianship authority over them. Even more damaging, Eli's gift becomes a fatal trap, paralleling a simultaneous experience of adult Edentonians witnessing the formal unveiling of Eli's model.

Recounting these childhood memories is Phillip as a young adult, electing to shoot his first film back in a hometown slated for imminent submersion in water, its nasty mysteries finally washed away forever. Phillip has grown, changed, become pessimistic about the future. His initial reaction to Edenton's decay over the years reinforces propensity for gloominess. Eli's judgment about the moral depravity lurking under the surface there is reflected in abandoned, overgrown ruins. If Edenton vanishes, it will be good riddance.

However, there were also, once upon a time, many pleasures to be experienced growing up there. Should they also be forgotten, buried in the past?

DOG DAYS OF SUMMER poses intriguing questions about how to respond to inequities, biases, and bullyings that must be endured. Should they be exposed, corrected, punished? Is suffering in silence and becoming a martyr an ideal policy? Would it be better to speak out, however painful the results? Can healing ever occur without offsetting agony? What does Edenton need more, celebration or renewal? Contriteness or eradication?

The film evidences amateur recording gaffes resulting in inaudible whisperings of dialogue and roaring operatic music. Nonetheless, performances by Devon Gearhart, a progressively disillusioned, cherubim-faced Phillip, and by Colin Ford as intelligent, mischievous, extrovert Jackson keep it grounded in reality. Their conversations are perceptive, utilizing vocabulary appropriate to their ages and situations, something not always practiced by screenwriters

scripting for juveniles. Wayne Crawford's guilt-ridden, sight-deprived Quincy Patch is also commendably nuanced.

Too frequently, lighting is marred by overexposures and nebulous backgrounds. This is a reflection of both crew inexperience and uncooperative nature. Interiors are sometimes underlit as well.

Tension is built skillfully through music cues and sustained, building to an unanticipated climax. A story with three key twists, each likely to dumbfound audiences, is formidably underpinned by a score alternating effectively between communicating suppressed anxieties and releasing uncorked passions.

DOG DAYS OF SUMMER's screenplay is likewise dodgy and astute, casual pleasantries giving way to penetrating insights as Edenton's dirty linen surfaces in later scenes. By postponing major reveals until characters have been well established, writers insure optimal uncertainty in viewers, keeping them guessing about ultimate outcomes until the final climactic tandem of disasters occurs.

Approved by the Dove Foundation for adolescents aged twelve and older, DOG DAYS OF SUMMER should prove a haunting experience to anyone at least fourteen years of age. Younger adolescents may be intolerant of its gathering gloom and complex characterizations. Lacking clear villains or a unique problem demanding resolution, this film is most appropriate for older youths and adults tolerant of moral ambiguities and human frailty. For them, Mark Freiburger's drama is an enriching, valuable excursion into the shadowlands of small town America.