

"Let's sleep in gas station lavatories..." - Pink Flamingos (1972)



REVIEWS

EVENHAND

by Merle Bertrand
(2003-03-26)



★★★★

2002, Un-rated, 93 Minutes,

[OFFICIAL SITE](#) [CREDITS](#)

"You can't be a friend to everyone." That's not only a song featured in director Joseph Pierson's painfully realistic cop drama "Evenhand," but a mantra that should be adopted by its lead characters, patrol cops Ted Morning (Bill Sage) and Rob Francis (Bill Dawes).



With sexy and stylish cop dramas such as "CSI" and "NYPD Blue" all the rage these days, "Evenhand" offers up a considerably more, well, evenhanded view of life with a badge. That's because its protagonists are the types of ordinary patrol cops that make up the majority of our police departments; the blue collar men and women in uniform who respond to humdrum calls dealing with domestic disputes, noise disturbances and delinquent kids. While Officer Francis, a transfer from across town trying to come to terms with a recent divorce, is a straight laced, by the books cop, his new partner Morning, who's been on the streets long enough to develop a healthy cynical shell, searches for anything to break up the monotonous petty affairs to which they're forced to respond.

"Evenhand" doesn't offer much in the way of a single overarching narrative. Instead, this film rolls along from one recurring episode to another; the storylines of the characters on Officers Francis and Morning's beat evolving as they do. The result is a sort of feature length version of "COPS," or "CHIPS" with more of a gallows sense of humor, if that's even possible. The most fascinating part of the film is watching the officers' character arcs intersect, then reverse until each cop occupies the emotional territory previously occupied by his partner. Whereas Francis transforms from a naive neophyte of the streets to a pragmatic pro, for instance, Morning allows himself to become emotionally involved with a troubled but charismatic street kid, with moving and ultimately tragic results.

The best independent films are those which either tell those stories never before told, or those that tell those old stories in a fresh new manner. What makes "Evenhand" such a powerful cop movie, as well as a moving and affecting human drama, is that it illuminates the life of a patrol cop in ways rarely seen on network television or Hollywood in general. "Evenhand" simply represents the best of what independent film has to offer.
