

MOVIE REVIEW

# Horror sequel *ABCs Of Death 2* settles into its anthology format, offering only a few duds

By [Keith Uhlich](#) [@keithuhlich](#)  
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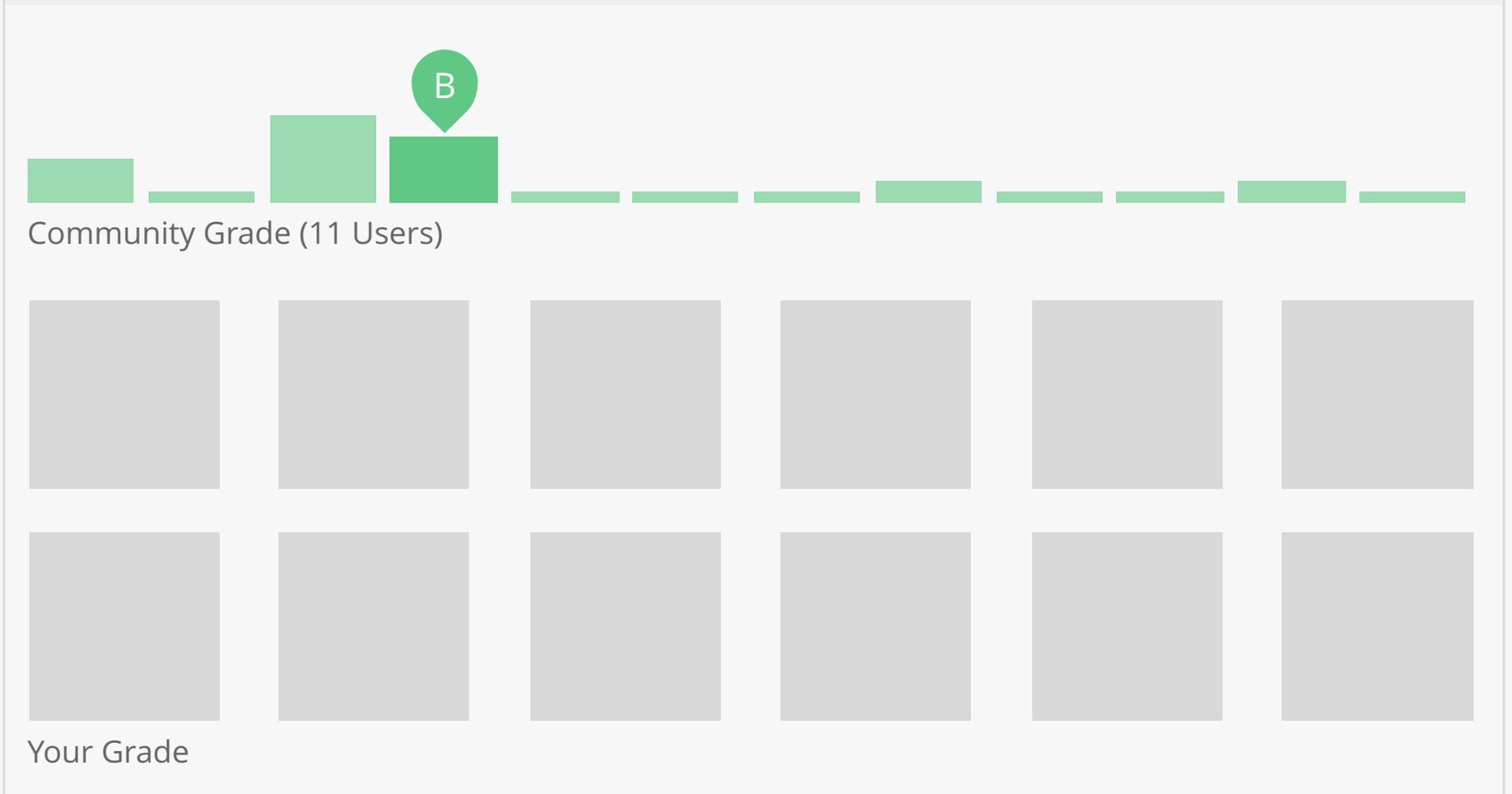


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## ABCs Of Death 2

**Director:** Rodney Ascher, Julian Barratt, 28 others  
**Runtime:** 125 minutes  
**Rating:** Not rated  
**Cast:** Béatrice Dalle, Laurence R. Harvey, Jack Fessenden



Omnibus features are by their nature uneven, so it's to the benefit of the *ABCs Of Death* series that the creative constraints (26 short horror films, each one pegged to a specific letter of the alphabet) encourage brevity. Not one of the works in this [anthology movie sequel](#) cracks 10 minutes, so they barely have time to overstay their welcome. It helps that there are only a few real duds, and that the producers have culled talent from around the globe (including the U.S., France, U.K., Nigeria, Japan, and the Philippines), which allows viewers insight into the ways different cultures approach such a thematically rich genre.

Naturally, a number of the writer-directors are just out to have some gory fun: The omnibus begins with a blackly humorous bit of cruelty from *Cheap Thrills* helmer E.L. Katz ("A Is For Amateur"), which details the travails of a particularly inept assassin. (If nothing else, it explodes the prevalent movie myth about the pristine cleanliness of high-rise ventilation shafts.) This sets the darkly comic tone for most of the shorts, the dual nadir of which are Jim Hosking's "G Is For Grandad" (little more than a laborious setup for a shrunken-genitals punchline) and Todd Rohal's "P Is For P-P-P-P Scary!" (a self-consciously irritating Three Stooges/Abbott & Costello homage about a trio of escaped

convicts lost in a hellish dark cave).

There are entries where concept far outshines execution (as in Jen and Sylvia Soska's amateurish feminist manifesto "T Is For Torture Porn") and some that seem like little more than vehicles for heavy-handed politicizing (for example, Aharon Keshales and Navot Papushado's Israel-Palestine cri de coeur "F Is For Falling"). Still others outright offend: Juan Martinez Moreno's "S Is For Split" is an impeccably crafted split-screen thriller that unfortunately plays into all sorts of rancidly homophobic stereotypes. But it doesn't cast much of a pall since it's been preceded by Dennison Ramalho's "J Is For Jesus," in which the queerness of its protagonists is a bloodily blessed event.

Among the highlights is Robert Morgan's "D Is For Deloused," a gorgeous stop-motion nightmare in which an executed man is brought back to life by a ravenous insect so he can exact revenge on his killers. The ever-nutty Bill Plympton, meanwhile, revels in the gender-war grotesqueries of the animated "H Is For Head Games," about a man and woman whose smooches get increasingly sanguine. Steven Kostanski has a lot of fun spoofing 1980s action-figure commercials in "W Is For Wish," as two young boys' *He-Man*-esque sword-and-sorcery fantasy goes horribly, perversely wrong. And there's something strangely potent about Lancelot Imasuen's "L Is For Legacy," a frenzied ritual-sacrifice fable with delightfully DIY digital effects. Best in show, though, goes to *Inside* directors Julien Maury and Alexandre Bustillo's "X Is For Xylophone," starring the luminously sinister Béatrice Dalle as a woman so upset by her granddaughter's off-key instrument playing that... well, let's just say she's got plenty of literal bones to pick.

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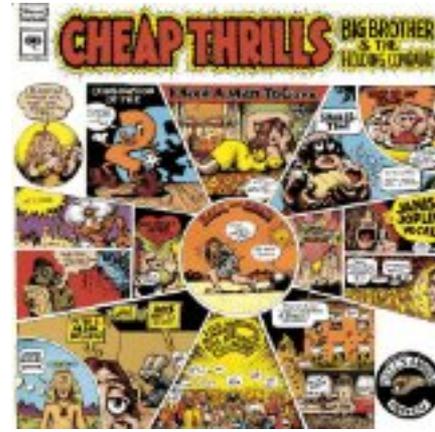


## Available at Amazon



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[Cheap Thrills](#)

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