



**\$STACK\$ - WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY:** Gerald Webb

**STARRING:** Mark Christopher Lawrence, Diahnna Nicole Baxter, Calvin Winbush, Jamie Burton-Oare, Tarnue Massaquoi and Jadarrel Belser **OFFICIAL WEBSITE:** [www.StacksMovie.com](http://www.StacksMovie.com)



With a face that screams out "Hey, I know that guy!," *\$STACK\$* lead Mark Christopher Lawrence (*NBC's Chuck*, *The Pursuit of Happyness*, *Fear of a Black Hat*) sets the tone early in writer/director Gerald Webb's entertaining and unexpectedly thoughtful short film for which Lawrence snagged himself a 2021 Daytime Emmy Nomination.

*\$STACK\$* kicks off with a sense of menace, a dimly lit lower-level garage setting offering a claustrophobic feel as two rivals, perhaps gangs, meet up to close a deal that promises to change lives. It's clear that Lawrence's Hector and Diahnna Nicole Baxter's Magdalena have a history, though before now both had moved on and there's a tension that makes you wonder where exactly all of this could possibly go.

If you're paying attention, audio and visual clues abound indicating where all of this is going. However, the odds are fairly strong you're going to miss them because Webb doesn't show his cards too early here and this ensemble cast is a mighty fine one that refuses to let you believe anything but where your mind is taking you.

*\$STACK\$* has already screened at nearly 20 indie fests and is the kind of indie short that fest audiences love with a unique blend of being both genuinely entertaining and remarkably thoughtful. The truth is that *\$STACK\$* doesn't go where you expect it to go and instead turns into an insightful film that takes a look at the contemporary state of society and engagingly tackles cultural and racial stereotypes. As the closing credits were rolling, even I found myself asking myself "Why did I assume this film was going in a certain direction?"

If I'm being honest, I'm not sure I like my answer.

The film has picked up several prizes including five awards at Idyllwild International Festival of Cinema (Directing, Screenplay, Ensemble cast, Lead Actor), Best International Short Film at International Cilento Film Festival, Outstanding Comedic Short at The Mischeaux Film Festival and others including, of course, Lawrence's Emmy Nomination.

Webb is a Daytime Emmy Award nominee himself and recipient of multiple Telly Awards whose work may be most recognizable for his long history with iconic indie studio the Asylum where he became Director of Talent and massively diversified the studio's output with tremendous success. His work here is inspired, an inspired script complementing Webb's ultra-stylized filmmaking that becomes far more substantial, and funny, than you ever expect.

Of course, it also helps to have a tremendous ensemble cast and that's very much the case here. The immensely talented Lawrence is an absolute delight and Baxter matches him note-for-note. Baxter co-created, co-wrote, and starred in *SATACRACY 88*, the first web series to win an Emmy Award. The rest of the ensemble also truly shines here and there's not a false note played.

Thomas Hennessy's lensing gives *\$STACK\$* a tight, ominous feel early on before segueing quite naturally as the film's story plays out. Kudos as well to Knappy for a spot-on original score and for Jeff Murphy's precise but patient editing.

*\$STACK\$* may not go where you expect it to go, but by the end you'll be absolutely delighted when you get there. Behind Webb's strong writing and direction and a terrific ensemble cast and crew, *\$STACK\$* is a film to watch for at a festival near you.

**Reviewed by Richard Propes**  
**The Independent Critic**

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