

Auto Focus



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In the 1960's one of the top rated TV shows of the time was a comedy about the unusual subject of a prisoner of war camp in Nazi Germany. The show was the story was about a group of prisoners in Stalag 13 whose mission was to conduct secret operations behind enemy lines. It was known as Hogan's Heroes. The film Auto Focus is not about this television show but about its star who found himself in the public's eye and being held up to public as the example of the ideal family man. His life and his actions were anything but ideal.

Bob Crane, played by Greg Kinnear, was addicted to both sex and pornography. Together with his friend John Carpenter (William Dafoe), Bob Crane not only engaged in his addiction, but he documented his acts using early video recorders and his amateur photography.

While the film Auto Focus approaches its subject somewhat light heartedly, it does an excellent job of exploring the pain and sadness that such addictions bring to the family. It pictures a life going out of control. Because the movie is graphic in its depiction of Cranes life the movie is not for the easily offended. Bob Crane was murdered. He was struck from behind with a video-camera tripod stand. The film is not going to answer the question of 'by whom;' that guilt has never been successfully determined. I found the film interesting and disturbing at the same time. The film was attacked and condemned by one of Bob Crane's two surviving sons. His other son has a small cameo in the movie and provided some documentation and advice to the filmmakers. For a while he even opened up a paid website and made some of his father's films and photos available for viewing. Auto Focus is not an easy film to watch. Much of the film takes place while Hogan's Heroes was still filming and the light hearted comedy of the recreated scenes from the show provides a strange juxtaposition between what the public saw of the man and the reality of darkness that his life was becoming.

Posted by Keith C. on March 6, 2014

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