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Hitchcock

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Hitchcock in *Girl Meets World*

The work of Alfred Hitchcock was not only revolutionary for his time, but it transcends the test of time and inspires film and television today. Most recently, I watched an episode of the new Disney Channel television program *Girl Meets World*. It is a reboot of a classic Disney Channel program called *Boy Meets World*, and it picks up present day with the main character, Cory Matthews, and his wife Topanga (also from *Boy Meets World*) as adults and their two children Riley and Auggie. Now, you may be thinking, "What does *Girl Meets World*, a Disney Channel sitcom, have to do with Alfred Hitchcock?" and that is an excellent question. The answer in general is: nothing. But there was a particular episode in the first season of *Girl Meets World* that parodied *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, which I greatly appreciated. Now, I do not view *Girl Meets World* as a particularly quality television program and if you have extra time on your hands I would not necessarily recommend it; its audience is primarily young children, but it has just enough throwbacks and cameos to also appeal to the original, now adult audience of its forefather. But this episode redeemed the show a bit in my eyes because the writers clearly took a chance to include their cult classic appreciation of Alfred Hitchcock in this appropriately spooky Halloween episode.

Disney loves to do themed episodes. So naturally, when Halloween approached, they took the opportunity to film a 'scary' episode of *Girl Meets World*, entitled "Girl Meets Word: Of Terror". This Hitchcock parody was not the A plot of the episode, but rather the B plot, and it was understated, but it was there, linking together the episode as a whole. Matthews' youngest child, Auggie, who is somewhere around the age of six or seven, plays the Hitchcockian host. But this episode is framed like an episode of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, and it is wonderfully done. The episode opens to eerie music and the camera slowly pans down a purplish-black curtain with bats cutout on it to a coffin, out of which Auggie emerges. It is reminiscent in the best way of some of the strange manners in which Hitchcock opened the episodes of his show. Auggie promptly breaks the fourth wall and addresses the audience with "a joke and a poke in the sponsor's eye" (Sullivan 214) just like Hitchcock did, including his British accent: "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to my Halloween Scary Time Theatre. My name is Auggie and I'll be your ghost." Just the kind of cheesy pun Hitchcock would have used himself, only to be interrupted by his mom Topanga walking into the room and turning on the lights, thus pushing the episode right along.

But the best homage to Hitchcock comes six minutes later in the episode, when we return to Auggie. There is a "silhouette self-portrait" (Sullivan 214) drawn on a canvas and a shadowed Auggie steps into it, just like Hitchcock always did, protruding his belly and lips to fill the Hitchcockian outline that his childish shape can't do naturally, which he justifies by insisting it was created by "too much candy". It is adorably hilarious and the perfect nod to the true master of suspense. Auggie

sums up what we've learned so far in the A plot of the episode and introduces the next scary adventure that awaits. The final scene we're left with another seven minutes later is Auggie concluding the episode and highlighting the moral, much like Hitchcock would do at the end of each *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* episode.

What struck me so much about this episode is how the writers were able to have fun with it and pay tribute to the great Alfred Hitchcock, while still catering to the strict rules that Disney requires. I would wager that not many people of the current generation and/or the audience of *Girl Meets World* are at all familiar with *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and were probably significantly confused by the setup of the Halloween episode. But the writers knew that the parents of the children might either be watching with their children or glimpse parts of the episode in passing and that it would appeal to the older generations (or those crazy, yet younger Hitchcock cult followers like myself) watching the show. I appreciate that Hitchcock has transcended time and was carried over into this episode of a modern day children's show because hopefully some of the child viewers will be introduced to and educated about Hitchcock after that episode. Hopefully some of the parents or babysitters that watched this episode with them will take the time to talk about how revolutionary Hitchcock was and how his influence even spills over to Disney Channel. Or if those children don't learn about Hitchcock now, maybe one day when they are taking a Hitchcock course in college, they will flash back to this particular episode of *Girl Meets World* and appreciate it much more than they originally did.