

## Damning DVD recalls rise and fall of legendary GOP Hatchet Man

Written by DVD Review by Kam Williams

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*Boogie Man: The Lee Atwater Story*

Harvey Leroy 'Lee' Atwater (1951-1991) was barely out of his teens when he burst onto the political scene in South Carolina in the early Seventies. Back then, the guitar-playing wunderkind loved the blues almost as much as he did serving as a consultant to conservatives during election campaigns.

A protégé of Strom Thurmond, he learned the tricks of the trade at the feet of an inveterate racist who once swore that blood would run in the streets of his state before he would allow integration. Thurmond, in fact, was such a hypocrite that he remained a bigot even after fathering a child with a 15 year-old Black servant.

As for Atwater, he devoted most of his days to denying African-Americans equal rights. And while he might have repented shortly before succumbing to brain cancer, that 11th-hour confession did little to undo the damage he had inflicted on minorities as the architect of the Reagan revolution.

For Atwater was a scoundrel who believed that anything goes in politics, so he felt it was okay to lie, cheat, make up fake opinion polls and generally tell the people what they wanted to hear and in order to prevail. He is probably best known for having masterminded the infamous Willie Horton ad which turned the tide in the 1988 presidential race in favor of Bush over Michael Dukakis.

Atwater's reward for having erased a 17-point deficit en route to the White House was his being

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named Chairman of the Republican National Committee. Understanding the power of the visual image, Lee fervently believed that “perception is reality,” so he was not above manipulating folks to vote against their own interests by serving them a pack of lies. Rationalizing that all that mattered was power, he single-handedly transformed U.S. politics into a series of tabloid moments.

His reign came to an abrupt end upon his dire diagnosis in 1990, but by then Atwater protégé Karl Rove was already well versed in all of his Machiavellian tactics. On his death bed, Atwater found religion and repented, going out of his way to apologize to every individual whose reputation he’d smeared, including Willie Horton.

Before he passed away, he released a statement which proved he had undergone a spiritual catharsis: “My illness helped me to see that what was missing in society is what was missing in me: a little heart, a lot of brotherhood.” Too bad that message was totally lost on Rove.

A fascinating, warts-and-all documentary about one of the most notorious and influential figures in 20th Century politics.

Excellent (4 stars)

Unrated

Running time: 86 minutes

Studio: InterPositive Media/Passion River Films

DVD Extras: Deleted scenes, MSN and other additional interviews, unpublished photographs, theatrical trailer, discussion guide and additional biographical info.

To order a copy of Boogie Man, visit: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

To see a trailer of Boogie Man, visit: [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)