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dinosaur mummy



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# Secrets of the Dinosaur Mummy

(Special -- Sun. Sept. 14, 9 p.m.)

By BRIAN LOWRY

Produced by MidCanada Entertainment and Myth Merchant Films.

Talk about "something for everybody" promotional hooks: Discovery presents a "CSI"-style investigation into remarkably well-preserved dinosaur remains, with the principle highlight being that Leonardo -- the nickname for a 77-million-year-old duck-billed dinosaur unearthed in Montana -- was found still covered in skin, with much of his digestive system intact. Dinosaur enthusiasts will surely want to check out the channel's latest CGI-augmented walk with these oversized beasts, while others might just watch to see an interesting but undeniably peculiar hour.

Why peculiar? Because smack in the middle, the amateur paleontologists that discovered the 20-foot, herbivore, Nate and Matt Murphy, "leave the project amid allegations of theft after federal authorities seize a new species of Raptor valued at more than \$200,000," as the narrator explains. Yet with that, they drive into the sunset and are barely mentioned again, which is just flat-out weird.

Granted, sifting through Brachylophosaurus bones, guts and skin is the featured attraction, but it's hard not to feel a little incomplete simply dropping any further discussion of the Murphys -- even though the alleged crime is unrelated to the investigation at hand.

As is, the scientists forge ahead, gasping over every revelation, with wild-bearded Robert T. Bakker --who bears a more-than-passing resemblance to John Carradine -- describing the chance to sift through prehistoric intestines "a religious experience." Indeed, the subject matter practically guarantees that the hour will contain fascinating elements, and you're half waiting for somebody to hypodermically suck out a few DNA strands out of the corpse and clone him, a la "Jurassic Park."

That cinematic point of reference also reminds us that there's ultimately at least as much creative packaging as paleontology at work here -- especially in the producers' use of a title that connects two of nonfiction cable's favorite subgenres, dinosaurs and mummies, and then garnishes them with forensic investigation. In TV, we call that a win-win!

As for timing, the spec conveniently arrives a few days in advance of a new Houston Museum of Natural Science exhibit, dubbed "Dinosaur Mummy CSI: Cretaceous Science Investigation."

Cute, but please, don't give CBS any more spinoff ideas.

Executive producers, Wayne Sheldon, Carrie Gour; producers, Kevin Dunn, Michael Jorgensen; writer-director, Jorgensen. RUNNING TIME: 60 MIN.

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