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BLOOD SHED (2007)

Published by David Carter on 2007/11/18 (61 reads)

Directed by Alan Rowe Kelly
Review by David Carter



Released by Heretic Films
Running Time: 116 minutes
Rating: Not Rated
Color format: Color
Audio/Subtitles: 2.0 Stereo English
Region Code: 1, NTSC
Aspect Ratio: Widescreen 1.77:1
16:9 Enhanced: Yes
Special Features: Commentary, Bios, Behind the Scenes montage
Trailer Online: Yes



Now that he's just a harmless old man that's occasionally trotted out for an unsuccessful parole hearing, Charles Manson is no longer the scary figure that he once was. If you were around in the late sixties, however, Manson was the literal embodiment of evil. The Manson Family murders were major events that had a lasting effect on not only society but cinema as well. Manson and company introduced two important archetypes in the horror cinema lexicon: the charismatic cult leader and his disturbed "family." THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE wasn't the first to translate Manson's family into another context, but it was certainly the most successful. It was so successful in fact that it too became a template for future horror families. I'LL BURY YOU TOMORROW director Alan Rowe Kelly returns to the horror genre with his demented family flick THE BLOOD SHED.

In the backwoods of New Jersey, there's one house that all of the locals make it a point to avoid. The dilapidated home on the edge of the woods is home of the bizarre Bullion family and also the epicenter of several unexplained disappearances. The Bullions are an odd bunch: thirty-something Beefteena still believes she's twelve, brothers Hubcap and Butternut spend their days shooting animals with father Elvis, and cousin Sno Cakes lives in a tent in the yard. They are relatively harmless, that is, unless you cross their paths. A local boy who teases Beefteena ends up being ripped in half in a strange twist on Tug-of-War. Beefteena falls for the sheriff, so the Bullion family kidnaps him and forces him to marry her but not before some brutal torture. The family is excited for Beefteena's upcoming birthday festivities, but when her modeling audition doesn't go well her party turns into a circus of violence and murder.

THE BLOOD SHED lives up to the DVD cover's comparisons to the films of John Waters and THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE. The Bullions' eccentricities are both humorous and murderous, but the film leans far more heavily to the comedy side of things. Kelly plays Beefteena, and does an excellent job of making her believable, funny, and frightening all at the same time. That fact that Kelly and the other actors all do such good jobs is vital to the film's success; apart from Beefteena's birthday, little in terms of a plot is present in the film. The lack of a strong narrative won't pose a problem for viewers, however, since the over-the-top performances are more than entertaining enough to make up for it. Kelly has effectively created a "sucker punch" of a film: just when you get lulled into a false sense of safety by the comedy, he hits you with one of the film's many disturbing scenes. Again, you'll be laughing more than cringing, and the horror moments in THE BLOOD SHED are made more effective by the contrast from the rest of the film.



Heretic Films' DVD presentations improve with each subsequent release, something that is proven by THE BLOOD SHED's excellent DVD. The film is presented in 16 x 9 format, a rarity for low budget films. The audio and visual quality of the film are both outstanding as well, something that can equally be attributed to Kelly's abilities as a filmmaker and Heretic's DVD. In the way of bonus features they've included a commentary track featuring Kelly and some of the crew and a nicely done cast bio section.



THE BLOOD SHED is one of the more entertaining indie horror films to come out this year. It's certainly not for everyone, but it's hard to find any faults with the film. The lack of a traditional "A to B" plot may leave you with the impression that the film is just an entertaining collection of scenes. Ultimately, I think most of us prefer an entertaining series of scenes than a boring, by-the-numbers horror film. Highly recommended for fans of John Waters, low budget horror, and the "Little Lulu" cartoons.

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