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Frankenstein '80 (1972/Cheezy Flicks DVD)

Picture: D Sound: D
Extras: C- Feature: D

During the 1960s and 1970s Italian horror was at its height. Under the direction of Mario Bava, Lucio Fulci, and others, many of these films rivaled Hammer Studios in gothic terror. **Frankenstein '80** is *not* one of these movies.

Filed in 1972 and set (as the title implies) in the less-than distant future of 1980, **Frankenstein '80** is the tale of Dr. Frankenstein, a wayward organ transplant surgeon who takes his profession to the extreme by creating a man entirely out of transplanted body parts. To reduce the frequency of organ rejection in his creature (aptly named "Mosaic") Frankenstein steals his colleague's revolutionary new serum. Fate seems to be closing in on the doctor though, as his creature becomes stronger and more violent, the police draw nearer to the truth of Mosaic's murder victims, and a vengeful reporter investigates the theft of the serum that led to his sister's death.

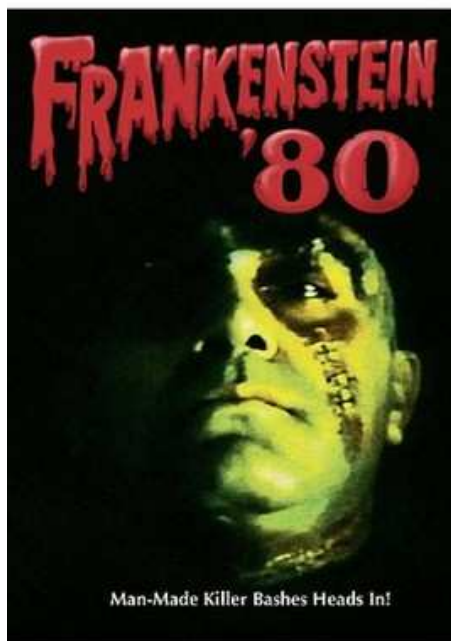
There was potential in the concept and plot structure that are the film's foundations. The interweaving plotlines are actually rather impressive for what is otherwise little more than an exploitation film, and there are real issues concerning the abuses medical science that could be explored here.

Instead, the writing is poor, the dialogue is badly dubbed into English, and the film transfer is so botched that the first five minutes of the film are nearly entirely dark. Carlo Rambaldi (**Alien**, **E.T.**) created the monster, but would do far better a year later in Paul Morrissey's **Flesh For Frankenstein**.

The picture is displayed in full screen format and we get very dated monophonic audio. The only special feature on the disc is a collection of old theater concession ads from drive-in theaters. They're fun, but they have absolutely nothing to do with the movie.

There are countless examples of Italian horror that do better service to a great era in filmmaking. Still, **Frankenstein '80** isn't the worst of the era either. For fans of classic horror, **Frankenstein '80** can at least serve as an example of how a good start can go very wrong.

- Matthew Carrick



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