

STRIPPERLAND!

"First they dance, then they kill!"

Idaho (Ben Sheppard) narrates, telling of how for the last three weeks the world has bore witness to an uncanny phenomenon: zombie strippers. At first, he says, it was like a "fantasy come true" – women everywhere disrobing and adopting slutty stances in the street.

But, as we witness in a fast-paced montage of gory set-pieces, these strippers are hungry. Idaho, we see, has managed to survive by adhering to the rules in a book he keeps close to his chest. Rule number 3, for example, is "never trust a stripper" ...



The present tense finds Idaho looting a seemingly empty convenience store for groceries. Alas, he's not alone and barely escapes a zombie attack thanks to an intervening stranger and his trusty baseball bat.

The stranger, Stetson-wearing Frisco (Jamison Challeen), is the strong silent type. He reluctantly agrees to take Idaho along with him in his 4x4, traversing America in search of signs of life amidst the hordes of flesh-eating, pole-dancing monsters.

In an early attempt to break the ice, Idaho tells his newfound friend of how he first heard about the zombie virus outbreak. Cue flashback: preparing for a wank in front of the internet – allowing for a less-than-subtle plug for the Brookland Bros' porno website – he's rudely interrupted by his zombified stepmother Barbara (Shel Bailey), complete with masking tape strapped provocatively across her nipples. Discovering his father (Lloyd Kaufman) dying from an undead bite, Idaho flees his home ... and has never looked back since.

Back in the present tense, Idaho and Frisco continue their travels through a devastated Middle America, observing the destruction and taking out the odd stripper along the way.

They meet two cute girls and invite them along for the ride - West (Ileana Herrin) and Virginia (Maren McGuire).

Their journey also introduces them to rapper Double D (Daniel Baldwin), who keeps zombies entranced in the desert with his freestyling – leading Idaho to observe "Rule number 8: strippers love hip hop". Less impressive is the wannabe sage-like Maestro (Boyd Banks), who they encounter at a shopping mall. He speaks what appear to be wise words ... before meeting a very sticky end moments later.

Will our four intrepid heroes make it through the night alive? And, if so, what is left of the world for them to salvage?

Although clearly a spoof of ZOMBIELAND, there are nods and winks to countless other zombie films throughout: THE EVIL DEAD, SHAUN OF THE DEAD, DAY OF THE DEAD, LAND OF THE DEAD, MICHAEL JACKSON'S THRILLER and so on. The guest performances are not limited to Banks, Baldwin and Kaufman either – sharp-eyed viewers will also spy Linnea Quigley.

Of the performances, only Challeen shames. His is a pale imitation of the Woody Harrelson character he's riffing on. Everyone else does the film proud, finding just the right tone: even Kaufman acts (yes, actually acts) for once ...

While the visual gags tend to lend the film a vibe akin to the Wayans Brothers' work (the SCARY MOVIE franchise), STRIPPERLAND is thankfully a less daft prospect than their output. It has its moments – some painfully stupid puns that induce cringes in the viewer – but for the most part this is fast-paced, tongue-in-cheek fun.

Especially pleasing is how much director Sean Skelding has come on since I AM VIRGIN. This is a much more accomplished piece of filmmaking, with great visuals, atmospheric aesthetics and slick production values.

More importantly, it lives up to its title with scores of scantily clad beauties and a shitload of gore.

Independent Media Distribution's release is a region-free DVD.

The film is presented in anamorphic 1.78:1, which appears to be the aspect ratio in which the film was shot. Images are crisp, detail levels are decent and colours are sufficiently loud without bleeding. Blacks also hold up well in what is a good transfer.

Likewise, the English audio stereo mix is clean and well-balanced throughout. It's especially kind to the film's rollicking rock soundtrack.

A static main menu page leads into a static scene-selection menu offering 11 chapter stops. Both menus come equipped with heavy beats.

Extras begin with 10 minutes of deleted scenes and a 4-minute blooper reel.

"Blood, Guts And More Guts" is a decent 5-minute featurette focusing on the copious gore FX featured throughout the film.

"First They Dance Then They Kill" takes 12 minutes out to meet the girls of the production.

"The Kiss-ass Begins With The Celebrities Of Stripperland" is 6 minutes of ... well, the title says it all really. As with the preceding featurette, this is made up of lots of back-slapping to-camera interviews, interspersed with breakneck behind-the-scenes footage.

Two music videos are suitably dumb: "Club Life" by Double D, and "Weirdo" by the delightfully named Smoochknob.

All of the above extras are presented in anamorphic 1.78:1.

Best of all are two audio commentary tracks. The first is provided by Skelding, in conversation with writer Brad McCray and editor David Webster. The second comes courtesy of FX artists Austin Healey and Christina Kortum. Both are interesting, fluid listens – lots of relative information is shared, and fans of low budget filmmaking will find the many facets covered to be illuminating indeed.

"Drive-In Fun" is a 5-minute archive drive-in advertisement. It's hilarious in its own cheesy way, and suits its extremely worn look.

We also get trailers for THE WALKING DEAD GIRLS, I AM VIRGIN, PENANCE and ULTIMATE DEATH MATCH.

Better gore, better music and a better hero (am I alone in thinking Jesse Eisenberg is a cunt?): I'm not ashamed to say I enjoyed STRIPPERLAND more than ZOMBIELAND ...

... And IMD's disc does the film justice.

Review by Stuart Willis

Released by IMDFilms
Region 1 - NTSC
Not Rated
Extras :
see main review

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