

Indie Horror Films

All genres of suspense, terror, and horror will be reviewed by Richard Gary. His address to send preview copies supplied upon request to rbf55@msn.com.

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DVD Review: Eyes of the Woods

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Eyes of the Woods: Unrated Special Edition

Directed by Darrin Reed, F. Miguel Valenti and Mark Villalobos (latter for special edition)

Central Film Company

Fade to Black: Films

79 minutes, 2008 / 2013

www.centralfilmcompany.com

www.myspace.com/eyesofthewoodsfilm

www.MVDvisual.com

During 1547, at the Puritan settlement of Knobs Creek (73 years before the first *historical* Puritan settlement in 1620) in an undisclosed location (though filmed in the Zaca Lake area in California), a father grieving for his dead young daughter turns away from God and makes a pact the devil. The end result is he is turned into a flesh-eating demon that kills off the whole town.

Flash forward to "now" and we see a group of five 30-year-old college students who are out for a camping expedition, and of course stumble upon said locale and creature.

Mostly, this is not a great film, honestly, with nearly no character definition other than one obnoxious dude and a stoner goth-ish gal (she wears black lipstick). Everyone else is exceedingly vanilla, and the viewer is not invited to like or care about any of them. This is the biggest flaw of many of the kids-go-to-woods-kids-get-dead genre.

There is an interesting use of a plot trick that would later be employed by 2011's *Grave Encounters*, where the territory keeps changing – one minute there's a lake and then it's not there, for example – throwing our annoying group for a loop as they can't find their way out of the woods / fields / meadows / leas. They wander around for literally days with no food, no water, and apparently not much of an appetite. Heck, they don't even get dirty, even though after the first night, they don't even have a tent and sleep on the ground.

And for most of those days, nothing happens. Well, at least involving them. There is a topless woman wearing only underwear and covered in blood walking around in a trance-like state that is never explained, and a couple of other campers who are lost that find the inevitable and oblivious bad ending. But mostly it's wandering and complaining, wandering and complaining. I was sorely tempted to hit that chapter skip button, but I didn't. Someone reward me.

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But, and this is a big but, as bad as the center section is, the first and last 20 minutes is worth watching. The extended "origin" story is exceedingly well handled (though the acting is wooden, and the men's costumes laughable), the creature looks great in these sections (not as much in the middle), the gore is top notch (again, in the bookends), and the editing bright and brisk without being too flashy. I would happily watch that sequence again.

Also, the ending act, where the demon finally decides to go all *Jeepers Creepers* on them, almost looks like it's from a different film. Even the stock looks different, with the middle being grainy (possibly video), and the beginning and end looking digital.

Like the saying "there are known unknowns" (originally said by the traitor, Rumsfeld), the ending is a bit of a surprise, but not really. You know something's coming, and you have an idea what, so that even when you're not sure, you are still sure enough to know *when* to expect it, if you follow horror films in the last 20 years.

So, if you manage to get your hands on this DVD, don't just toss it. Watch the beginning until we meet our modern troupe, and then skip to the one hour mark and start watching again. Don't, however, go to the chapter list, because it will ruin what little surprise there is (really? You show the ending in the chapter list? Duuuuude!),

There are no extras. Boy, I'd hate to see the regular edition to this film if this is the special one.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=967t2YeSn3k>

Posted by **Robert Barry Francos** at 12:01 AM

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