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- [DVD review](#)

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- [Mark of the Astro-Zombies](#)
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- [Female Slaves Revenge](#)
- [Dimensions in Fear](#)
- [Dr. Jekyll's Dungeon of Death](#)
- [The Doll Squad](#)
- [Drive-in Massacre](#)

DVD review

Gore, car chases, explosions, creepy mask, gratuitous nudity (sex AND a shower scene), multiple modes of killing, even a kind of unique plot. What more could you ask in a low budget flick? Granted, it's random as hell at times and boasts a couple of preposterous events but if you can suspend disbelief for this, then what the hell? It's a great ride and never goes the way you expect it to and is pretty damn impressive for the amount of budget they had to have had on hand for this one - i.e. not a helluva lot, at least by Hollywood standards.

Things go right to hell in a handbasket when Mike Strauber comes home and finds his wife in bed with his friend. We are witness to his sanity slipping away in a nice montage of flashback and shots of Mike pondering the catastrophic new situation in his personal life - just a hint at the surprising stylishness on display in this film.

He ends up in the woods and his psychologically off-kilter childhood (try a game of truth or dare in which he cut his own wrist, much to Mommy's chagrin) comes back to him with a vengeance, fueled by his wife's infidelity. Mike ends up playing his own self-destructive (yick!) game of truth or dare with a woman who is but a figment of his imagination.

This lands him in a mental institution, but after 13 months they let him out, cured - or so they think. A visit to his wife lands him back in the mental ward, where his fantasies of truth or dare reach a new mutilatory peak. This time he's got two imaginary friends to share the game with him and even though we know they aren't real, the gore of their "self" mutilation still packs a lo-tech punch. For a movie with not much money to work with, relatively speaking, Truth or Dare does a good job of (mostly) not letting the zipper up the monster's back show as far as the gore is concerned; but at the same time, the gore is plentiful and effective.

Anyway, trying to cut one's own face off doesn't land one in good stead with the shrink authorities but it does lead to one making a creepy mask in craft class or whatever.

And spiraling insanity leads to a break-out from the sanitarium and an escalating string of delusion and violence, all leading back home to the now ex-wife.

The second half of the movie - Mike's spree of crazed violence as he swaths a bloody trail back home - is where some of the more preposterous elements arise. Where does he get these great weapons? A machine gun, chainsaw and mace? But if you can accept you're watching the modern equivalent of a drive-in picture (which you are) and suspend your disbelief in what is not supposed to be a super-realistic film anyway, then this part of the picture also offers a delirious stretch of various acts of violence and a descent into madness of which any indie horror flick could be proud. And director Tim Ritter pulls no punches; even babies and kids are not safe from his bloodily creative eye or Mike Strauber's demented mind.

And speaking of that descent into madness, Truth or Dare boasts a nice expression of Mike's psychotic mind; its portrayal of madness is over-the-top but intense and effective. It gives us more than just the unexplored madness of your average movie psycho.

I DARE you to watch this!

(This is Sub Rosa Studios' re-release of Tim Ritter's 1986 film.)



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Upchuck Undergrind listens to a little bit of a lot of things - just note the eclecticism of his reviews. He also reads voraciously and loves movies. He is a very open-minded Episcopalian (and student of Buddhism and Hinduism) who thinks Slayer is one of the greatest metal bands. Ever. In addition to his work with Corazine - for which he has written since its inception (he is a Fishcomcollective veteran) - he also writes for DJFix.com.

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