

## Video Vodou

### Truth or Dare?

August 22, 2010 at 5:46 pm ([6 Heads](#), [Truth or Dare?](#)) (1986)

Truth or Dare? knows no restraint. Despite slasher clichés, no likable characters, and a lack of style, Truth or Dare? (a.k.a. Truth or Dare?: A Critical Madness) prevails with cartoonish ludicracy. Sincerely juxtaposing the killer's overwrought piteous childhood flashbacks with kids being drive-by chainsawed, this flick simultaneously inspires sympathy, revulsion, and hilarity. Truth or Dare is most interesting for its tonal ambiguity.

After a superb title animation where a razor slashes Truth or Dare and the letters ooze blood, Mike rolls home early (in gold Firebird with car phone) to witness his wife banging his buddy. Fleeing in a confused rage, he debates suicide amid repetitious flashbacks. Lo and behold, nutty Mike suffers from a vaguely traumatic childhood Truth or Dare wrist-slitting incident. In the present, the plot degenerates to weirdness. Mike hallucinates picking up a slutty hitchhiker. They camp out and play Truth or Dare, first sexy then disturbing as they dare each other to dismember themselves. Mike rips out his tongue before he's discovered and winds up in an asylum. Due to budget cuts, Mike leaves in a year, cackling and tossing his release papers out the window as he drives to kill his wife. Hilarious mayhem triumphs as Mike, wearing a Leatherface mask (apparently of copper) goes on a 45 minute rampage, muttering "Truth or dare?" as he murders with an arsenal of increasingly absurd weapons that appear mysteriously in his possession

Here, Truth or Dare's somber tone disintegrates into gore-hound appeasement. To overbearing synthesizer music, Mike mows down geriatrics with a machine gun, crams a grenade in a man's mouth, and runs over a baby carriage. Blood is plentiful. While the effects are uninspired, it's hard to contain yourself when a mace (the spiked Medieval club) suddenly materializes in Mike's hand and he clobbers a grandma with it.

A flick this uninhibited is, of course, a technical mess, with cringe-worthy acting, flat overly bright lighting, and the ponderously long shots of arbitrary composition. Then there's the Whitney Houston-esque credit roll power ballad: "He's got a *CRITICAL MADNESS* from being places no one should go -o-o-o! He's got a *CRITICAL MADNESS* from facing questions no one else could know-o-o-o!" And dig that charming old school title generator making subtitles look like "a test of your emergency broadcast system". But considering director/writer Tim Ritter was only 18, he's tough to fault.

Truth or Dare falls in the post-Halloween slasher boom. Frequently, these flicks are tired Halloween retreads (i.e. Offerings, 1989). While Truth or Dare derives much from Halloween (i.e. a killer named Mike), its approach is unique. Michael Myers, a killer since childhood, is an insane monster, impossible to sympathize with because he tries to kill fan-favorite Jamie Lee Curtis. Truth or Dare's Mike is deranged for more concrete reasons, and who wouldn't want to murder Mike's insufferable wife? His depth of character (however poorly executed) elevates Truth or Dare, eking its nose above the slasher sludge threatening to drown it. Is it riveting enough to spawn 2 sequels (and a 3rd in production)? Probably not, but I'll pass judgment when I see them.

Rating: 6/10 Shrunken Heads. Another 80s slasher flick. If that's your flavor see it before [Graduation Day](#) or [Bloody Movie](#), but it's not art.

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