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Lights, Camera, Dead (2007)

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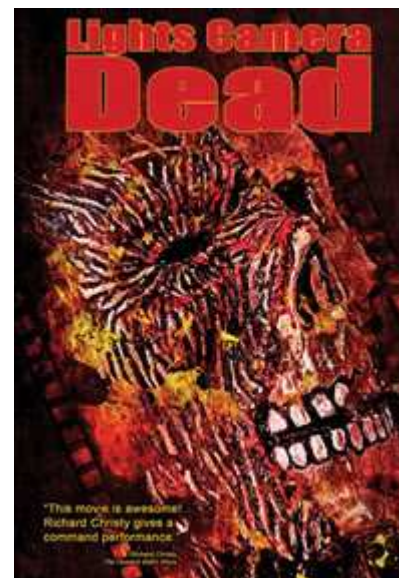
Don't be fooled by what you see on tv shows and in magazines. Sure, it might be all glamour and Wolfgang Puck-catered craft services on the latest Hollywood adaptation of some best-selling book, but down in the trenches where the low-budget auteurs work, filmmaking is rough, seat-of-your pants stuff. Hell, sometimes – like in the surprisingly entertaining LIGHTS CAMERA DEAD – filmmaking can be downright deadly.

While struggling to make their low-budget horror opus THE MUSIC BOX, director Ryan Black (Wes Reid) and screenwriter Steven Didymus (JC Lira) run into more than their share of problems: a cast comprised of talent-challenged amateurs and friends; a volunteer crew that's more interested in getting baked than helping out; a crazy composer who wants to score the flick with nothing but drums; and, an uncooperative editor who sends the duo into a homicidal rage... literally.

Lamenting that they failed to capture the murder on film, the moviemakers set about giving the flick some much-needed realism, sending LIGHTS CAMERA DEAD down a post-modern path with plot holes you could drive a Mack truck through while somehow succeeding as a frenzied riff on egotistical Scorsese wannabes and writers who think every word is sacred.

Frankly, LCD probably does a fair job of portraying what's really going on behind the scenes of those shot-on-video masterpieces that are clogging my Netflix queue like plaque in my artery walls. Ryan screams that "every great director has a cameo... I'm like Hitchcock!" while Steven derides the low-budget ghetto he's mired in, declaring "I wanna make a Hollywood film! I wanna walk down a red carpet! I wanna fuck supermodels!" As an added bonus, pumpkin-loving Howard Stern Show regular Richard Christy steals the show as the drum-obsessed, horror-hating composer.

I'm not sure if I'm making the flick out to be better than it deserves. On one hand the movie-within-a-movie isn't much worse than the hundreds of shot-on-video tripe I've sat through over the years, Coldon Martin delivers a winningly Jason Mewes-esque performance as Ted the wake-and-bake PA, and there's an inspired scene between Kari (Amy



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Lollo) and Ryan over the contents of an envelope. On the other hand, the female leads are annoying and hard to buy as the objects of desire and it takes half the flick to get to the pivotal twist we all saw coming the moment we looked at the box.

Horror-comedy is usually not my cup of tea, especially when it's done on such a low or non-existent budget. But I have to admit I found LIGHTS CAMERA DEAD to be far more worthwhile than the exploitation time-waster for which I had it pegged.

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