

## FFanzeen: Rock'n'Roll Attitude With Integrity

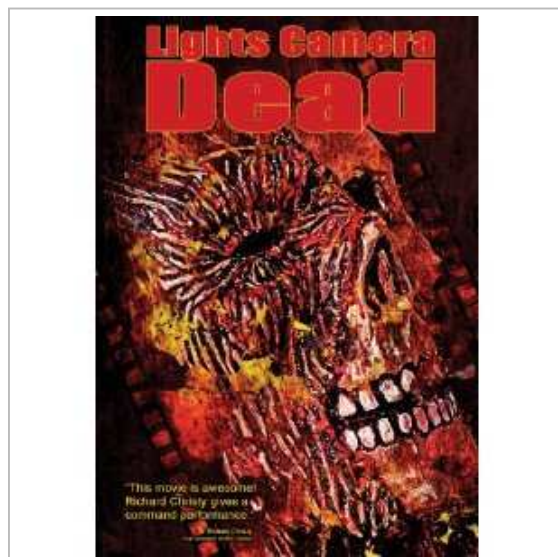
Through the writings and photography of Robert Barry Francos, a view of the arts and culture, including everyday life.

MONDAY, AUGUST 30, 2010

### DVD Review: "Lights Camera Dead"

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Images from the Internet



#### Lights Camera Dead

Directed by Tim Reaper

Sub Rosa Studios, 2007

80 minutes, USD \$9.95

SRSCinema.com

Lightscameradead.com

MVDvisual.com

Independent cinema can be quite inconsistent. Sometimes you find utter trash, and other times you end up with classics like *Re-Animator* or *Evil Dead*. Well, Tim Reaper (aka Tim Moehring) hasn't quite given us an equal to those two, but I will say that this sets a pretty damn high bar.

What better way to formulate a horror flick than to make one about the making of one? *Lights Camera Dead* [LCD] starts off with auditions for actors and crew for a below low budget film (to be shot on VHS!), called "The Music Box." The audition scenes are hilarious as even the real director gets to have his cameo as a southern mumbler. Some of this footage is in the trailer, attached below.

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The premise, written by Tim and his wife, who is also one of the key characters in the film, Monica Moehring, is quite simple and explained on the box: *Halfway through filming, a fed up cast and crew quit, thus shutting down production. But not for long...the fast, efficient filmmakers devise a plan to "finish" off their flick...and there will be blood.*

While this is actually a decent sized cast, the main core stands at five:

Amy Lollo is the female lead, and the core of the troupe, keeping the meta-production together, though thoroughly underappreciated by the director and writer characters. Lollo is strong in her role, and plays various emotions well. She has a strong Sarah Michelle Gellar vibe and look going on. When she confronts her boyfriend, I actually backed up on the couch and cringed. That's effective.

The other female lead is Monica Moehring, another alpha woman whose chest is referred to often (remember, she is one of the writers), but never seen bare because as she explains in one of the commentary tracks, and I found this quite amusing, when she is not filmmaking, she is a school teacher. Her facial expressions as she tries to explain what is going on to a drunken redneck (their word), played by director Tim's actual dad, who apparently really was drunk, is easily one of the most amusing scenes in the flick. Kudos, dad! Monica has a couple of other acting credits, in films associated with this same production group.

Coldon Martin seems to act by widening his eyes until there is all white around the pupil, but he is also a decent comic relief, especially thanks to a good sense of timing. I have to say he looks quite a bit like a rockabilly version of Casey Affleck. He plays a crew member (and also does the same in the real production, apparently) who is good bad, but he's not evil. Well, maybe... This is his only official acting credit.

J.C. Lira plays Steven Dydimus, the writer of the doomed production, as well as the "monster" in the rubber mask that is supposed to be a demon from hell. A frustrated horn dog, his level of violence - not expected for his milquetoast character - escalates throughout the making of the meta film. Again, this is his only official acting credit.

Last is Wes Reid, who plays the desperate and borderline - and then over-the-line - psychotic director of the picture, Ryan Black, who will do anything to get it completed. As the horror film is being created, he turns more and more dictatorial, and blames everyone else for his own short sidedness and lack of ability. Wes is becoming sort of a touchstone for Jonathan Straiton's productions, with a half-dozen of them under his belt; the trailers for most can be seen in the special features section of this DVD. Wes's weight changes dramatically throughout the film, up and down, as he was also acting in other roles while *LCD* was being filmed down in Virginia.

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#### About Me

Robert Barry Francos  
c/o 62 Timber Ridge Rd,  
Commack, NY 11725. From 1977-88, I used to publish a music magazine in New York called FFanzeen, which dealt with the wide-ranging independent music scene. I also photographed many bands from the period (and since). And the beat goes on.

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While some of the film has that shoestring feel, the cast and crew make the most of it, and seem to actually be enjoying their working together. There is also some interesting writing and filming involved, such as when Lollo's character is trying to decide whether to open an envelope from her ex-, while he comes to her in her mind in both loving and abusive modes (you can tell which by what he is wearing); this moment also produced the best fright, but I won't give too much of it away.

I guess I should mention that Richard Christy, of the *Howard Stern Show*, makes a manic cameo as a music soundtrack writer (this is the only scene shot in Brooklyn, NY), which is amusing, but gotta say I don't listen to Howard Stern, so I have no idea who Christy is, but his brief commentary on the special features shows that his character in the film is pretty damn close to the real guy. Five minutes long, and he was having trouble figuring what to say.

Anyway, I liked *LCD*, and from the one indie film I worked on, there is some level of truth to the goings on in this type of production, sans the gore and killing, of course (even though our shoot stayed friendly).

It should be emphasized that this is also a pretty humorous film coming from a very dark, dark place. Fairly put, this film is more purposefully funny than unintentional, much in the way as are the other two films I mentioned in the first paragraph. So go grab a beer, sit back, and enjoy.

Speaking of beer, the full-length commentary on the film is quite fun in most parts, but somewhat annoying in spots. There are four or five people there, including the core of the production staff and some actors, which makes it a bit confusing, though the conversation is usually lively even as they tend to talk over each other (ironically, the video editor of "The Music Box" within the film makes that very complaint stating that it's hard to edit because of it). People walk in and out of the range of the microphones, there is occasional talking in the background so it's hard to make out what people are saying near or away from the mics, and at one point, Tim says to Monica, who has left the mic, "Hey, bring me a beer." You can often hear the tabs being pulled on the beers throughout the commentary. While it's a bit of a mess, there is still a lot of good information about the writing and making of the picture, so I still recommend it.

So other than the full length commentary, the short Christy comments, and the trailers, there is also an earlier shot short film (2005) by Tim Reaper Moehring called... *The Music Box*, which is actually not related to the main feature, except the same box appears in both. It is pretty bad and amateurish, shot on video, and shows just how much Tim learned between the two, because the main feature is so much better. It's more interesting as a historical document in comparison than as a stand-alone short.

I'm grateful films like this get made, because as fun as mainstream horror films can be, it is the indie films like this one that tend to be made by fans, and so there is usually quite a bit of heart. And in this particular one, a bit of intestine, as well.



Posted by Robert Barry Francos at [12:01 AM](#)

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