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Even the Lowest Bar of Expectation Was Too Much for "Night of the Tentacles" to Grasp

Review

by Lee Jutton

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I recently reviewed a film titled *Bath Salt Zombies*, an incredibly low budget (and low quality) horror-comedy from multitasking cult filmmaker Dustin Wayne Mills. Despite the film's various faults (and trust me, there were many), my overall impression was rather positive; the cast and crew's lack of filmmaking prowess was somewhat canceled out by the impression that they clearly had a great deal of giddy enthusiasm for what they were doing.

However, *Night of the Tentacles*, which I hoped would entertain me in the same ridiculous way, did not measure up to the incredibly low bar set by *Bath Salt Zombies*, which is saying a lot. The films share much of the same cast, including goofy star Brandon Salkil as Dave, a lonely artist who spends his days jerking off to his pregnant neighbor and his nights creating "fantasy erotica" for other people to jerk off to. It seems as though there are more scenes involving masturbation than monsters in *Night of the Tentacles*, which is one reason why it ends up being

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surprisingly boring.

Salkil's face is seemingly made of rubber and can contort in ways that make it seem CGI-enhanced; he is not a good actor, but he is indeed a fun one to watch, and ideal for this kind of film. Yet even Salkil's antics aren't enough to make one care about what happens to Dave after he has a heart attack and makes a Faustian bargain with the devil for a new ticker. This heart ends up being a tentacled monster kept in a locked chest, which must be unlatched at least twice a week so that the heart can eat--or Dave will die. Naturally the heart will only eat live human meat, and naturally Dave's apartment complex is full of terrible individuals who end up becoming fodder for the heart to feast upon. Despite his hatred for his neighbors and his desire to see them gone, Dave doesn't really want to sink to these murderous methods in order to keep on living; yet he also wants to stay alive and start a relationship with the aforementioned girl downstairs, Esther. What to do, what to do?

In the case of filmmaker Mills, the answer is to fill an hour and a half with boobs and blood. Now, this is exactly what he did with *Bath Salt Zombies*, so that isn't surprising; what is surprising is that film displayed much more of a creative, imaginative spark than this one does. If *Bath Salt Zombies* was Mills' *Dawn of the Dead*, then this is his *Diary of the Dead*--similar enough to lure in the same fans, but nowhere near as good. The attempt at a Faustian storyline does the film no favors, and the lo-fi camera and special effects trickery that so endeared me to the previous film seem remarkably absent here. I still admire what Mills does with so little in the way of a traditional film crew and budget, and I would watch more of his films in the future for when I need a gruesome giggle; however, because I know he can do better, *Night of the Tentacles* ends up being disappointing. Definitely one only for the hardcore horror completionists, not for those who dabble in the genre.

DVD Bonus Features

There are no DVD special features.

"Night of the Tentacles" is on sale January 22, 2013 and is not rated. Horror. Written and directed by Dustin Mills. Starring Brandon Salkil, Jackie Mckown, Nicole Gerity.

Lee Jutton • Staff Writer

Lee attended NYU for Film & TV Production, but she now works mostly in PR. She also reviews books for Kirkus Indie. Her primary obsessions in life are Doctor Who, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Arsenal F.C. If you see her at the Blind Pig in New York on a game day, say hello.

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