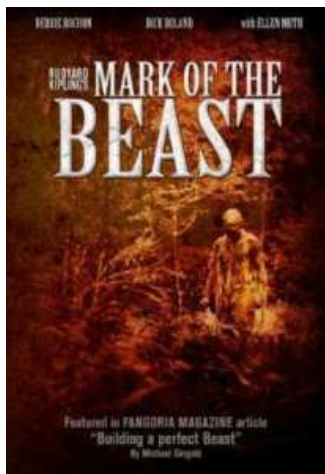


## DVD REVIEW: MARK OF THE BEAST (2012)



**Rudyard Kipling's MARK OF THE BEAST** is, of course, an indie horror film based on a short story by **Rudyard Kipling** of the same name, and upon reading it after viewing directors' **Johnathan Gorman** and **Thomas Edward** film (both directors' of the **BIKINI BLOODBATH** Trilogy fame), I feel their story is a pretty direct and accurate modernization of Kipling's story that does it justice and keeps to the story almost exactly. One can find Kipling's short story online for free if they care to read it to compare this indie horror film with the original story, as watching the **Blood Bath Pictures** release helped clarify the story as it is told in a contemporary manner and style all its own.

The film starts out with narration from well-known indie horror's **Debbie Rochon** (**TROMEO AND JULIET**), whom also plays the lead character of Debbie, who is friend's with Fleete (played by **Phil Hall**) that sets up the story of a group of friends getting together for a New Year's Eve celebration deep in the woods. As friends show up for the celebration to Strickland (played by **Dick Boland**) and Sheri's (**Sheri**

**Lynn**) cabin for a pre-celebration dinner, characters Natalie (played by **Ellen Muth** (**DEAD LIKE ME**)) is introduced, as well as her friend Maggie (**Margaret Rose Champagne**). These five are the film's primary characters and the film starts out slowly setting up the plot with Strickland as he talks about a local tribe that lives deep in the forest that worships a monkey god and of a particular time when Fleete (described as a big wimp both physically and mentally) got spooked by some noises in the woods that he felt were due to the local natives. They have a temple in the woods where they worship and Fleete got freaked out by it.

The story goes on with everyone getting drunk, Fleete more so than everyone else, and trying to go out to his car and drive home. Instead, in a drunken stupor, tosses Strickland's keys in the lake and has to be walked back home by Strickland and Debbie in the morning after he sobers up. This is when the Fleete comes across the natives and their shrine of sorts, desecrates it by putting his cigar out on it, and is marked by one of the tribe's lepers.

The story is pretty true to Kipling's story and only the time period has been modernized. The story's driven by the character's within the film and the narration given by **Debbie Rochon**. The production values keep in line with many indie horror films, but have a few touches that give the film a more professional edge and look to it. The film is a little bit tame in terms of blood and gore, keeping in line with its source material, but at times I thought the make-up effects for the leper were brilliant. One saw that a lot of time was put into the detail of the nearly full-body make-up provided by make-up artist **Leigh Radziwon** (**KILL THEORY**), most evident in the final half of the film.



Debbie Rochon and Dick Boland carried the film with strong lead performances.

many cases it was not. It only detracted from the overall enjoyment of the film a tiny bit, but still was a minor distraction.

**MARK OF THE BEAST** felt shorter than your average film, as it should having a running time of only 72 minutes, but considering the source material of Kipling's short story the running time is highly appropriate. I feel that **Debbie Rochon** and **Dick Boland** really carried the film with their performances of the strong lead characters that do almost all of the major decision making in the film's plot and **Phil Hall's** portrayal of a man infected with some sort of disease, virus, or possibly even curse was pretty decent.

I enjoyed the film for what it was, a very accurate modernization of a short story from one of the world's more respected author's of fiction, short stories, poems, and children's stories. It stayed true to Kipling's vision and was only modernized. The acting was pretty solid, but I think more focus could have been spent on throwing some more special effects into Fleete and his make-up. It would have added much more to the movie and looked a hell of a lot cooler if there was more thought into **Phil Hall's** character than just some



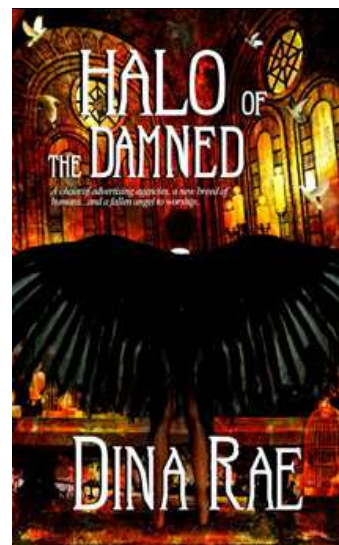

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black eyeshadow applied under his eyes. Budgetary constraints were obviously holding back certain scenes that could be much more powerful with some extra detail and using a lens filter for night scenes gave shots that were probably filmed during the day a bluish tinge to them. It still looked cool, though.

In the end, the film kept my attention and it was primarily due to strong performances given by **Dick Boland** and **Debbie Rochon** who displayed some very obvious chemistry when acting in scenes together. On the technical end, the native leper had some really cool make-up and those aspects of the film were what shined through.

As for special features on the disc, there is a documentary entitled "Making the Beast", a director's commentary, and some trailers and teasers. The film is presented in standard widescreen format and was a production from **Blood Bath Pictures** (an independent film production company based in Connecticut) and released through **MVD Visual**. I recommend reading Rudyard Kipling's original short story as a companion piece to this modern-day adaptation of **MARK OF THE BEAST**.

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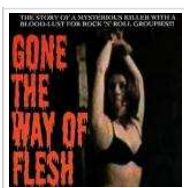
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