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Rudyard Kipling's Mark of the Beast

2012

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I hadn't actually taken notice until recently, but aside from the numerous horror movies which have decided to focus on zombies or found footage, demonic possession is yet another sub-genre which has been getting a great deal of attention from filmmakers over the past few years. Once again however this also translates to the idea having been beaten long ago of its last shred of dignity. Just like with the other types of horror films however there's a small part of me that just keeps hoping that someone will at least come up with an idea which grabs my attention, so I keep watching.

Mark of the Beast is an adaption of the Rudyard Kipling short work although his most well-known is *The Jungle Book* which has been adapted numerous times. Of course given that the story was written well over a century ago it's not quite the type of thing that you want to set in the past so instead *Mark of the Beast* is pushed up into present day where a group of friends are gathering together in a remote cabin to celebrate New Year's. One of the group, Fleete (Phil Hall) wanders into the nearby forest after having a little too much to drink and comes into contact with a strange, disfigured man before he can be brought back. Fleete begins acting strangely, enough that two of his friends, Strickland (Dick Boland) and Debbie (Debbie Rochon) think that something has infected him and Strickland's diagnosis is demonic possession. When their attempts to exorcise him fail they have no choice but to find the leper he came in contact with, hoping that perhaps there may be another way to rid him of the demon.

Mark of the Beast works with the narrative aspect of Kipling's story during part of the film, having Debbie assume that role, and for the most part it works, but that isn't something which helps the movie either. Narration in a movie, as I've pointed out many times through other reviews, is something which can either work incredibly well or it can be nothing more than an addition which drags the movie down. In this case it falls somewhere in the middle. It works to tell part of the story but it's not really anything which I felt was crucial but instead just an effort to stay with the original work. The film also has a cast which, while not horrible, isn't overly impressive either. They just feel as if they are going through the motions without any real feeling.

Mark of the Beast tends to be slow going and even when it finally comes down to demonic possession, it never manages to accomplish it as well as other movies have in the past or even over the past two years. It's never anything which is frightening and in contrast to the many other attempts to do the same thing although most of these have been drawing heavily for more notable movies covering the

same topic. *Mark of the Beast* also tries for an atmospheric approach but sadly it overuses post-production filters, adding in blue and sepia tints. This ends up looking horrible instead of bringing any real feelings of tension or eerie visuals. There were however a few moments in the cinematography area where I liked the camera work, but sadly not too many.

There are no special features on the disc.

Mark of the Beast is just another film dealing with possession which will be forgotten. While I appreciate the effort to try and focus on a story which isn't the norm, it just doesn't work as a film, at least not this adaptation. I also feel that the packaging trying to lure in viewers by making mention that it was featured in Fangoria is a bit of a misdirection. The magazine simply did an article on it but Fango covers a lot of horror movies, some which are never released, and others that simply end up not being nearly as good as anticipated. In the end *Mark of the Beast* feels like it's merely trying to ride a wave of popularity which so many other films do and in my opinion, it's high time that the horror industry stop trying to cannibalize what others are doing and bring back some originality.

Directed by:
Jonathan Gorman
Thomas Edward Seymour

DVD Features:
Aspect Ratio: 2.35:1
Audio: English Dolby Digital 5.1

Written by:
Jonathan Gorman
Thomas Edward Seymour

Based on the Story by:
Rudyard Kipling

Cast:
Ellen Muth
Debbie Rochon
Margaret Rose Champagne
Sheri Lynn
Thomas Edward Seymour
Phil Hall
Matt Ford
Dick Boland
Isaiah Entsua -Mensah
Mark Bovino

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