

# Indie Horror Films

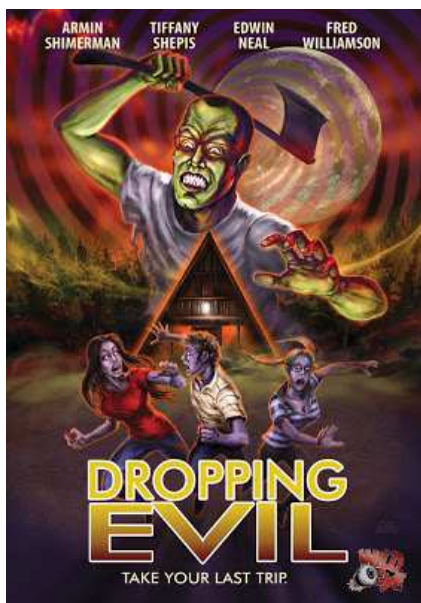
All genres of suspense, terror, and horror will be reviewed by Richard Gary. His address to send preview copies supplied upon request to rbf55@msn.com.

Friday, January 25, 2013

## DVD Review: Dropping Evil

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Images from the Internet



### Dropping Evil

Directed by Adam Protector

Wild Eye Releasing

82 minutes, 2008-2012

[Wildeyereleasing.com](http://Wildeyereleasing.com)

[MVDvisual.com](http://MVDvisual.com)

The publicity for this indie is proud to state – and does so often – that they had the whole idea of watchers as some kind of overlords to a group of teens who are brought together in seclusion for a reason unknown to the youngsters way before the recent hit, *A Cabin in the Woods* (2012). And rightfully so. Do I think the makers of *Woods* ripped off this film? Highly unlikely, even though it took four years to film this one, but *Dropping Evil* is low budget enough that it probably wouldn't have been noticed by the big boys.

This piece of cinema is definitely one of the more ambitious indie films I've seen in a while, and certainly a brave release. It's not surprising it took so long to record and let loose. The question I have is as follows: how successful is it in reaching its goal?

Well, certainly, there are problems. Note that *any* indie film has its issues, no doubt, especially one with this vast a cast and ambition in story. And the sheer filming time frame *must* bring its own set of issues.

From what I can figure out through some of the story is that there are at least three separate levels going on (how very *X Files* / *Lost*). First, there's the four life-long mid-20s high school students off for a weekend in the woods, including a couple (Tom Taylor, Rachel Howell), and as a possible set-up, a nerdy girl (Cassandra Powell) and a volatile religious fanatic (Zachary Lint; he even gets upset when his bottle of juice is next to a beer can in the cooler). Add a little tripping powder and "Mr. Jesus" (whose name is Nancy, by the way, which is never really explained other than his mother chose it) gets busy with an ax, as is seen on the DVD box artwork.

On the second story level, we view the ValYouCorp organization, who apparently specializes in artificial body parts and robotics (played by actors wearing motorcycle helmets), but who seems to be looking at a (evil?) larger picture than is let on at first. It is run by scheming CEO (played by name character actor Armin Shimerman; you'd know him is you saw him, e.g., as Quark on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, or Principal Snyder on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*). His vision, involving the four friends, could change the fate of the entire world.

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The third level is more meta-physical and less clear. From what I can figure out, it involves God, who seems to be missing (shades of Kevin Smith's 1999 *Dogma*), a host of other older gods and goddesses from the Classic Greek period, and even older gods than that called the Titans (whom Zeus defeated to become king of the gods in Greek mythology; scarily, I knew that without having to Wikipedia it. That's right, I used it as a verb, wanna make somethin' of it?). A new war coming? Again, it is reminiscent of another film, *The Prophecy* (1995).

This is a mixture of both a dark comedy and an occasional slapstick one, the latter of which is more successful. For example, one of the better moments is handled deftly by the lovely and underused ex-Troma actor and current exploitation queen Tiffany Sephis, who plays the goddess Dionysia (I met her once at a Chiller Theater Con in New Jersey during the 1990s, during her Troma days, and she was very nice).

Honestly, as original as the story is, and credit should certainly be given, it is also exceedingly convoluted. Half the time I didn't know what anything meant to the storyline, and there isn't really too much of a conclusion that explains it. I would, however, recommend following the film with the two deleted scenes and especially what is called the "sequels," three shorts (between 15 and 20 minutes each) that come with the DVD in the extras. My guess is that it was either too much footage for put in the film, or too short amount to make a true, complete sequel. But it will definitely help fill in some of the questions (but not all) that are bound to come up. And besides, this is the only way to see any of the footage of '70s action star Fred "The Hammer" Williamson, in a bit of an extended cameo that is not really explained well, as is another short bit by Edwin Neal, who plays the POTUS; not bad for someone who started as the insane hitchhiker in the original 1974 *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*.

The film has a bit of everything (too much?). For example, when God is missing, people do not die no matter how grievous their injuries, and the dead also arise. This gives way to an amusing social bias between those who died before or after God's disappearance. This would make an interesting full-length feature in itself, especially in our current zombie-fixated and partisan culture.

With this entire convolution, what actually annoyed me was the shoddy camerawork. It felt like a high school project. Shaky cameras are bad enough, but badly handled shaky cameras are something else. There are also some larger choice questions I had, such as: if ValYouCorp can make a camera that fit inside someone's eye without being detected, then why does their hit team need to film their excursion into the woods with a 1980s sized camcorder?

Despite my whining, there are a lot of imaginative uses of the image, such as thoughtful switching between color and black-n-white, stylized imagery (including with the hit team mentioned above), and the occasionally really smart use of contrast and lighting.

There are a few good giggles in there, and at least three times I found myself laughing out loud. It's a fun film, but it does take some work to watch (i.e., it can't be put on in the background if you want to make anything of the plot), and whether you think it is or not, could depend on factors such as some history with J.J. Abrams and Chris Carter material, how stoned you are at the time of viewing, and level of patience. Especially the latter. I enjoyed the experience, but felt exhausted.

As a sidebar that has nuthin' ta do with nuthin', I find it cool that the actresses of the two couples of youngins have last names that rhyme.

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

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