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Random Film of the Week(end): Bath Salt Zombies

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As far as low-budget horror flicks go in this day and age, MVD Entertainment Group's latest DVD release, **Bath Salt Zombies** is a gory wonder of economy that's an intentionally cheesy, but wickedly fun time. Packing in plenty of blood, twisted humor, skin-ripping gore, a couple of sexy ladies, more gore, a few crazily creative fight scenes, cheap backdrops (did I mention gore?), and a leading man with quite the knack for freaky rubber-faced expressions. It's Type AB-solutely NOT for the kiddies, so go roll them into the closet with a box of eBay Ho-Ho's (or substitute those nastier Little Debbie rip-offs that taste like sugar dipped chocolate rolled sponges — they won't know the diff), kick back and definitely catch this flick if you're into the hot and heavy cult horror thing it's got going on...

Taking a cue from the days of yore, you get a brief cartoon before the main event, but don't you dare grab the kids from the closet and dump them in front of the TV, as it's a mean little number about a little brat who gets some nasty bath salts from the devil himself and chomps his mommy's mug off. It's creepy enough to scare the kids back into the closet if you let them watch, but if they see it and DON'T get freaked out... well, you better start sleeping with one eyeball open with the dog on your head. Anyway, the film proper is a hoot that pokes fun at the crazy bath salts stories the media has seen fit to buy into full force plus tax while offering up a bunch of bodies and a pretty angry DEA agent with some mad self defense skills. Add in a punk soundtrack with tunes from The Dwarves, The Meatmen, The Murder Junkies, Antiseen and The Gaggers, shake well and you get a flick that gets your ears and eyeballs popped open from the get-go.

Set in a future where the bath salts "industry" has been wiped out after a heavy application of government across the Midwest and Southern states where it thrived. Of course, all this does is push dealers and their stockpiles of low-end salts into hiding with a nice black market in play. Meanwhile, up in New York City, some whiz kid chemical genius with a big idea cooks up a super-high powered new strain with intent to capitalize on the lack of quality product. Of course, his mix has a lot more kicks, as it makes urban hicks turn to "undead" pricks within minutes of smoking it. Let's just say mayhem ensues and not the kind delivered by that guy in the beat-up suit in those insurance commercials. A few eaten faces, a smashed head and plenty of other mutilated body parts later, you'll either be curled up in a ball from laughter or if you're a total chicken, from being scared of some cheap-looking (but amusingly effective) nasty gore effects.

At 90 minutes, the flick does drag a teeny bit in spots, but the threat of something about to happen to someone at nearly any point keeps things rolling 'til the very end. Still, it's a mostly one joke premise that benefits greatly from the super low budget. I'm betting the helicopter shots around Manhattan cost the most money out the (get this) \$5,000 budget (whaaaat??!). Then again, If this were about a few hundred thousand to a million or so dollars more expensive to make and the filmmakers took the material too seriously, you'd end up with something like 1978's Blue Sunshine, which sort of had the same premise, but used lab-tainted LSD as the drug of choice. Actually, I need to track that flick down and do up a RFotW on it, as I keep meaning to do so, but I always get too busy with life and gaming and better (or worse) movies.

Overall, Bath Salt Zombies is a great little cult horror hit that's bound to tickle the ribs of

those who like it hot and chunky. The film works best if you're slightly bent upstairs and have a sense of humor about the subject matter. If director Dustin Wayde Mills and company want to churn out more like this, color me interested in a sequel or all-new horror on a dime enterprise. This one sure beats those "syfy" Channel junk-fests by a few miles. Hey, I don't do drugs (well, other than caffeine and sugar and whatever chemical crap is in the water and any processed food I eat these days) and I know "real" zombies are fake, so I find stuff like this mighty damn funny. That said, real-life cranked up jackasses turned crazed cannibal thanks to ingesting untested chemicals as a recreational high? Yeah, that WOULD be kind of scary (or would be a hell of a lot scarier if I lived near some)...

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