

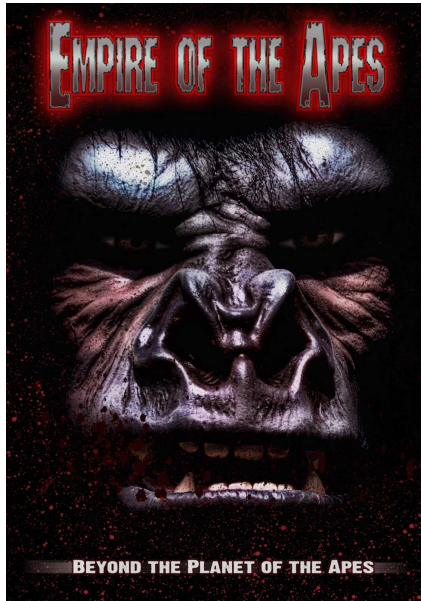
Indie Horror Films

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.

Saturday, August 16, 2014

DVD Review: Empire of the Apes

Text by Richard Gary / Indie Horror Films, 2014
Images from the Internet



Empire of the Apes

Written and directed by Mark Polonia
Sterling Entertainment
Polonia Bros Entertainment
MVD Visual
80 minutes, 2013
www.sterlingmoviefactory.com
www.mvdvisual.com

Uff da.

Over the past few years, Polonia and his siblings have made a name for themselves in the indie horror world apparently by sheer volume. He has directed over thirty films since 1986, though becoming much more prolific since the millennium, averaging two or three releases per year. And yet, this is the first of his I've seen, so I will only go by this one.

Let's get right to the premise, which is an obvious combination of *The Planet of the Apes* franchise through the decades, Larry Buchanan's *Mistress of the Apes* (1979), and Ken Dixon's *Slave Girls From Beyond Infinity* (1987). Most have their roots or ideals in the early 1980s horror/sci-fi glut that emerged with the VHS market. I'm nearly surprised there wasn't a cameo here by the likes of Brinke Stevens, Linnea Quigley or Michelle Bauer.

But the cast is small and most have but few credits (nearly all with Polonia). Told mostly in flashback, three comely women wearing little are prisoners on a spaceship and about to be sold to another planet as pleasure servants. They don't really like each other much, but manage to work together to escape and steal a space pod, landing on a planet inhabited by about half a dozen talking male apes (English, of course), led by the ambitious and cruel Korg (Ken Van Sant), wearing a headpiece-hat-thingie that looks like medieval kings wore. On the other end of the spectrum is the erstwhile ape hero, Trask (Jeff Kirkendall), who wears a tan overcoat! With a hood! It's sort of right wing vs. left, if you want to get a tad deep about it.

Speaking of the apes, their masks are obviously rubber, with a loose jaw for when they are talking. And despite that they are on a planet far, far away, even though it's odd they speak English, it's the phrases they use that throw me. For example, one references the planet as a "Garden of Eden." Old Testament on chimp planet? Wha? Another time what is spouted is, "This way, you merry mother grabbers!" Eh? Lots of anachronistic

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language is flung like poo at us, though no cuss words. Of course, this is also part of the charm, and besides, it may show up on TV that way. Uncut.

The lead human villain is the head of the prison ship, Captain Zantor (played by shaved-head punk rock drummer Steve Diasparra). On a slightly different and deeper level, there is actually very little difference between leader Korg and leader Zantor, which I am sure is part of the point.

They are conniving, ambitious, greedy, and backstabbing. Which will win? Well, that's given away pretty early, unfortunately, as this is – as I stated earlier – a flashback.



As for our three anti-heroines, there's the somewhat leader and toothsome Dane (Danielle Donahue), the biker babe type Theel (Elizabeth V. Costanzo), and the "innocent" Jada (Marie DeLorenzo, who rocks a sort of Drew Barrymore look). Despite the theme of the film, they actually take second banana (couldn't resist) to both Korg and Zantor. But they are all three attractive, and all dressed in some form of flesh-showing Lycra.

Speaking of which, let's talk about why we watch this stuff, in part. Even though there are lots of bare arms, legs and bellies, there

is absolutely zero nudity here, not even a hint. Hasn't anyone given Polonia the handbook? There is practically no blood, never mind gore. Polonia *needs* to contact and hire DMP (Dustin Mills Productions), one of the best in the micro-budget trade, to get his splatter on. And as for SFX, well, other than some rubber masks, a couple of interesting looking spears, and some miniature space crafts, nearly all of the effects are cheap digi ones that look like it was done on a free software you can download from the 'net. We're talking Ed Wood level effects, if there was digi-FX back then.

I respect what the Polonia Brothers are doing, don't get me wrong, please. They do get a story going, and even manage to make it lead towards a sequel even though the whole ending here is a WTF moment. The kindest and truest thing I can say about this film is it really is a loyal nod to the 1980s VHS schlock that so many of us like. Even though I thought the pace was a bit slow, the dialog stunted, the acting deplorable, the setting silly (mowed grass?!), and huge plot holes (really, the captain of the prison ship would go after three prisoners on an unknown planet? Alone?), I would still rather see something like this than sit in a theater and watch most Hollywood digital disasters (for example, the excruciatingly painful on so many levels *Transformers* franchise).

So even with its many faults, I say a small bravo, and look forward (though on a lower scale) to the next in the *Apes* series.

Posted by Robert Barry Francos at 12:23 PM

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