

# Empire of the Apes

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Three women are held captive on a prison ship in space, en route to be sold to an alien race as sex slaves. They capture one of the ship's escape pods, and flee to a nearby planet. When they land they are confronted by the planet's inhabitants – sentient apes, who hope to use their space craft to escape, or failing that to use the women as breeding stock to increase their dwindling numbers. At the same time, they are pursued by Zantor the prison warden, who fears retribution from his customers if he can't supply the women on

schedule.

If the synopsis above sounds like a sleazy Grindhouse film from the 70s, all full of gratuitous violence and nudity....

....you've fallen into the Polonia Brothers' trap – **Empire Of the Apes** is nowhere near that entertaining.

To start with, the film is painful to look at. Not in the sense that the effects are terrible (they are, but more of that in a bit) but that something to do with the camera they used makes a jagged digital blur every time the camera moves faster than a slow walk. Since this is fairly often, it's quite possible that watching this movie will give you a massive headache, as it did for me.

This is not helped by the sound, which seems to have been largely done on location with a single mic (possibly the camera mic) and has the telltale echoey, indistinct and “distant” sound you get from that. When it's not too far away, the mic's been placed too close to the actor without a pop screen of any kind so thuds and pops are pretty much constant.

The effects are, as I noted above, dreadful. The masks, miniatures, props, and costumes are kind of charming in their horribleness – like watching early **Dr. Who** episodes, or seeing the strings on the **Thunderbirds** – but the computer effects are just abominable. Rather than use cheap practical effects like stage blood or dry-ice smoke, the Polonia Brothers opted to superimpose smoke, fire, spaceship engine effects, muzzle flare for guns, and basically any other “effect” they needed, using the worst possible digital superimposition. Worse than fake, it's incredibly distracting.

Not that there's a lot to be distracted from in the first place. None of the three human women are especially interesting – they're marked out as “bitch”, “innocent but annoying” and “kind of motherly” at the start and never really get fleshed out any more than that. The apes have subplots in the form of a power struggle and a plot to conceal a fake god, but they're so cursory and the ape masks are so unexpressive that those only really serve to slow things

down.

Things are pretty slow already. The script is pretty heavily overwritten, with characters (especially the apes) tending to veer off into long and overblown speeches at the slightest provocation. In combination with the general cheapness and incompetence on view, this lends a strange “amateur dramatics gone horribly wrong” vibe to the proceedings.

**Empire Of The Apes** really felt like it wanted to be a homage to the dark and exploitative “video nasty” period of cinema, but it failed to be dark, nasty or exploitative enough. As a result, it’s just kind of hard to watch. Not recommended.

**Director: Mark Polonia / USA / 2013 / MVD Visual & Stirling Entertainment / 79 Mins / 1.33:1 / Region 4**



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