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EMPIRE OF THE APES (2013)

Published by [David Carter](#) on 2014/5/11 (134 reads)

Directed by Mark Polonia
Review by David Carter



Released by MVD Visual
Running Time: 79 minutes
Rating: Not Rated
Color format: Color
Audio/Subtitles: 2.0 Stereo English
Region Code: 1, NTSC
Aspect Ratio: 1.33:1
16:9 Enhanced: Yes
Special Features: None
Trailer Online: [Yes](#)



Short Version: More damn, dirty apes

Mark and John Polonia will always have a place in low-budget cinema history. Their 1986 film SPLATTER FARM was one of the first entries in the shot-on-video subgenre and was made while the pair was still in their teens! SPLATTER FARM also showcased the bizarre, boundary-pushing plots that would become a hallmark of their output. John Polonia unfortunately passed away in 2008, but Mark has carried on with a new collaborator, famed indie special effects guru Brett Piper (RAIDERS OF THE LIVING DEAD, BIKINI GIRLS ON DINOSAUR PLANET). Polonia and Piper's latest effort, EMPIRE OF THE APES, is now available on DVD from MVD Visual.



When we first meet intergalactic bad girls Jada, Dane, and Theel they are prisoners on the ship of Captain Zantor. Zantor's planning on selling the women to an alien race, but the trio has a different idea. They subdue Zantor's guards and commandeering an escape pod, crash landing on a hospitable but seemingly empty planet. They know that Zantor won't be far behind, so the girls scramble to find a way off the barren planet.

Jada, Dane, and Theel soon find out that the planet isn't as empty as they originally thought; it's actually inhabited by intelligent apes. Led by Korg, the apes capture and imprison the girls in hopes of mating with them to revive their dying species. The trio desperately try to escape with the help of a sympathetic ape, not knowing that Zantor has arrived, doubling the number of their pursuers. Korg and Zantor form an uneasy alliance to capture the girls and transport the remaining ape-men off the planet. Each plans on double-crossing the other, and the outcome of their fight will decide not only the fate of the girls, but the entire galaxy as well.



I'm no stranger to micro-budget cinema and neither are Polonia and Piper. They have certainly learned how to make the most out of the least, and that ability is definitely on display in EMPIRE OF THE APES. Polonia has progressed beyond shooting on cam-corders but the special effects of his films have changed very little since the mid-eighties: the apes wear commercially available gorilla masks and the lips don't move. Depending on your opinion of micro-budget films, you'll either find this endearing or infuriating.

I've never let budget constraints take away from my enjoyment of a film, and as a rehash of PLANET OF THE APES, et al. EMPIRE does a competent job of hitting all the expected marks. Polonia doesn't try to reinvent the

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wheel here – simply mimicking the classic 70s series was good enough for Hollywood in 2001, 2011, and once again later this year, so doing the same shouldn't be held against Polonia. I will give the film credit for attempting to add in some new elements not found in the originals such as the need to use the girls to repopulate the ape race. Additionally, APES films have historically relied on an ending twist – a technique avoid by EMPIRE to its credit.

MVD Visual's disc has a good looking print of the film. Despite its low-budget origins, the quality of the visual and audio presentations is surprisingly high. Appearances to the contrary, EMPIRE OF THE APES isn't a spoof but a faithful reimagining of the APES franchise in a micro-budget context. I found this to be refreshing, since humorous takes on this concept are numerous. Not as groundbreaking as SPLATTER FARM or some of Polonia's earlier works, EMPIRE OF THE APES will still manage to bring a smile to the faces of those who fondly remember the glory days of no-budget indie cinema.



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