

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, August 22, 2014

DVD Review: Camp Blood First Slaughter

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



Camp Blood First Slaughter

Written and directed by Mark Polonia

Sterling Entertainment

Polonia Bros Entertainment

MVD Visual

78 minutes, 2014

www.sterlingmoviefactory.com

www.mvdvisual.com

Recently, I reviewed another Polonia film, *Empire of the Apes* [HERE], the film they made before this one, and I wonder how they got so much better in one film?

There are similarities, though: To begin, both films are based on other people's franchises, in this case it being Brad Sykes's killer clown in the woods *Camp Blood* trilogy, which I haven't seen. Well, this one doesn't continue it as much as kick it in the ass, which is part of what makes it fun. And then, like most other killer in mask camp films, this one takes place in the woods, much as did *Empire*.

What I like about this film is that Polonia takes the basic maniac in the woods story and mixes it up a bit. All the clichés of the genre are there, including the weird old guy warning them to leave which they of course ignore, and Polonia even combines it with the found footage phenomena that everyone seems to be jumping on over the past few years since *Blair Witch Project* (1999).

Sometimes when you have an indie film, because the Hollywood rules don't always count and the training is more hands-on, directors can get away with more because the lines are more fluid. This happens right off the bat here. Did not see that first killing coming at all, and it was very impressive.

After a standard prologue where the woman belittles the man who gets killed before she does, as is also par as the story is a class of high schoolers – for once most of whom look like they actually could be that age or close – are sent into the woods by their teacher (Cindy Wheeler) to investigate (and film) what really happened. The point is to prove or disprove if there even is a Blood Lake killer clown with a machete hacking people. Okay, yes, same MO (i.e., mask and a onesie) as Jason and same locale as Jason and same weapon as Jason. I get it other reviewers, so let's move on.

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So three females and two males camp out, and then run their cameras constantly through the day. And night. With no outlets to recharge the cameras. It's the modern equivalent of a Western where the six-shooter never runs out of bullets, I suppose. I know I have to charge mine about every two hours of usage. Again, the rules of micro-budget are different, that is apparent.

Talk around the campfire with one of them trying to scare the others with stories? Check. False scares (such as someone surprising someone in the dark)? Check. A real scare as the killer shows up after the false scare? Check.

Now, while a lot of this is frankly following the playbook, there is also an undercurrent element which has, well, if not originality, then definitely a shake-up of the standard. There is some playing with time, you definitely get a preview of what is going to happen to our hapless students, and of course, what are left are the video cameras, including the one worn by the killer on the side of its mask. And the ending is actually a bit of a surprise.

While this isn't the greatest of films, it's miles above the *Empire of the Apes* (the one Polonia did before this one!). The gore is a cheesy mix of digital and appliance. Despite being a bit hackneyed, such as using a machete with part of the blade cut out to look like it's chopping through a body part, it's still a fun ride to watch. The digital blood spatter is, however, just bad. There most of the other reviews I've read have it right; fakest I've seen since *Empire*, which was even way more *fakey*.

Again, micro-budgets produce interesting vibes, and sometimes even the most ridiculous become... well, not credible, but acceptable-though-noticeable. For example, when one teen is getting her head chopped off, and blood is pouring from her mouth (they must have gone through a *lot* of blood capsules in this film as *everyone* bleeds profusely from the mouth), she appears to be laughing as she's coughing up blood. It actually made *me* smile, and she was one of my favorite characters.



Now to some quickies: You can tell when the POV is the killer's other than the students because you can hear the heavy breathing, like it was the end of a marathon; I kept saying, dude, you need to work out more and do some cardio. Every couple of minutes you see the screen scrambled with a *szhzhzhz* sound, like interference, to remind the viewer that it is supposed to be watching video after the fact. I know my digi camera never does that, but okay. I figured out the killer pretty fast, dismissed it, and then remembered at the end as was right; however, it's not *that* obvious and it *may* surprise you. It seems that every victim picked up the wooden Camp Blood sign just before they become ex-teens. Again, no nudity or even the suggestion of it (though an affair is rumoured). Other than chapter choices, there are no extras on this.

Some of the Polonia stock players make appearances, such as Jeff Kirkendall (also a genre filmmaker) as the loony warning them away, Ken Van Sant as the sheriff that finds the cameras, and punk rock drummer (yes, I will always use that descriptor because it is cool) Steve Diasparra as the Mayor (and one other role). Most of the other cast have either this as their only credit, or just a couple or few others with Polonia or Kirkendall.

Yeah, the acting and dialog are somewhat stilted, but the message comes across without the viewer having to use the mind too much, and sometimes that's all one needs, right? The film is a decent length, being not *too* long, but with enough time to tell the story, which is obviously written for a sequel.

Posted by Robert Barry Francos at 6:43 PM

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