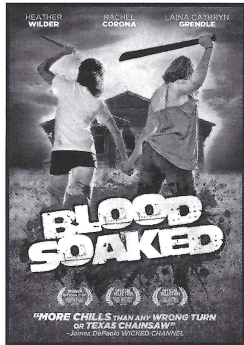


the corpses, both male and female. Yes, I realize that Cédric is *supposed* to be a rude, talentless asshole, but his character — like large portions of the film — is also severely tedious, particularly Dupuis' lengthy close-up rants. Squandering a potentially clever idea, the gore is gross yet never believable, it's obvious where the story is heading after 10 minutes, and the whole thing feels like a pointless exercise in excess and egomania.

Writer-director Peter Grendle certainly knows how to quickly grab a viewer's attention with his 2014 horror goulash **BLOOD SOAKED** (*Wild Eye*). We get two little girls witnessing their father's death, a panicked woman pursued through the desert and snazzy opening credits with a Nazi motif, until the story finally settles down as we're introduced to perky college student Piper (Heather Wilder). This incoming freshman is thrilled to be away from home and making new friends, like affectionate lesbian Ashley (Rachel Corona), who invites naive-but-willing-to-experiment Piper to a party in the New Mexico desert. Unfortunately, car trouble soon leads to the pair's roadside run-in with crazy, bedraggled homophobic siblings Sadie (Laina Grendle) and Katie (Hayley Derryberry), who also happen to be Nazis! Piper's nightmare turns seriously weird (not to mention, black-and-white) once she's taken prisoner in their secret bunker, complete with a scheme involving a secret German neurotoxin that



creates flesh-eating zombies! If all of this seems incredibly silly, it is. Alas, it isn't nearly as much fun as it sounds. Wilder is cute and highly personable, with Piper's likable kitschiness keeping us hooked once the horror kicks in, while her nutjob captors end up being more strident than legitimately scary. The set-up is great, the later portions are grueling yet monotonous, and despite being only 68 minutes, its story runs out of gas long before the end credits. Extras include Grendle's effectively grim, 11-minute THIS SIDE OF NIGHTMARE, the 2007 short which inspired this feature; an intro (and drunken outtakes) with Heather Wilder and Laina Grendle; plus two commentaries — one pairing the director and cinematographer Tyler King, another with leading ladies Heather and Laina — as they recall the shoot's oppressive heat, lack of permits, fire ants, and using an abandoned college dorm for their makeshift Nazi bunker (which earned a few surprised looks from the school's janitors).

When the Canadian fright-fest **CURTAINS** (*Synapse*) first schlepped into 1983 theatres, it was promptly dismissed as flacid, nonsensical garbage. Sadly, that's still true, though insight into the film's chaotic, behind-the-scenes history provides a partial explanation for its failure — since dissatisfied producer Peter Simpson recut the original footage (that had been directed by Oscar-nominated cinematographer Richard Ciupka), personally commandeered re-shoots nearly *two years* later and "salvaged" the project by turning Ciupka's lovingly-shot psychodrama into run-of-the-mill horror fluff. On the positive side, this mess has never *looked* better... Egomaniacal director Jonathan Stryker (John Vernon) has an unorthodox method of casting the coveted lead in his latest opus — invite several diverse candidates to his remote, soon-to-be-snowed-in mansion and see what shakes out. Guests include a bitchy actress

(Linda Thorson, from *THE AVENGERS*), a stand-up comic (*STRANGE BREW*'s Lynne Griffin), a famous ice skater (Lesleh Donaldson), a dancer (Anne Ditchburn, star of John G. Avildsen's romantic-misfire *SLOW DANCING IN THE BIG CITY*), plus Stryker's longtime starlet (slumming Samantha Eggar), who's straight from a looney bin stint. The proceedings quickly shift from catty to deadly as these gals are slaughtered, one by one, by some hag-masked fiend. Yawn. The plot is littered with incoherent twists, the kill-scenes are dopey, and what the fuck is up with that hideous doll with the outstretched arms (featured prominently in the film's advertising), which appears just as a couple characters are about to die, only to be totally forgotten about? Meanwhile, Eggar overacts wildly (which sorta suits her unstable role), Vernon plays yet another manipulative sleazeball and Griffin brings welcome attitude and humor to the dreary shenanigans, plus look for Michael Wincott as Stryker's creepy, Jacuzzi-screwing assistant and Maury Chaykin as a swishy talent agent. The disc includes a commentary track by Griffin and Donaldson, a 2004 audio interview with douchebag Simpson and a brief chat with Eggar, but its highlight is a 36-minute featurette detailing the film's haphazard production history, with comments from Ciupka, Griffin, Donaldson, and assorted crew members (none of whom seem particularly proud of this fiasco).



Civilization is on the brink, monsters roam, pirates rule, animals wear hats, and teenagers still have f@#king cell phones!

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