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[BD Review] Stay For the Shorts In 'Hillbilly Horror Show Vol. 1,' Skip The Skits

 By *Pat Torfe* on November 17, 2014 @*pattorfe*

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Horror fans have had a pretty good run of anthology television shows. From *The Twilight Zone* and *Tales From The Crypt*, to more recent fare like *Masters Of Horror* and *American Horror Story*, and even the humorous side of horror with *Mystery Science Theater 3000*. Like the latter (minus the robots) and running commentary), today's low-budget anthology show consists of Blu de Golyer's *Hillbilly Horror Show*, which is on Vimeo-on-Demand. This first volume of the show contains four shorts by up-and-coming indie directors, mixed in with some skits from our hosts, all for a measly ten bucks. Time to crack open the moonshine.

Bo, Cephus and their cousin Lulu, three fun-loving, beer-guzzling hillbillies, pick out horror shorts from fresh directors from around the world for your viewing pleasure. The first short is "Franky And The Ant", directed by Billy Hayes. In this short, Franky (Emmanuel Todorov) has been betrayed, and now he's looking for more than just payback. The next short, Cuyler Carvin's "Amused", has a woman named Martha (Elise Rovinsky) returning home one morning to find something unspeakable munching on her daughter's head. Martha flees but is now stuck navigating through the frozen countryside with the horror in hot pursuit. Theo Stefanski's "Doppelganger" has a lonely skeleton on a journey to try and find one of his own kind, but gets more than he bargained for. Finally, Tim Zwica's "The Nest" has a restaurant owner whose honey is wildly popular with people. However, the owner's bees are of the giant type, and are more fond of flesh than of flowers.

Clocking in at 10 minutes, "Franky And The Ant" starts off with what feels like a rip-off of Vincent


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and Jules from *Pulp Fiction*, complete with banter that tries to be philosophical mixed in with more “fcks” than *Scarface*. However, it’s hampered by the fact that the duo aren’t properly micked (remember your volume). The twist at the end was pretty cool, along with some nice shots (such as the view from inside a coffee can and a reflection in a toaster), but overall, it wasn’t anything special.

“Doppelganger” plays out like a tribute to Ray Harryhausen with its stop-motion effects. It’s not as smooth as the stuff from *Jason And The Argonauts*, but it’s still neat to see. This short is silent, but like all good shorts, effectively uses music to help build up the journey, with the twist at the end being punctuated nicely. The only weak spot is the short is drawn out for too long (the irony doesn’t escape me), and could’ve maybe had a trim.

“Amused” opens up with a neat quote by Stephen King, and quickly displays its strengths in showing off the beautiful winter landscape. Reminds me of back home. The camera work is the real strength of this short, along with the acting. This one again has a twist to it at the end, but it ends on a weird note that had me scratching my head. Still, some good foley work as well as a nice bit of gore to it.

Note to new filmmakers: Don’t be M. Night Shyamalan. Not every movie has to have a twist. It’s quickly becoming a cliché that doesn’t need to be happening (if it hasn’t already).

With “The Nest”, this is the longest short at 32 minutes. This one was by far the best of the lot. Slickly shot in a sepia filter, with some great acting by Jamie Newell as the restaurant owner. The rest of the cast does well, although Adam Shalzi’s wooden acting and dialogue makes his character kind of irritating. The CG unfortunately is the weakest part of the short, which is a shame because the sets like the diner and the nest really benefit from the use of the aforementioned filter. I genuinely would love to see this turned into a feature-length film, as it’s unique and delightfully twisted in the vein of *Motel Hell*.

As for the skits with our hillbilly presenters? They fall flat. Relying on the same redneck jokes you’ve heard before and ripping off “King Of The Hill” in the character of Cephus, the skits, plainly speaking, aren’t funny. The only consolation is seeing Rachel Faulkner as Lulu. She’s certainly easy on the eyes. Overall, the shorts are a mixed bag. Granted, they’re not terrible by any stretch of the imagination. A couple of them do feel like college projects, albeit well-done college projects. It remains to be seen what the next couple of volumes will have to showcase, but at least there’s entertainment to be found in these films. Just leave the hillbilly skits to a minimum.

Video/Audio:

Presented in 1.78:1 widescreen (though “Doppelganger” is slightly windowboxed), the various sources all vary in quality, but are still quite good. There are a few scratches and dirt here and there, with some minor chromatic aberration in “Amused”, but overall the image is acceptable.

Audio-wise, the LPCM Stereo is a mixed bag. For the most part, audio is clear and free of distortion, but for “Franky And The Ant” and “The Nest”, the audio levels are really low when it comes to dialogue. Have your remote handy for changing the volume back and forth, as you’ll have a hard time hearing what’s being said. Other than that, it matches the video in terms of quality.

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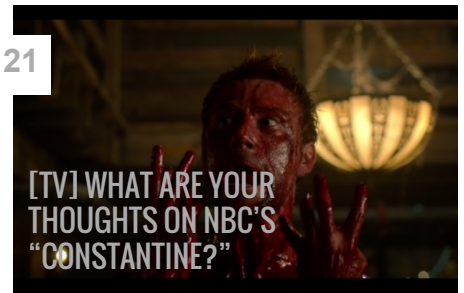
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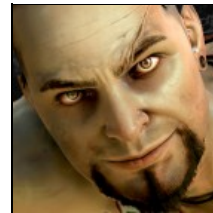
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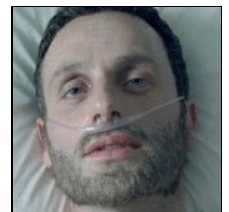
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