



# THE GORE MET

MENU: EIGHT DISHES OF INDIE HORROR



The anthology film has long been a staple of the horror genre and has enjoyed a renaissance as of late due to movies such as *The Theatre Bizarre* (2011), *VH/S* (2012), and *The ABCs of Death* (2012). Out this month on DVD and VHS from Wild Eye Releasing is *Hi-8 (Horror Independent 8)*, an anthology featuring an all-star cast of eight veteran independent horror filmmakers getting back to their roots.

"A few years ago, I was working on a belated VHS release of one of my old Hi-8 features from the '90s," recalls executive producer Brad Sykes. "That reminded me of how much fun it used to be back then, just making a film for the fun of it, without all the creative and financial pressures you get in 'professional' filmmaking. So I thought *Hi-8* would be a fun way to get back in that groove, and bring some other indie SOV vets along for the ride".

Sykes wanted that ride to be old school and devised a simple set of rules for the project. Each segment had to be eight to ten minutes long and shot on VHS, Hi-8, Digital or miniDV in a 4:3 aspect ratio, and all of the makeup and gore effects had to be practical. He then compiled a list of directors with his producer and wife, Josephina.

"We selected the other seven filmmakers based on their track record, and their individual styles," says Sykes. "I wanted a lot of different styles and tones represented in the finished movie. As long as they respected the rules, they were free to make whatever type of film they wanted, as long as it was horror."

*Hi-8* is actually comprised of ten short films. Sykes' *No Budget Films Presents...* concerns three young people shooting a no-budget slasher in a park and serves as the wraparound; Tim Ritter's *Switchblade Insane* turns the indie-standard serial killer story on its ear; Marcus Koch's *A Very Bad Situation* is a paean to horror films like *The*



*Deadly Spawn* and *Slither*. Tony Masiello's *The Tape* is about a video store clerk obsessed with a rare VHS tape, while Ron Bonk's *Gang Them Style* is a delightfully campy zombie romp bursting with references to classic '80s horror films. Then there's Chris Seaver's oddball *Genre Blending*, which takes a comedic approach to rape, and Todd Sheet's *The Request*, a mature tale of a late-night disc jockey haunted by telephone calls from his dead wife. Donald Farmer's *Thicker Than Water* deals with a newly expectant mother whose insecurity about her relationship drives her to torture and murder, and the final story, Sykes' *The Scout*, tells the tale of an independent director and his actress girlfriend who find themselves stranded while scouting a remote and eerie location in the desert.

There's a genuine sense of fun in *Hi-8* and, with the exception of *Genre Blending*, loads of splatter! The shorts run the gamut from comical (*Gang Them Style*) to deadly serious (*The Scout*) and are perfectly sequenced. Given the number of filmmakers and Sykes' hands-off approach to the production of the film, there's a re-

markable sense of cohesiveness in the end product.

"We ended up with eight films shot in six different states," he says. "Honestly, we didn't know how the film was going to turn out until we had about half the shorts delivered. Josephina and I were always discussing what order to put them in for maximum impact, because the tone was always changing. I wanted those tonal variations and I got them, though not necessarily in the way I expected. Some of the directors gave me very different films than I expected from them. So even if you know some of their past work and have expectations, prepare to be surprised!"

As with all independent productions, there were hardships to get around and hurdles to get over.

"A lot of them were location shoots," says Sykes, "and had to contend with the usual issues — inclement weather, exterior noise, etc. On my segment, *The Scout*, we were constantly stopped by 70 mph winds blasting through the Mojave Desert. Todd Sheets got shut down by the cops while shooting a scene with a guy dragging a 'dead body' into the woods at night. That story took me right back to my teen years getting busted for shooting all over town. That's when I knew we had something special. It's just not an indie horror flick 'til some concerned citizen calls the police on you."

