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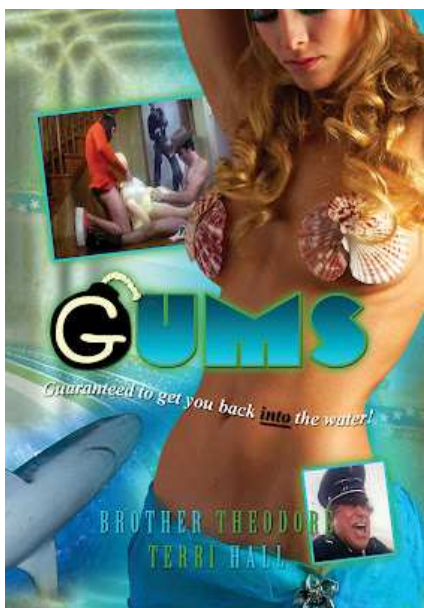
# Indie Horror Films

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](mailto:rbf55@msn.com).

Thursday, May 3, 2012

## DVD Review: Gums

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### Gums

Directed by Robert J. Kaplan  
Sinful Mermaid, 1976 / 2012  
66 minutes, USD \$24.95  
[MVDvisual.com](http://MVDvisual.com)

If you look at the works of recent low-to-nil budget auteurs that use high-end video for their releases, it's interesting to look back at some of the film releases that were actually shot on celluloid, rather than digi.

For a while, in its golden age of the 1970s, porn was a haven for the quickie film (as well as a training school for up-and-coming major directors). Back then, rather than a collection of shorts set pieces strung together as it is now, there was a story, even if it was threadbare or nonsensical.

That brings us to *Gums*, a semi-ambitious homage to the then-recent Spielberg hit, *Jaws* (1975). Rather than a shark, though, it's a "Great White Mermaid" (or, spermus gobbulous) that is gulping people down (men and women), in more ways than one.

During a time when the industry was still located mainly in New York City (before becoming almost completely Los Angeles-centric in the '80s), so the fact that this albatross was filmed both in Long Island (NY) and Florida is quite a memorable note. It's just a shame it did not live up to its possibilities. Why? Oh, the reasons are many. And while most of these may be a surefire must-to-avoid, it's *so* bizarre in its way that it's almost worth seeing just for all the things wrong with it.

Let's start at the top. The director, Robert Kaplan, must have been stoned out of his mind because he handed in a product that had some excellent reasons to succeed, and trashed them all. Now, let's get to the story and cast.

As the titular (pun intended) evil mermaid, is Terri Hall (d. 2007). She is completely nude in every shot, with

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the exception of a tiara, some bluish make-up that covers the top half of her face, and an occasional shell-strung belly chain. Her entire oeuvre is to swim around (sometimes in the ocean, and when at “home” under the sea, it’s obviously in a pool), including doing underwater cartwheels. When on solid ground (apparently mermaids not only have two legs, but can breathe in both water and air), she’s dancing, with Hall putting her classical training to use.

The hero of the piece is Sheriff Rooster Coxswain Jr. III (yep, you read that correctly), with Paul Styles playing the Brody role. With his thick New York accent and dazed look, it’s no surprise that this is Styles only film credit. Even the film crew recognized this, and I’ll get to that a bit later. Meanwhile, when the sheriff isn’t doing the wife (Rachel McCallister, aka Crystal Sync; she was also in the classic *Bloodsucking Freaks* [1976], FYI), he’s screwing a blow-up doll he shares with...

...Filling in for the scientist role as Seymour “Sigh” Smegma is Dryfuss-look-a-like Richard Lair. Who, you ask? Well, in “the industry” he was better known as Richard Bolla, or just R Bolla. Under his real name, Robert Kerman (from Bensonhurst!), he is a trained actor who got into the industry to survive, and later became a big star in Italian cinema, including seminal genre films like *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980) and *Cannibal Ferox* (1981). But for this film, he pretty much walks through his role, obviously ad-libbing and recognizing it for the *WTF* that it is.

The last main character is actually quite the shocker. Filling in the Quint role is monologist and “stand-up tragedy” comedian Brother Theodore (Gottlieb; d. 2001), as Captain Carl Clitoris. Through most of the film he is either dressed entirely in an SS uniform (riding crop included) or biker leather, all the more interesting when one realizes that he was a survivor of Dachau. Brother Theodore was quite the phenomenon in New York City at one time, having a one-man show for a large number of years in which he berated the audience for attending, and being at the core of the transgression theater movement. His many appearances on *David Letterman* are legendary, and worth checking into. To have him appear in a non-sexual role (mostly) here in full force alone makes this worth watching, as he sputters and curses, eyes rolling in his head.

Along with *Jaws*, there is also a strong *Blazing Saddles* (1976) feel through this, with people answering all at once for example.

So this mermaid comes to the town of Great Head (sigh) and the three intrepid idiots (along with the gay Deputy Dick, played by Ras Kean) are out to get her. Apparently, when she’s done with her (male) victims, all that’s left of them is their pecker (represented by a rubber dildo, side seam intact). This makes no sense to me, since if this is what she latches onto, why is it the only thing not ingested?

I am assuming this was a hardcore picture when it came out, but perhaps there were two versions of it. In this one, all the sex scenes are either edited so there is no visible penetration or mouth-on-johnson seen, but most of the time the image is blocked by some graphic, be a crude drawing of a plate of mussels, a lobster, or a sign that says something like “U.S. Government Grade ‘A’ Pork” or “Kosher for Passover.” They look period rather than added on in the current version, which is why the wonder of a double release.

To add even more weirdness, on the boat near the end of the film, there is a memo across the screen (in similar graphic form) that states “Get rid of the Sheriff, even a puppet can ACT better than him!!!” And from then on, you got it, he’s replaced by a marionette puppet, with larger than proportion dildo genitalia. Before long, all three of the main male characters are also puppets, which the mermaid orally attacks.

As a final topping, the song over the final credits is a “Mack the Knife” sounding “Thar She Blows,” which is just terrible, though it should be noted that it was written by Bard Fiedel, who would later go on to score the likes of *The Terminator*, *True Lies*, and *Johnny Mnemonic*! Oy.

The extra is three B&W loops of various women undressing, looking like they are from either the ’50s or ’60s.

So, yeah, I thought it was a bad film, you’re most likely to think it’s a bad film...heck, even the film crew thought it was a bad movie. But the question is, is it worth seeing? I reservedly say yes, just for the ?!?!?! factor alone. Just go in knowing what you’re getting into, and that there is certainly no self-satisfaction potential involved.

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#### Bonus video:

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