



Judge Gordon Sullivan was a disco podiatrist.

Get down, get dirty, get dead.

Since at least [Singin' in the Rain](#), movies have looked back at earlier eras and tried to recreate some aspect of them. The idea has worked for everyone from Peter Bogdanovich ([Paper Moon](#)) to Martin Scorsese ([The Aviator](#)), though no one seems to have embraced the idea quite as much as the horror crowd. There's something about capturing an earlier era of horror that seems appealing. Hammer films are often a twist on Universal tropes, and [Halloween](#) looked back to [Psycho](#). Since those heady days of the slasher craze, more and more filmmakers have been looking back to the peaks of Seventies horror. Witness the slew of exorcism movies, Seventies remakes, and grindhouse homages. In some cases, it's just people returning to the familiar, to what horrified them when they were young or the films that made them want to make horror films. In other cases, it's just laziness, filmmakers recycling bankrupt ideas rather than trying anything new. Even more rarely, a filmmaker turns to the past because he or she has a genuine idea and only the tools of prior decades can bring them to life. Such is the case with **The Disco Exorcist**, a clever film that looks back to bellbottoms and assorted other horrors with a loving eye.

Rex Romanski (Michael Reed, [Nun of That](#)) is the king of the disco, until one night he brings home the wrong woman. Rather, he brings home the right woman for that night, and when Rex turns his affections elsewhere, she seeks her revenge by cursing another of Rex's lovers so that she blacks out and becomes a demon whose sole purpose is to kill Rex.

I'm of two minds about **The Disco Exorcist**. On one level, I really enjoyed its retro stylings and low-budget vibe. The film is well-acted (for this type of flick), and the production looks and sound fairly authentic. The film was shot digitally and grindhouse-style print damage in the form of nicks and scratches was added in afterwards, but in many ways the film looks like it could be an unearthed flick from 1976 that's been languishing in someone's basement. The film also gets points for taking a kind of demon/voodoo direction that avoids typical associations. It's obvious that filmmaker Richard Griffin has some issues with religion (if it wasn't obvious from this flick, take a look at his previous effort **Nun of That**) and that gives this flick a satirical edge that too few indie films capitalize on. The soundtrack also deserves a shout-out. It's obvious that the musicians involved really know their 1970s disco, which includes more than the Bee Gees and Donna Summer.

On the other hand, **The Disco Exorcist** can feel like wasted effort. As a viewer, I'm immediately dubious of any film that has to digitally degrade the image to achieve the look of a particular era. I was even skeptical of [Grindhouse](#) initially until the stories pulled me in enough to stop noticing the image degradation. In the case of **The Disco Exorcist**, I don't mind the digital trickery too much, but what it represents bothers me a bit. I often found myself wondering why everyone was going to all this trouble to recreate a bygone era. When I want to watch a Seventies flick, I put on a Seventies flick. To make a low-budget recreation of a low-budget film from the 1970s doesn't seem like the best use of the obvious talent on display in this film. Though there are numerous scenes I enjoyed, there were just as many that left me with the nagging feeling that everyone involved could better spend their time creating their own vision rather than recreating someone else's. This might also translate for other viewers to a sense that the Seventies thing is being and/or has been done to death. Those tired of fake-scratchy film and Seventies fashion should definitely steer clear of this flick.

Whatever side of the film you fall down on, however, you have to admit that **The Disco Exorcist** gets a solid DVD release. The 1.78:1 anamorphic image is clean and bright—or at least it was before the digital degradation was added. Still, even with all the fake cuts and scratches things look good, with appropriately saturated colors and lots of Seventies textures. The audio track is similarly effective, with clear dialogue and sweet disco rhythms.

Extras include a lone deleted scene, a teaser, trailers, and a commentary from director Richard Griffin. He's knowledgeable, and he's more than willing to discuss his creation, offering tidbits on everything from the story's genesis to how the production achieved various effects.

I'll say this for **The Disco Exorcist**: it delivers what it promises—retro-Seventies raunch, horror, and a bit of comedy. Though the kind of attention to historical detail might not be to everyone's taste (especially since a lot of people seem to be jumping on that grindhouse bandwagon), **The Disco Exorcist** is worth a rental for Griffin fans, fans of Troma-style pics, and low-budget horror-comedies in general.