

THE DISCO EXORCIST | May 31, 2012 | ADD A COMMENT

'The Disco Exorcist' doesn't live up to its grindhouse standards

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DVD cover for The Disco Exorcist
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There are very few films released these days which legitimately echo the glory days of "grindhouse" cinema.

Ofentimes, filmmakers lose the point and miss the magic of what earned such classic drive in fare as *Truck Stop Women*, *Ilsa*, *She Wolf of the SS* or Ruggero Deodato's cult *Cannibal Holocaust* their indomitable reputation for sleaze and sickness. As a result, many, if not most of these neo-grindhouse films tend to fall flat, despite an obvious feeling of influence and appreciation for the source material.

Director Richard (*Nun of That*) Griffin's *The Disco Exorcist* is unfortunately one of these films; an admittedly admirable attempt to evoke fond, fuzzy memories of the hazy 1970s exploitation scene which nevertheless devolves fairly quickly into minor mimicry. The flick deals with one Rex Romanski-played with mild charm by a smirking Michael Reed-a swingin' disco aficionado who prides himself on lovin' and leavin 'em with the greatest of greasy ease.

Things quickly venture south for Romanski, however, when he plays the wrong lady for a fool: the diabolic and destructive Rita Marie, who isn't going to be *ignored*, Rex. Boobs, blood and a whole lotta black magic take it from there, with *The Disco Exorcist* gleefully exploring the exploitation plot archives for all their worth as the film comes to an explosive climax.

While all of this sounds very well and good on the surface, *The Disco Exorcist*-like many of its 'New Exploitation' brethren-is simply too self aware to succeed at what was one of *classic* exploitation cinema's biggest and most characteristic strengths: innocence. Griffin's creation is so damned self-aware of its inherent 'kitchiness' that the film never even has a chance to lift from the ground and show the audience what it can do.

No digitally-inserted burn marks or purposeful print damage can hide the fact that this film features stilted and almost uniformly poor acting from its principal cast, with Ruth Sullivan's Rita and Sarah Nicklin's Amoreena Jones joining Reed's portrayal of Romanski to lend only marginal buzz to the proceedings. Likewise, the gratuitous gore and nudity does very little to lift the enjoyment factor for what is, essentially, the worst sort of exploitation: the kind without palpable care or charm.

While the filmmakers of years past may be considered purveyors of 'schlock' by some of today's cinematic standards, the true, inherent magic behind vintage exploitation cinema is that all-important desire to make a good movie. Now, whether or not budget or extraneous constraints allowed that to occur was one thing, but the connecting thread behind why we, as an audience, adore these films despite their flaws is that we can see and feel **behind** all of that, and simply enjoy the absurdity for what it is: entertainment.

Conversely, *The Disco Exorcist* **isn't** entertaining. It's almost embarrassing. Although certain aspects of the film are in place to ensure that all important 1970s legitimacy-the instrumental score of Daniel Hildreth provides some decent disco, although the vocal numbers once again show too much self-aware, coke-obsessed posturing to be rendered as anything other than hokey-the lion's share of Griffin's film fails when it comes to a believable, honoring homage to the "grindhouse" spirit.

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Report



George Pacheco, Cape Cod Movie Examiner

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