

# Indie Horror Films

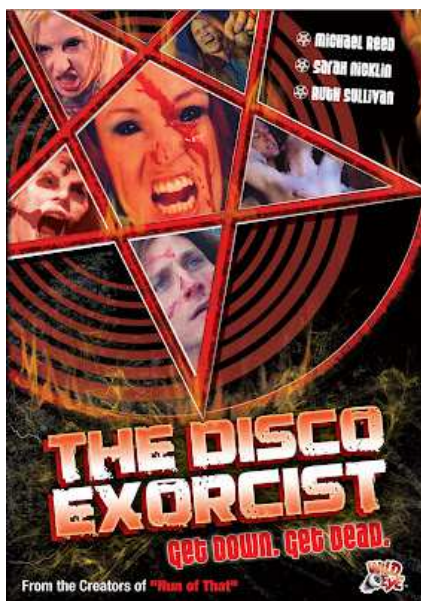
All genres of suspense, terror, and horror will be reviewed by Richard Gary. His address to send preview copies supplied upon request to [rbf55@msn.com](mailto:rbf55@msn.com).

Friday, August 17, 2012

## DVD Review: The Disco Exorcist

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### The Disco Exorcist

Directed by Richard Griffin

Wild Eye Films, 2011

80 minutes, USD \$16.95

[wildeyereleasing.com](http://wildeyereleasing.com)

[MVDvisual.com](http://MVDvisual.com)

It seems the whole retro exploitation movement came into full fruition with the Tarantino / Rodriguez double-billed *Grindhouse* (2007), with fake period pieces added, digital scratches to look old, and "missing scenes" taken out. Just when you thought it was safe to go back into the genre, out comes *The Disco Exorcist*.

Despite the obvious comparison to the previous film(s) mentioned, *The Disco Exorcist* is, well, amazingly enjoyable. Director Richard Griffin has a history of making horror films of various genres, occasionally with a retro feel. He has certainly hit the pin on the voodoo doll head with this one.

Taking place in 1979, at the height of the disco era and just as it was starting to thankfully wane (to be replaced by the equally noxious hip hop), there are three main characters around whom the plot revolves, each with less than subtle character names.

First, there is the title fellow, otherwise known as Rex Romanski (i.e., romantic lead). He's sort of like John Revolta / Tony Monero from *Saturday Night Fever* (1977), who dances and then subsequently beds all the women, and then moves on to the next one with no thought of hurt feelings. He leaves a string of women who sit at the dance club watching him move while bitterly (and humorously) make snide comments like a rejected Greek chorus. Donning a '70s style long-haired wig and full of baby blue eyes and dimples, Michael Reed plays him almost as an innocent, rather than the pig Rex actually acts. Without malice of thought, Romanski just lives his life, which just happens to involve disco, dipping and dumping. His sidekick, Manuel (Brandon Luis Aponte, taking a fun turn), is rarely from his side, even when he's in a theater – er – touching himself, watching his favorite actress perform.

At the club, he meets the edgy, sometimes beautiful / sometimes scary Rita Marie (a derivative of the name Miriam – Moses' sister – Marie means "Bitter"... yes, I just knew that off the top of my head; Rita, a derivative of Margarita; is a pearl... that one I looked up). We see from the first scene that there is something wrong with Rita, who has more power than she can use wisely, and rather takes her anger issues out by... well, you'll have to see the cool period aesthetics. Ruth Sullivan, a consummate actor actually, does just the right amount of scenery chewing for this role, which calls for a lot of hysterics, yearning, burning, and literal finger-pointing.

Lastly, there is Rex's idol and eventual lover, porn star Amoreena Jones (as in *Amore*). Beautiful with pouty lips, Sarah Nicklin is fearless in her role as the focus of Rita's jealous vengeance. This is another part that could have been dismissed by an actor of less caliber, and cheapened by the

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### ▼ 2012 (14)

#### ▼ August (3)

DVD Review: The Disco Exorcist

DVD Review: The Hunt

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#### ► May (5)

#### ► April (2)

#### ► March (4)

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action, but Nicklin actually comes out the best of the three as far as skills go – and that’s saying a lot considering the amount of talent is actually present despite the budget – not by doing her “Linda Blair” bit of being possessed, but by her comic timing and treating this as a she might, say, *The Godfather* (yeah, okay, that was a weird comparison, but hopefully I made my point). Oh, as a sidebar, in the real world, the leads Nicklin and Reed are married, so some of the positions they assume were “familiar,” as they state in the commentary.

All three of these actors are part of the New England theater scene (as are most of the secondary and ancillary cast), and Griffin, from the area himself, filmed much of this in Pawtucket, RI, as he does with most of his releases. As such, the three are part of his stable of on-screen (and quite some behind-the-scenes, as well) talent, having all appeared in a number of his flicks.

I must say, that as a retro film that was supposed to look like it was released at the end of the ‘70s, Griffin does take it a bit too far. For example, in that period, you *never* saw male genitalia, unless it was a rubber dildo. Even then, unless it was someone like Russ Meyer, it was highly unusual, and no theater (other than pornos) would have shown it, unless, of course, it was Meyers, an even rarer exception, and yet only in some major cities. Even with female nudity, it was T&A, but no genital hair for a long time. The one exception I can think of, though, is the actually boring *The Harrad Experiment* (1973), where we got to see Don Johnson’s – er – *johnson*.

Going in that direction for a moment, it is interesting to note that part of the this excursion into dat ol’ tyme exploitation horror, there is a set piece involving the filming of a porno film (stolen, in part, by the faaabulous scenester and collector – IMDB refers to his “paranormal artifacts, murderabilia, sideshow exhibits and downright weird stuff” – Babette Bombshell, who also designed the hexilious voodoo doll). I bring this up because recently, I reviewed the re-release of the mostly expunged *Gum* (1976) [HERE], at the correlation between the two is remarkable, including cheezy sets and lack of acting (although this would become especially true when porn switched from film to video in the ‘80s).

Also, check out the commentary, consisting of director Griffin, actors Nicklin and Reed, and producer Ted Marr. Usually, when you have that many people doing the annotation, it gets muddled and people talk over each other, but here, not only do they respectfully let each other have their say, but what they say is relevant to the film. Plus they still keep it humorous, again indicating that it was an enjoyable shoot for them, which passes on to the viewer.

I gotta say that this was a hell of a hoot (pun intended) to watch, and I recommend it to those who are not offended by body parts, both attached and un-. And, in the meanwhile, I look forward to seeing the sequel, *The Brother of the Disco Exorcist*, listed as turning its head in 2013.

<iframe width="560" height="315" src="http://www.youtube.com/embed/AzmGeZOss5o" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>

Posted by **Robert Barry Francos** at 11:02 AM

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