

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.

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DVD Review: Exit 101: Halloween Party Massacre

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Exit 101: Halloween Party Massacre

Directed by Doug Cole
World Wide Multi-Media (WWMM)
105 minutes, 2011 / 2012
wwmm.info/
MVDvisual.com

Sometimes a thematic cultural trend can get tiresome pretty fast, especially when it seems like it's everywhere. But for some reason, no matter how corny or commonplace it gets, there's something still appealing about a zombie movie, be it viral, radiation, braaaaains, other fleshy bits, or just walking-and-decomposing corpses.

But the place where it is popping up the most, and is largely and lovingly touted, is in independent cinema. Lots of gore and make-up effects raise the possibility of a happy crew and cast. Whether overrun in the city or deep in the woods, a chompin' cadaver is always welcome.

This indie film's title place is real, making it a bit different right off the bat. Down in Cordele (renamed Lakeshear for the film), Georgia, at Exit 101 off highway 75, is the town attraction: a 15-foot Titan 1 missile frame. This is the focal point of the film, the hub where the action emanates.

We meet a group of (too old to really be) high school students whose hangout is at the missile's site, where apparently in 1969, a failed secret military formula was hidden in the projectile. Of course, our noble drawing clique finds it a few days before Halloween, and on a dare, the green fluid is downed by intrepid Caleb (Joseph Lavender, who also wrote and produced the film).

The bunch of bananas includes the power couple of the cute dumb girl Stacey (Kasey Stewart) and the football player Blake (Dennis Proulx) who is a bit of a bully, the cool goth/punk girl Erica (the smokin' Raina Ashley Strickland), the weird-nerd Colin (Sebastian Gruber), the hip token black guy Reggie (Devin Ray), the plain girl Sarah (Cassandra Johnson, who is married to Lavender in the real world) who is secretly in love with Caleb (i.e., she's the heroine), and then there's Caleb, who's the slacker.

As Caleb slowly "turns" over the days, between blinding headaches for which he doesn't think to see a doctor, he starts to eat raw packaged chopped meat and doing in a wayward pizza delivery boy as a bite, for starters.

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Did I mention that this is a comedy? Thankfully not on the bad pun level of, say, *ThankSKilling* (2009), but rather more of a humor flavor throughout. Parts of this film was incredibly effective. There is one great scene, for example, where some rednecks meet pizza boy and things turn nasty. The three actors playing the back woods trailer trash just nail it.

Of course, our likable yet not overly bright group and the growing number of zombies are destined to converge at the big high school costume party in the woods, where blood, gore and humor come to a head.

The mentioned gristle is mostly fine, with an occasionally too thick blood to look real, but it's excusable considering how much works well.

The extras are a gag reel that's amusing in some parts (especially the rednecks ad-libbing). The making-of doc is occasionally interesting. As for the commentary, it's director Cole and writer Lavender. They vary from fascinating when they are on topic of the production information to a tad talking over each other. The only real annoyance is that Cole is too close to the mic so you can hear him breathing through his nose, and Lavender is occasionally too far from the mic, so he's hard to hear.

But it's the film that the important thing, and luckily that is well done and worthwhile.

Posted by **Robert Barry Francos** at 12:01 AM

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