



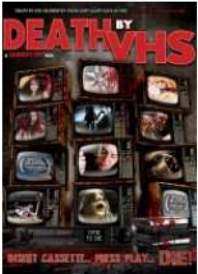
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Movie Review: 'DEATH BY VHS'

Published on August 30, 2013, by Marie Robinson - Posted in [Movie Reviews 0](#)



4.5 Overall Score

Story: 5/10

Characterization: 3/10

Execution: 6/10

Anthologies are fun and allow for creativity and collaborations between filmmakers.

Possibly borrowed ideas and unsatisfying performances.

Anthologies are making a real comeback in the world of horror. Or, rather, they've come back. Anthologies can be a really fun, unique experience, and can allow for some real originality and creativity. All well-versed horror fans are familiar with the more recent and successful brilliance of *V/H/S*, which was creative and cringe-worthy (in the good way, of course). It's common in cinema for filmmakers to borrow the ideas and aspects of well-received films, but it isn't exactly the most original or most admirable thing to do, although it may be done with earnest intentions. There are a few things that led me to believe that 2013 horror anthology film *Death by VHS* was trying to profit off of *V/H/S* and the relevancy of anthos.

Trailer

The title is probably the most obvious (for lack of a better word) rip-off—and when you hear the premise it only lends more to my argument. Two grungy young adults go in search of a series of videotapes that are claimed to have a drug-induced, hypnotic effect on its viewers. On top of that, watching all the tapes is supposed to lead to the audience's demise. But, the dopey duo is willing to the risk as they break out the bong and the snacks and pop in cassette after cassette.

There are three different directors (Walter Ruether, David Sabal, and Jacob O'Neal) and a quite a lengthy list of writers who contribute to this piece, all of which

are independent artists; to several people involved this appears from my research to be their first real endeavor into film.

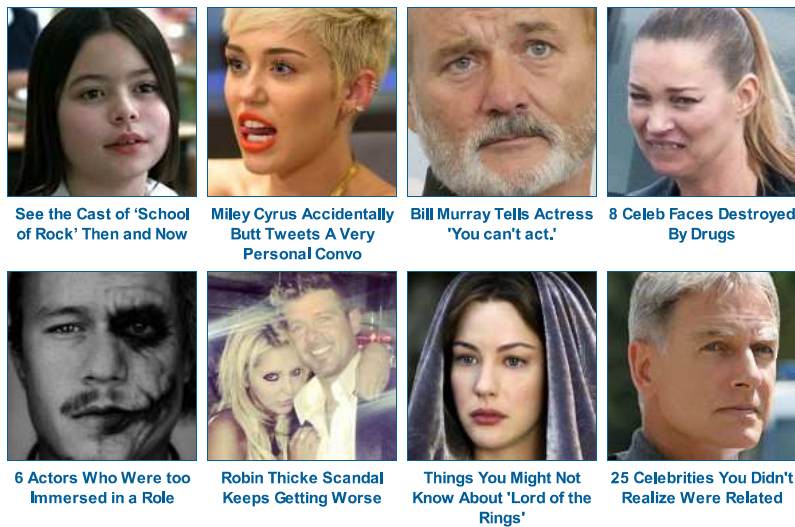
Perhaps the most well known member of the cast and crew is writer/director/producer Walter Ruether, also known as his grindhouse inspire alter ego, Scarlet Fry. Under this guise he has acted, directed and written a few other gritty horror movies. Actually, in his defense, this isn't the first anthology Ruether has been involved in. In fact, his Scarlet Fry character was created to host 2007's *Junkfood Horrorfest*. He seems to have a real love for the vignette form of storytelling—his influences include Rod Serling, Vincent Price, and I'm going to venture a guess and say that he's a fan of *Tales From the Crypt*.

The latter reference is probably the closest of the three that *Death by VHS* resembles. It aspires to be a seedy, romping cult film, but whether it is lack of resources or craft that doesn't quite get the film there. It isn't the filmmakers' fault that they don't have a big budget so I try not to judge a film based on production quality.

Whether it is meant to be campy or the talent really isn't just quite there, the acting was a huge downfall of the flick to me. Sometimes bad acting can give a film a certain kind of charm, but at the same time you don't want it to be so distracting that you forget all about what you are watching.

The vignettes differ from each other in style, content, and somewhat in quality. For example, the first tape, entitled "*Suburban She Freak*" is a light-hearted campfest that could (almost) fit the bill for *Chillerama*, while another shot in black and white goes for a more minimalist, art-house approach.

Like I said, anthologies are pretty popular right now, so if you are a fan of the short story equivalent to film, you may just want to check *Death by VHS* out, or more of Scarlet Fry's work.



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