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STRANGE THINGS ARE HAPPENING

HELL ON EARTH DVD. Elite.



From the producer of **The Deadly Spawn** comes this micro-budget horror comedy that unfortunately doesn't live up to even the minimal expectations you might have for it. A cross between **The Evil Dead** and **Married With Children** – which is a pretty awesome concept if you think about it – it suffers from being neither scary nor funny – the two basic ingredients you might reasonably want in a horror comedy.

It follows teenage Bobby (Brett Fallon), a classic victim character – he wears a leg brace, is hated by his family *and* loves horror movies – who has discovered how to summon up demons, zombie and other ghouls thanks to his demented Aunt Sadie (Pat Caesar), a former witch, who has given him The Apocryphal Book of Tarkuhm. Little does he know that the demon friends he summons are using him to open a portal to allow their demonic master into the world. And tonight is the night, as his bitchy sister (Kristin Woodburn) is having a sleepover with her slutty friends.

While refreshingly old school in its approach – the prosthetic make-ups look like something from the 1980s, and so, to be honest, do the CGI moments – **Hell on Earth** also suffers from all the faults of films of that era. It takes forever for anything to happen – you have to sit through the best part of an hour of talk before the gory horror kicks in. This might be acceptable if the comedy dialogue was actually funny and the actors talented enough to make it work – but that's not the case. In fairness, Ted A. Bohus' screenplay has a few witty lines of dialogue, but its mostly badly delivered and shot – director Bohus definitely letting writer Bohus down.

While he makes excuses on the commentary track about micro-budget films having no time to set up lighting, camera etc, that's clearly a bit of an excuse for a lack of imagination – I think we've all seen films shot for nothing on tight schedules that nonetheless have creative set-ups and atmospheric visuals. And that doesn't really alter the fact that the actors here are mostly not up to the task – comedy is hard, and pretty unforgiving when it comes to the delivery of dialogue. But I suspect the could've done better if they were directed more efficiently – it does seem as though Bohus was simply content to get each scene on tape and move on to the next one. More care towards both art and craft could've improved this considerably.

Still, I'm sure some fans of retro horror will enjoy this. It's certainly no worse than many a Troma film, and - eventually - has enough entrail ripping and gratuitous nudity to satisfy the baser instincts. But personally, I'd rather have rewatched **The Deadly Spawn** – a horror film with real verve and imagination. Clips of that film turn up here, and only seem to reinforce the fact that Bohus has regressed, rather than progressed as a filmmaker.

DAVID FLINT

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