

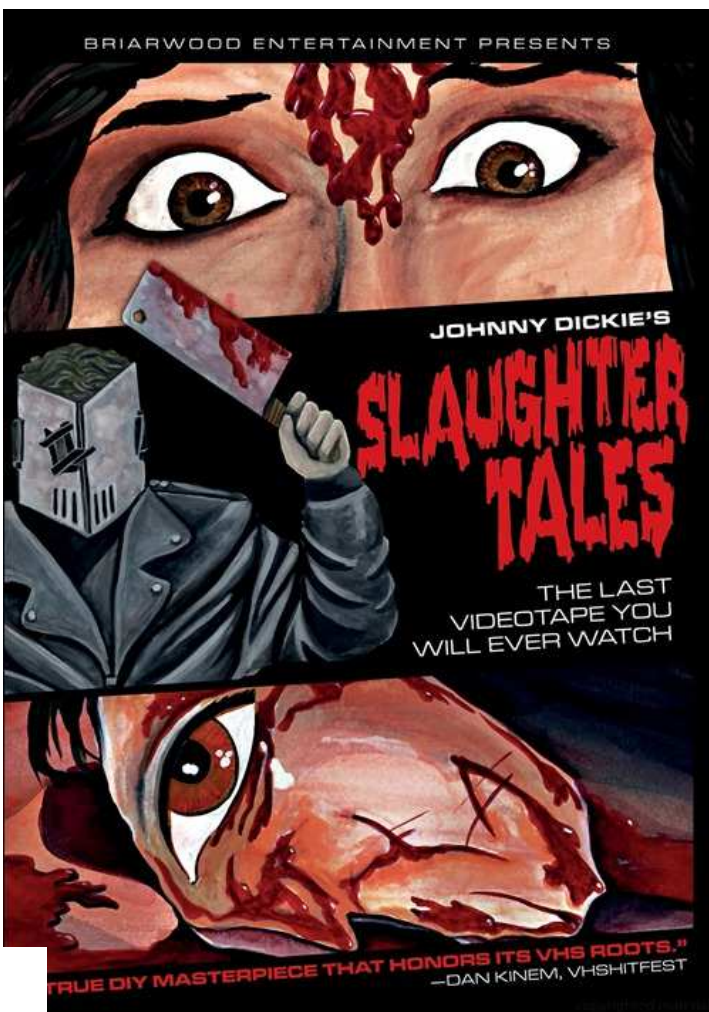


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## Slaughter Tales (2012, DVD Review)

by [Dan Clausen](#) on November 20, 2012



Directed by: Johnny Dickie

Starring: Johnny Dickie, Joe Ankenbrand, Katrina Basilio and Joey Davalos

Briarwood Entertainment / Region 0 / Not Rated / English Mono / 91 minutes

Special Features: 2 trailers / Behind the scenes featurette / Special effects featurette / Audio commentary with Johnny Dickie and VHSitFest

Johnny Dickie's *Slaughter Tales* is a very prestigious shot-on-video horror film, something that I don't believe is said about a lot of SOV horror. It has created a decent amount of internet hype for being the first ever movie (at least to my knowledge) to be directed, produced and written by a 15-year-old. Oh, and did I mention that he stars in it too? Shot on a budget of a little over \$60, this feature-length, lo-fi cheesefest blew my mind.

In the vein of SOV classics such as Olaf Ittenbach's *Burning Moon* (1997) and the recently seeing the light of day *Basement* (1989), *Slaughter Tales* is a collection of horrific stories brought on by a sticky-fingered teenager (played Johnny himself, of course) who jacks the titular VHS from some sort of pawn shop and takes it back home. He then pops it in into his VCR, despite the warning of a tortured soul (also played by Johnny) who seems to have been brought death and eternal misery through the very same VHS. What follows is five different stories, once again all starring Johnny, that make little to no sense but actually pick up rather than losing steam as time goes on. This is where some of the movie's humor comes into play; As each segment ends, real world Johnny comments on the quality

of them, spouting off criticisms like "That fucking sucked!" and things to similar effect. It sort of brings a certain kind of self-aware humor to *Slaughter Tales* that seems to be the filmmaker saying "Yeah, I know it's bad and I embrace it".



To have expected quality rather than a stupid good time would have destroyed all potential enjoyment I could have gotten out of this flick. I can't help but love it when it embraces the SOV classics that I've come to love and also seemingly throws in references to more well-known cult classics. It becomes very apparent very quickly that the director is a fan of the kind of movie he's making. There were references to Tim Ritter's *Truth or Dare* series, Christopher Lewis' *Blood Cult* (1985) and even a story that was potentially influenced by Fred Dekker's *Night of the Creeps* (1986). Believe me, the influences don't stop there and it's amazing how much the kid squeezes into this feature. It was fun to pick up on the seemingly infinite amount of shout-outs to '80s trash horror.

This is something that only the biggest z-grade movie fan will appreciate, and as much fun as I had with it I wouldn't recommend watching it with anybody who pops in a DVD and expects to be fucked in the face by explosive special effects, rapid camera cuts and Shia Labeouf's Disney Channel-era haircut. I've sat through the worst of the worst, and I can boldly claim that *Slaughter Tales* does not find itself on that list. Don't get me wrong, the special effects and acting are awful. Any gore effect in the movie consists of a close-up of a (typically) poor attempt at molding a human appendage out of clay, or just a camera cutting to a wall with phony looking blood spraying all over it in an entirely unnatural way. Not to mention, the cast consists of Johnny's friends and family, and that's to be expected on this kind of budget. However, there is a surprise appearance at the end of the movie that caught me completely off-guard, that you'd really have to see for yourself.

For the most part, the stories featured in the movie are very short, barring the overly long ending segment. The wraparound story is humorous and serves its purpose well. On a more technical note, there are some very crude title cards created in Windows Movie Maker and for some reason or another the aspect ratio seems to shift every few cuts. By no means is this a shining example of "good" filmmaking, which would be more of an issue if the movie were trying to be pretty. But what Johnny lacks in experience is more than made up for with the passion that he put into this thing. Despite the factors that work against it, I still can't give *Slaughter Tales* anything but praise. I want Johnny to continue doing what he's doing, and to capitalize on the fact that he's already made a bit of a name for himself. In a world consumed by overly polished, big budget Hollywood snoozers, once again I say that I can't help but love something like this. *Slaughter Tales* is a well-deserved slap in the face to the mainstream.

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