



Case Number 21949



The Puppet Monster Massacre

MVD Visual // 2010 // 70 Minutes // Unrated
 Reviewed by Judge Paul Pritchard // August 5th, 2011

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Scales of Justice

Video:	88
Audio:	85
Extras:	60
Acting:	78
Story:	78
Judgment:	78

All Rise...

Judge Paul Pritchard is a survivor of the My Little Pony Massacre.



The Charge

"It's like something out of a horror movie."

Opening Statement

Combining his love of horror and puppets, Dustin Mills' **The Puppet Monster Massacre** is a tale of fornicating teens, mad scientists, bloodthirsty monsters, and diabolical penguins. Chances are you won't have seen anything quite like it. Oh, and if you weren't sure, this is definitely not one for the kiddies.

Facts of the Case

Four teenagers receive invitations to the Wagner mansion on the outskirts of town, each promised a reward of one million dollars should they survive the night. Amongst the chosen few is young Charlie who, hoping to save the family business, accepts the offer—much to the dismay of his Grandpa, who smells a rat.

Arriving at the mansion, Charlie meets the other members of the party. There's his friend Gwen, who he has developed feelings toward; Raimi, a film geek with raging loins; Iggy, a foul-mouthed punk rocker from London; and Mona, Iggy's girlfriend who has tagged along in the hope of cashing in. On arrival, Wolfgang Wagner, owner of the mansion and the person behind the invites, greets the group and asks them to make themselves comfortable for the night. However, Wagner has a secret, a hidden past that links him with each of the teenagers he has brought to his home. Worse still, Wagner has something terrible lurking in the basement.

As the night draws on, the teens start dying in increasingly gory ways, as they fall victim to **The Puppet Monster Massacre**.

The Evidence

As is acknowledged by writer/director Dustin Mills in his commentary track, **The Puppet Monster Massacre** will inevitably draw comparisons to Peter Jackson's **Meet the Feebles**; and just as Mills points out, it is a lazy comparison. Now, anyone who has seen Jackson's "Muppets on acid" (as it was so fittingly described upon release) will know what a vile, filthy, mean-spirited little movie it really is; and though **The Puppet Monster Massacre** contains a good dose of gore and profanity (not to mention puppet nudity), it shares few other similarities with Jackson's work. It is, dare I say, actually a lovingly crafted homage to Eighties horror. Although it may not be a complete success, it still offers enough for fans of cult cinema to be a worthwhile purchase. Put simply: if the film's title interests you, chances are you'll be of the right mindset to enjoy it.

Perp Profile

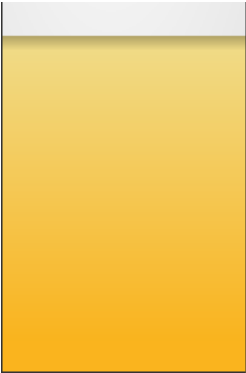
- Studio: [MVD Visual](#)
- Video Formats:
 - 1.78:1 Anamorphic
- Audio Formats:
 - Dolby Digital 2.0 Stereo (English)
- Subtitles:
 - None
- Running Time: 70 Minutes
- Release Year: 2010
- MPAA Rating: Unrated
- Genres:
 - [Comedy](#)
 - [Cult](#)
 - [Horror](#)

Distinguishing Marks

- Commentaries
- Image Gallery

Accomplices

- [IMDb](#)
- [Official Site](#)



What impresses most, and really sells the film, is the quality of the visuals. Clearly Mills loves the horror genre, and this is reflected in the attention to detail shown. The lighting of the film, in particular, is perfect. I wouldn't imagine it being an easy task making a puppet feature look like an authentic Eighties horror, but somehow Mills has pulled it off through a combination of his puppets (which his mom made), and his use of CGI to flesh out background details. If Mills' only aim was to present an authentic-looking horror movie, albeit through the use of puppets, then he has undoubtedly succeeded. However, Mills, it would seem, has much grander aims for his debut feature.

Going back to the **Meet The Feebles** comparison, and as much as there will always be a part of me that loves the anarchic nature of that film, **The Puppet Monster Massacre** is built on much stronger foundations. Not every scene is played solely for laughs or to repulse the viewer; the film sits well within the three-act structure and the story moves along at a more considered pace. Though a brief prologue—which sees an **Alien**-style birthing of the monster—supplies the expected gore quota, the film quickly settles down to establish both its cast and setup. There's even a decent little mystery behind the strange goings on at the Wagner mansion, something that is explored during an animated flashback sequence during the film's final act. A number of key scenes are dialogue heavy, which Mills is rightly proud of, proving beyond a doubt that, yes, this is a real film. When the time comes for action, the **The Puppet Monster Massacre** delivers in spades. The finale, that sees all hell break loose as Wagner's monster grows to enormous size and rips through a four-hundred-man army squadron is, frankly, awesome. Full of splatter and memorable imagery (see the monster's break for freedom set against the backdrop of a full moon), it makes one wonder just what Mills could pull off with more money at his disposal. That said, even the meager budget afforded to the film cannot dampen Mills' ambition.

The film's voice cast delivers their readings with just the right blend of comedy and seriousness so as not to turn the film into a goofy parody. Being a homage, it would be remiss of me to mark the film down for each of the character's being a stereotype, as that's exactly the point. Rather, Mills should be praised for hitting the mark with each one of his creations. None may be overly memorable, but there's fun to be had with Raimi (a.k.a. Lippy the WonderVirgin), the stock nerd, whose encyclopedic knowledge of horror movies, not to mention his lack of success with ladies, makes for some of the film's funniest moments. Likewise, we get a likeable hero in Charlie, the town wimp who is forced to man up when the chips are down.

Probably the most important question to ask regarding **The Puppet Monster Massacre**, is whether or not it would stand up had it been filmed with a live-action cast. While there's no doubt the use of puppets gives the film a fun gimmick to help it stand out, it's important to stress this isn't used to hide shortcomings with the rest of the production. Yes, the screenplay is rife with references to old horror movies (everything from **House on Haunted Hill** to **The Evil Dead**, by way of **Psycho**), but it is based on a premise that is involving enough to keep the viewer interested. Better yet, bar a few crummy one-liners, the dialogue impresses. Don't get the wrong impression: this isn't Oscar-winning material, but it fits the genre and isn't overly

reliant on in-jokes to get by. In general the humor is fairly lowbrow, and favors crude gags over anything too clever, but much like the numerous fart jokes, there's something undeniably funny about an old guy informing his grandson he could "fill a bucket with my giant balls." It's all about the context of course, and this is something writer Dustin Mills is fully aware of.

The DVD comes with two audio commentaries, the first with director Dustin Mills, the other with Mills and his assistant director, Brandon Salkil. The second track is undoubtedly the better of the two, as the two men bounce anecdotes off of each other and generally provide a more entertaining, though no less informative track. Also included are two discarded monster designs.

The quality of the DVD transfer is good, with good black levels and a sharp, detailed picture. The stereo mix is generally flat, but dialogue remains clear, as do individual sound effects.

Closing Statement

The title alone should be a good indicator of whether **The Puppet Monster Massacre** is for you or not. For my money, the film could have gone a little further with the weird goings on, perhaps taking advantage of its use of puppets a little more. In fact, my only fear is that the obvious **Feebles** comparison will raise viewers' expectations of what to expect in terms of splatter and lewd behavior, as, like it or not, Peter Jackson's film has cast a shadow over adult puppet movies forever. Taken on its own terms, however, **The Puppet Monster Massacre** is fun, smartly executed horror.

The Verdict

Not guilty.

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