

FFanzeen: Rock'n'Roll Attitude With Integrity

Through the writings and photography of Robert Barry Francos, a view of the arts and culture, including everyday life.

SUNDAY, JUNE 26, 2011

DVD Review: The Puppet Monster Massacre

Text © Richard Gary / FFanzeen, 2011

Images from the Internet



The Puppet Monster Massacre

Written, puppeteerd, edited, executive produced, and directed by Dustin Mills

MVD Visual, 2010/2011

70 minutes, USD \$14.95

MVDvisual.com

There is a sub-sub-genre of puppet-charactered horror and exploitation films that goes back a few years. Some titles include *Mad Monster Party* (okay, that one was rated G), Peter Jackson's early *Meet the Feebles*, parts of *Night of the Living Dead: Reanimated* (reviewed in an earlier blog), the all-out hardcore *Let My Puppets*

Blog Archive

- ▼ 2011 (58)
 - ▶ July (11)
 - ▼ June (5)
 - [BUZZCOCKS: Their Last US Tour \(1980\)](#)
 - [DVD Review: The Puppet Monster Massacre](#)
 - [Life gets in the way of life](#)
 - [DVD Reviews: Two by Creep Creepersin: Ding Dong De...](#)
 - [ConsentFest and SlutWalk, Saskatoon, May 28, 2011](#)
 - ▶ May (8)
 - ▶ April (11)
 - ▶ March (8)
 - ▶ February (8)
 - ▶ January (7)
- ▶ 2010 (152)
- ▶ 2009 (78)
- ▶ 2008 (70)
- ▶ 2007 (22)

About Me

[Robert Barry Francos](#)

Currently living in Saskatoon (email at RBF55@msn.com for address). From 1977-88, I used to publish a print version of a music magazine in New York called FFanzeen, which dealt with the wide-ranging independent music scene. I also photographed many bands from the period (and since). Now I write this blog, and have a column at jerseybeat (dot)

Come, and now this new splatterfest. These are hardly Puppetoons you would show along with *Frosty the Snowman* to the kiddies.

With tongue in cheek (and hand in felt) writ large, Dustin Mills does an homage to the early plethora of cheesy video-era horror flicks; this one takes place in 1985. Some of the puppets, which look similar in style to the Henson variety, were created by Dustin's mother, with varied and imaginative looks. It's not just the gore (of which there is plenty, some of it CGI splatter), the nudity or the sex, it's the writing that that truly makes this something worth seeking out...other than the novelty of an all puppet exploitation film, of course.

The central theme is that the evil scientist Dr. Wolfgang Wagner (voiced by Steve Rimpieri) and his sidekick penguin, Mr. Squiggums (aka, the comic relief), has built himself a monster parasite that he plans to feed through inviting some town teens to come stay at his house under the premise that if they spend the night, they get... one million dollars.

The first teen (and main character) is Charlie (Ethan Holey), who is afraid of his own shadow, especially compared to his apparently loony World War II hero grandpa (supposedly, grandpa kicked Adolph in his Hitlers...actually - and I doubt this would make *Final Jeopardy* - the German leader actually only had one testicle, FYI); shame Grandpa (Bart Flynn) couldn't have been in the movie more as he is so much fun (the crusty and vulgar old man film stereotype that Alan Arkin has embodied so well), though he is actually in the film just the right amount for the story. However, Charlie wants to restore the family honor by reopening the family dollar store (what, you're looking for sense in a horror puppet movie? What is *wrong* with you?).

Also invited is Gwen (Jessica Daniels), the hoodie-wearing girl Charlie has been in love with since kindergarten and is now his best/only friend, but is afraid to ask out. We all know where that relationship is heading (some cliché's remain true), if you've ever seen any of a thousand *Sixteen Candles* kinds of flicks. She comes across smarter, braver and more logical than him, but remains unassuming.

Third is Raimi (an obvious tribute, voiced by Mills), an Elmo-colored film geek/freak who talks in quotes and references. He is buck-toothed, has what I'm assuming are pimples (though they could be blotches; they move from one side of his face to another in different scenes), and has a Wolowitz kind of relationship with his mother (also unseen here). Actually, his oversexed, under-experienced annoying nature is also similar to the *Big Bang Theory* character, but is hardly a rip-off.

The fourth invitee is a bald tough guy named Iggy (of course) with a too-thick Cockney accent and lots of piercings, who is obviously monster fodder (ah, but will he have a comeuppance? Or is that a *comeuppuppetance*?). Iggy (also Bart Flynn) brings his uninvited gothic, mohawked girlfriend, Mona (portrayed by Mills' real-life girlfriend,

com (slash) quietcorner (dot) html. And the beat goes on.

[View my complete profile](#)

Tom Bingham's blog

[My recent photos](#)

[My photos of "The Day"](#)

[Jersey Beat magazine](#)

[Life and Blog of Gary Pig Gold](#)

[Lethal Dose by Donna Lethal](#)

[Blitz! Magazine: Mike McDowell](#)

[Tom Bingham's blog](#)

[G-Mole: Bruce Farley Mowat](#)

[Suburban Voice: Al Quint](#)

[Blog of Lance Strate of General](#)

[Semantics/Media Ecology](#)

[Association](#)

[Who Really Cares blog of Craig](#)

[Davison](#)

Erica Kisseberth; also the voice of Raimi's mom), who supplies the "nudity" in a couple of occasions. She is tough as nails and has more than a larcenous streak to her.

The five show up at the *Rocky Horror*-inspired house, turrets and all, of course on a rainy Friday night. Plot-wise, what happens from then is highly clichéd, but there are moments of lunacy equivalent to the Bugs Bunny cartoon where a horse is walking in the middle of the air who states, as Bugs flies by in Superman style, "A rabbit? Up *here*?" There are bunny farts (actually there are a *lot* of farts from numerous characters) and, well, isn't bunny farts enough? But there is more.

It's all very amusing, and I can understand why this won the 2011 Motor City Nightmares Film Festival's Best Animal Film award. In the end credits, Mills lists some who inspired him to make films, such as Guillermo Del Toro (imagination), Kevin Smith (zippy dialog and lower-level humor situations; even in Smith's best film, *Dogma*, there's a shit demon, or "poopy-boy," as Muse/Selma Hyack calls it), Robert Rodriguez (action pacing and editing; his *Planet Terror* is a joy to watch for that), the aforementioned Peter Jackson (certainly not for his *Lord of the Rings* work, but rather his also excellent early films), and Jim Henson (well, that's kinda obvious, doncha think?). Bugs Bunny (hey, bunnies run through the film, so why not this review?) and/or Scooby Doo can be added in such scenes as when Raimi and the monster duck around each other in varied directions.

There are two commentaries, one by Mills alone, and one by him and assistant director Brandon Salkil. While Mills mentions that he feels the one both of them is better, in actuality, they are both excellent. In either/or, he details how the film cost \$3500 (for copyrights, camera, computer, software, felt), and goes on to explain that "An average day of filming was two Jackasses [Mills and Salkil] in my living room with a green screen and bunch of puppets." Two of the characters are portrayed by professional (i.e., as Mills explains, they've done it for money before) voice actors: Rimperi and Flynn; they emailed in their readings, and Mills has never actually met them at the time of the commentary).

Mills goes on to explain why he made the film, his plans for the future, scene by scene his finest and least favorite (a certain CGI shot) moments, and the experience as a whole. He does a better job than most in keeping in the moment on both tracks, which is appreciative as so many other commentaries are wastes of time (including by one of his inspirations, Kevin Smith). There are also two short examples of monster styles that were not used, the second not too bad.

You really have to be of a certain type to like this kind of film, and I'm fortunate that I am, because I had a lot of fun watching the whole she-bang, and listening to all of the two commentaries. Whether there is a sequel or not (there is a typical '80s-style hint of it at the end), I hope these guys keep going. *Texas Puppet Massacre? Last Puppet on the Left? Night of the Puppet Dead? Puppetzilla* (Mills mentions that

he has a thing for giant monster films)? *It! Puppet From Beyond Space?*
The Puppet of Gore? Incredibly Strange Puppets Who Stopped Living
and Became Mixed Up Marionettes? Okay, I'll stop now while you
order this film...



Posted by Robert Barry Francos at [12:01 PM](#)

Labels: [DVD review](#), [DVD Reviews: The Puppet Monster Massacre](#),
[FFanzeen](#), [horror films](#), [independent cinema](#), [Richard Gary](#)

Reactions: interesting (0) cool (0) informative (0)

0 comments:

Post a Comment

Comment as: Select profile...

Post Comment

Preview

[Newer Post](#)

[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)

Subscribe to: [Post Comments \(Atom\)](#)