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## Puppet Monster Massacre Review

by Anders Nelson

AUG  
04  
2011



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Several directionless instincts collide in *Puppet Monster Massacre*, the first being that puppets, on their own, make anything funny. After *Avenue Q* and *Meet the Feebles* seemingly divined everything that could be divined from placing Muppet stand-ins in adult situations, one would hope that film-makers after cheap laughs would look elsewhere, but *Massacre* utilizes its cast without about as much character as those Fandango ads featuring brown paper bags. The other is that haunted house movies were popular in the 1980s, which they weren't. The back of the box proudly proclaims that the film honors the horror films of that decade, but plots involving kids having to spend the night in spooky old mansions have far more in common with the beach party movies of the 1960s than they do with the early slashers. These may seem like minor quibbles, but they speak to something wrong at the heart of *Puppet Monster Massacre*, and may help in determining exactly why the movie isn't funny at all.

Horrible, Germanic mad scientist Wolfgang Wagner works alone in your standard issue condemned home out in the middle of the forest, perfecting his genetic design for a creature that only grows larger and more voracious the more that it consumes. His experiments having learned all that they could in isolation, he invites a number of teenagers out to his house under the pretext of potentially earning a million dollars. Time and bandwidth could be spent describing them or the situation that follows to you, but that'd really be a waste of your time. Suffice it to say, the problem isn't that you've seen this before (though you probably have); it's that the dynamic here is too weak and facile to be persuasive even if it was the first time it was being utilized.

Carps about the production values aside (because really, we do all need to believe that something like this could be made reasonably well with these kind of resources), everything that you really need to know about *Massacre* can be summed up in the way that, even clocking in at under 75 minutes, numerous scenes stretch on for much longer than necessary to tack on jokes that aren't especially funny. Take the scene in which we are first introduced to the grandfather for example; even after his grandson has left the room and given all necessary expository information, the grandpa spends a considerable amount of time talking to himself, and revealing that he has soiled himself. Even if you happen to think that they're funny (but don't count on it), it'd be hard to argue that they have anything to do with what's going on in the admittedly thin story. It's sort of a magnification of *South Park's* famous complaint against *Family Guy*, but on even larger scale. Instead of cutting away to a joke that isn't necessarily funny, *Massacre* simply mistakes its whole set-up for being funny.

And it's not hard to see why. There seems to be a pernicious trend going around that insists that anything referencing aspects of the recent past that are already past their shelf life can get out of jail free based on nostalgia alone, resulting in innumerable unwarranted playings of Journey's "Don't Stop Believin'" and so many Chuck Norris jokes that they were eventually collected as a book. It also bears noting that if *Puppet Monster Massacre* had no puppets in it, the only thing that would change is that its title would be grossly inaccurate. There was really no reason to make this film with puppets, other than to perhaps give it a certain notoriety that human actors would not. But that underlies the real problem, which is that the whole thing plays like something the film-makers thought people would find funny, rather than as something that was actually funny. It's an ugly amalgamation, and it's unlikely that even last weekend's *The Smurfs* would

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...ome deleted footage.

6, 2011 and is not rated. Horror. Written and directed by Matt Miller, based on the book by David J. Schickel, Bart Flynn, Ethan Holey, Erica Kisseberth,



...to say it seems that this reviewer didn't bother watching the first bit and then ranted and raved as no connection to. Haunted house movies

...It's not for everyone, but it certainly isn't the best ever, funny, and entertaining. A quick google search of reviews of this movie by reviewers who are made for and, as a result, review the film with

Just a few examples.

<http://www.dvdverdict.com/revi...>


<http://blogcritics.org/video/a...>

<http://www.okgazette.com/oklah...>

I agree with Wickru. Kudos to the filmmaker for a fun, lovingly created film.

4 days ago

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 Anders

Thanks for responding, and thanks for coming up with an argument better than "they deserved a good review because they finished making the movie."

Haunted house movies were a lot more popular in the 50s and 60s, with Wagner an obvious takeoff on characters that Vincent Price and Boris Karloff used to play. There's nothing wrong with that, but it's just a little confusing when it says it's an homage to the 80s right on the back of the box. And there have been a few popular haunted house movies recently (Paranormal Activity, for one), but nearly all of those took place in suburban settings, not old houses like this. The only successful one of those in the last 30 years or so that I can think of is The Others.

But frankly, I don't feel like we actually disagree here. You're saying that this was made for a niche community, and it was, and I'm saying it relied too much on outright gimmicks to appeal to that community, and didn't develop enough of a sense of humor of its own. I think that's fair. I don't think you're looking for a review of this movie; you seem to want someone to cheerlead for it. And that's fine, but I never pretended to do that. And you seem to be backing me up that this was a calculated effort to appeal to a certain group of people.

I'm certainly not trying to stop Mills from making another movie; I hope he does. But I don't see how liking anything he makes out of hand is going to help him do that. Like so many online reviewers, I did go to film school, and needed to be sat down and told when what I was making was absolute garbage, and that if I didn't improve, I would richly deserve the F I would be getting. It's always tough to hear, and it can verge on being mean, but I've always thought it was crueler to pull your punches with people.

4 days ago in reply to fancypants

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 **Hohmeisw**

I'd spend more time refuting your review, but I can simply say I don't trust someone who doesn't like Journey.

4 days ago 1 Like


Like Reply

 **Anders**

As someone who actually saw Journey in concert, I feel comfortable saying I actually like them. I just don't think it would kill people to play "Lovin Touchin Squeezin" or "Faithfully" instead of "Don't Stop Believin" every now and then.

4 days ago in reply to Hohmeisw

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 **Wickru**

I have yet to see this feature, but I must say...way to bully a filmmaker Anders!! Bravo!! I bet you feel like a big boy now. This is the second smack down I've read by you of a filmmakers creation and all I have to say is, "Yawn"!! Reviewers like you are a travesty to the viewing world. You bored angry little man... I think we'd all love to see you\* create anything other then a deprecating opinion of someone elses hard won product. But I guess we all know how this works right? Those who can't create, criticize...

Kudos to the team at Puppet Monster Massacre for completing a project and having the balls to face to a\$\$holes like this guy!! I know I'd like a copy!!

5 days ago 8 Likes

Like Reply

 **Anders**

<http://www.justpressplay.net/a...>

I've linked to a film of my own, so if you feel so compelled to do so, you may post negative comments either her on the site itself.

It's not that I don't sympathize. It's tough to make it in this industry, and every one deserves a chance. But I don't see the point of turning this into an "everyone-gets-a-medal-just-for-showing-up-situation", because that's not going to help anybody.

But your response shows that, if anything, I've done my job. A critic shouldn't dictate taste; he or she should just try to keep the conversation interesting. And since I clearly pissed you off so much, I've done that. And if I've done so enough to make you want to buy a copy, then I feel like I've done them a favor.

Just out of curiosity, what was the other "smackdown" of mine that you disapproved of?

5 days ago in reply to Wickru 1 Like

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