

MY STEPDAD'S A FREAKIN' VAMPIRE

Well, we've had My Stepmother is an Alien, I suppose...here we go, then, with an entry into the risky horror-comedy genre in which, quite simply, Rusty Funkhauser's stepdad is a vampire ♦ but this situation doesn't seem so bad that it merits real bad language (what's with the 'freakin' which is used throughout, by the way ♦ not just on the cover? Afraid of the swear jar?) The trailer reel which precedes the feature includes 'Aaah! Zombies!!! in all its badly-punctuated glory; Dance Fu; and something called Scouts' Honor: Badge to the Bone, so, along with our title, you get a reasonable idea of the type of films (and budgets) to expect. It's not that you can't work wonders on a bare fraction of what most Hollywood filmmakers would use for their projects, but you have to be ingenious with what you do with the money you actually have. Whilst My Stepdad's a Freakin' Vampire isn't offensively bad ♦ it just passes you by, like some sort of slacker episode of Buffy ♦ it does nothing to distinguish itself from the horde of other barely-passable horror-comedies either. Perhaps most importantly, it fails to be either very funny or very much like a horror.



Onto the plot...Rusty, ostensibly a teenage boy but evidently more like late-twenties (Lahcen Anajjar) lives with his mother and her new husband Richard (Larry Peterson). One week, when mom (Kate Forristall) goes away to a conference, she hopes that stepdad and stepson will bond over a bit of mutual DIY, but Rusty is having none of it ♦ especially when he sees blood coming from the attic...what follows is a battle of minds between Rusty, his equally-dubiously-teenaged friends and his wicked stepfather: Richard must be stopped before he retrieves a mysterious artefact, because if he does, a problem will arise which may take around eighty-five minutes to solve...

Okay, well, excepting the perplexing trend across the pond of casting people who are much too old to be in school as school-goers, even in films like this one which have no nudity, a surprising lack of blood, considering the theme of the film, and not even any freakin' base language, the characterisation here isn't great. A lot of very similar characters are introduced very quickly, most of which slot neatly into the 'slightly obnoxious stoner kid' bracket, not fleshed out enough to gain our sympathy or sustain interest. Same goes for the 'adult' characters. I know that this was a first film, and I'm trying hard not to pass judgements on whether or not director David Matheny did or didn't just try to make a horror-comedy because he assumed it would be cheap and easy, but stodgy dialogue and bland characters do not clear the way for the jokes to land. I'll give the film credit for delivering one novel death scene (admittedly off-camera, but the idea was fun), but otherwise I got exasperated with the odd familiarity of a plot which just seemed silly when it went off in its own direction. For instance, and pardon the mild spoiler in this sentence, but why the fuck would you go to school as normal if you knew that you had one day to save the world? Ditto the fact that no one noticed Richard was a freakin' vampire ♦ and dealing with it in the script, showing you're aware of the plot hole, isn't enough! Fix it!

There is some effort here: some inventive camera shots are used, and the film does try to throw in some creature SFX which, though a bit derivative, at least show willing. Thing is, when the vampire character can't talk with his fangs in, then the premise is in trouble. I'm being a tad cruel, but then I have sat through umpteen films which are very similar to this one, and it's impossible to review

these things in a vacuum. My Stepdad's a Freakin' Vampire plods along familiar lines to its close; there's very little else to say.

The film is presented in 2.35:1 widescreen, with stereo sound. The sound is easily-audible (with voices high in the overall mix) and has clear, if sometimes high colour.

Review by Keri O♦Shea

Released by Level 33 Entertainment

Region 1

Not Rated

Extras :

see main review

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