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Indie Horror Films

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DVD Review: Planet of the Vampire Women

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Planet of the Vampire Women

Directed by Darin Wood

Seminal Films, 2011

95 minutes, USD \$19.95

Seminalfilms.com

Planetofthevampirewomen.com

MVDvisual.com

This film reminds me of three overlapping horror and sci-fi sub-genres. The first is from the 1950's low-budget B-line films that used laughable props and minimal sets. Some classic examples are *Queen of Outer Space* (1958) and *Cat-Women of the Moon* (1953).

The second is more of a '70s and '80s post-VHS intro of then-smoldering fantasy, like *Galaxina* (1980) or the British obscurity *Spaced Out* (1981). This was mostly fall-out from the post-*Star Wars* (1977) success ride-the-wave glut. These last two made John-Boy's *Battle Beyond the Stars* (1980) and the original *Battlestar Galactica* (1978) look like *Titanic* (1997).

The last is from the millennium period, when a series of women-based films, often with lesbian fantasy sub-themes (though mostly watched by teen males), that took traditional storylines and changed them to fit the format, such as *The Vampire's Seduction* (1998) or *The Lord of the G-Strings: The Femaleship of the String* (many of which starred the likes of the lovely Tina Krause and Misty Mundae).

Planet of the Vampire Women is a pleasant and quite rightfully ridiculous throwback to that style that looks like some of the cheaper sets on the first season of *Star Trek*, where boulders were easily identified as paper mache, clothing was tight, and creatures were either puppets or people in hairy suits. Welcome back!

You may ask yourself, "How cheap is cheap?" Well, for example, the film opens in a casino / strip joint (of course), and the liquor (opium rum) bottles are written in a strange language... in magic marker. Yep.

Our heroes, as it were, are space pirates (no, the loveable kind, not Somalian), led by Capt. Miranda Richards (Paquita Estrada; for some reason imdb.com has her listed in two films from 1934 and 1933!). Her crew robs the casino (a scene of blood and boobs, as I wrote in my notes) in a set piece that's a tad too long, and then they tear out of there via their spaceship, which is maneuvered by a steering wheel. Did I mention the word cheap? Oh, and I don't want to forget the bobble hula girl on the dashboard. As they zoom off, Richards officially states, "Captain's log, star date...whatever." I love a film that doesn't take itself seriously, and had lots of

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nods to its time-binding predecessors.

All is well and good until a mysterious face in a cloud shoots a lightning bolt into the good captain's eyes, turning her into the first of said vampires (around the 24 minute mark). This does not bode well for the rest of the crew, which includes: Astrid Covair (Stephanie Hyden), a smarter-than-she-looks "pleasure clone" who can change into any raunchy outfit (and does often) or to anyone, with a twist of her body that would make Samantha Stevens proud (one of her best lines is "I read a lot between fucking and sucking!"); the driver is Ginger Maldonado (Liesel Hanson, who ironically plays Liesel on the TV show *Galen*), the hardcore Tank Girl type; Pepper Vance (Ashley Marino) plays the drugged out scout; and the only male on board, Automatic Jones (Keith Letl), who is part android and most likely a nod to the various "robots" in the *Alien* franchise. Chasing them – and eventually joining in, of course – is lawman and Cuba Gooding Jr. lookalike, Val Falco (Jawara Duncan). You know he's a cop because he has flashing red lights on his sunglasses; he also has one of the better recurring lines: "Now look, I'm not saying what we saw were vampires...all I'm saying is there was some kind of undead creature that was sucking the blood out of the living and shot lightning out of their eyes..."

They are all forced to land on a hostile planet filled with electrical storms and blowing dust (another *Alien* [1979] reference?), where they encounter – in part – a paper mache dinosaur (wisely only seen in short spurts) and digital space bugs that look like the zomBEEES from auteur filmmaker Bill Zebub's *The Worst Horror Film Ever Made* (2008).

Of course, this all end up back at the stripping casino (obviously shot at the same time as the opening scene) for the final battle between good and evil, living and undead.

Shot at Black Cat Studios in Sacramento, strangely, the entire film is one chapter on the DVD, so the viewer has to fast forward to wherever they left off.

Look, it is impossible to watch a film like this with the same mindset of, say, *Lord of the Rings* (2001) or even *Me, Myself and Irene* (2000). When you get down to this level, it's a completely different semantic environment, and the rather than expecting the best and taking away points, the viewer must expect the worst and add from there. Using this paradigm, this film was sheer stupid, obnoxious, and a ton of fun. This isn't a cinema discussion group material to discuss how it reflects to Kant, but rather you should get some bodies in the same room, turn it on, and party. You'll groan, you'll hoot, you'll point out all the continuity errors and how amateurish the sets and creatures truly are. You might even be the one to say, "Man, I could do it better than that." But most likely you won't; rather you'll have to settle and kvetch while getting a lot of amusement seeing this.

<iframe width="560" height="315" src="http://www.youtube.com/embed/RusNM9D0_Ck" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>

Posted by **Robert Barry Francos** at 12:01 AM

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